

Frommer's®

Hong Kong

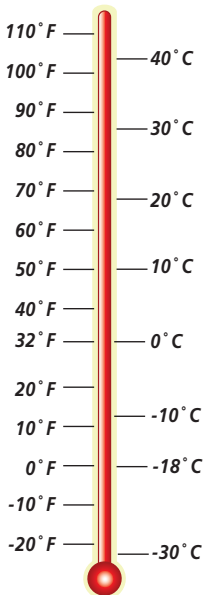
including Macau

with
foldout
map



METRIC CONVERSIONS

TEMPERATURE



To convert F to C:
subtract 32 and
multiply by $\frac{5}{9}$ (0.555)

To convert C to F:
multiply by 1.8
and add 32

$$32^{\circ}\text{F} = 0^{\circ}\text{C}$$

LIQUID VOLUME

<i>To convert</i>	<i>multiply by</i>
U.S. gallons to liters	3.79
Liters to U.S. gallons	0.26
U.S. gallons to imperial gallons	0.83
Imperial gallons to U.S. gallons	1.20
Imperial gallons to liters	4.55
Liters to imperial gallons	0.22

$$1 \text{ liter} = 0.26 \text{ U.S. gallon}$$

$$1 \text{ U.S. gallon} = 3.8 \text{ liters}$$

DISTANCE

<i>To convert</i>	<i>multiply by</i>
inches to centimeters	2.54
centimeters to inches	0.39
feet to meters	0.30
meters to feet	3.28
yards to meters	0.91
meters to yards	1.09
miles to kilometers	1.61
kilometers to miles	0.62

$$1 \text{ ft} = 0.30 \text{ m} \quad 1 \text{ mile} = 1.6 \text{ km}$$

$$1 \text{ m} = 3.3 \text{ ft} \quad 1 \text{ km} = 0.62 \text{ mile}$$

WEIGHT

<i>To convert</i>	<i>multiply by</i>
Ounces to grams	28.35
Grams to ounces	0.035
Pounds to kilograms	0.45
Kilograms to pounds	2.20

$$1 \text{ ounce} = 28 \text{ grams}$$

$$1 \text{ pound} = 0.4555 \text{ kilogram}$$

$$1 \text{ gram} = 0.04 \text{ ounce}$$

$$1 \text{ kilogram} = 2.2 \text{ pounds}$$



Frommer's®

Hong Kong

***10th Edition,
with Macau***

by Beth Reiber

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—Beth Reiber

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Long before she could read, **Beth Reiber** spent hours pouring over her grandparents' latest *National Geographic* magazines. After living four years in Germany as a university student and then as a freelance travel writer selling to major U.S. newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post*, followed by a stint in Tokyo as editor of the *Far East Traveler*, she authored several Frommer's guides, including *Frommer's Japan* and *Frommer's Tokyo*. She also contributes to *Frommer's Europe by Rail*, *Frommer's China*, *Frommer's USA*, and Northstar Travel Media and writes a blog for the Japan National Tourist Organization's website at ww.japan.travelinfo.com. When not on the road, she resides in Lawrence, Kansas, with her two sons, a dog, and a cat in an 1890 Victorian home.

AN INVITATION TO THE READER

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Other Great Guides for Your Trip:

Frommer's China
Frommer's Hong Kong Day by Day

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system**. In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

 Find	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
 Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
 Kids	Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
 Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
 Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
 Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
 Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express	DISC	Discover	V	Visa
DC	Diners Club	MC	MasterCard		

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- Podcasts, interactive maps, and up-to-the-minute events listings
- Opinionated blog entries by Arthur Frommer himself
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

What's New in Hong Kong

PLANNING YOUR TRIP The **Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)** has opened a new HKTB Visitor Information & Services Centre, in a vintage tram car on Victoria Peak, open daily 9am to 9pm.

Oasis Hong Kong, a fledgling low-fare, long-haul airline, flew its last flight in 2008. **Hong Kong International Airport**, one of the most user-friendly airports in the world, is even more welcoming now that it offers free Wi-Fi from anywhere in the airport. Travelers to U.S. destinations will find check-in easier: You can check in for most airlines at two satellite train stations, Hong Kong Station and Kowloon Station, for the first time since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Getting around Hong Kong has gotten simultaneously more difficult and easier. Hover ferry service between Tsim Sha Tsui East and Central is no longer available, making the trip between the two a longer haul. On the other hand, the absorption of the Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) into the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) subway system now means slightly cheaper fares and eliminates having to buy a new ticket when making transfers.

WHERE TO STAY The **Ritz-Carlton** has closed in Central to make way for an office building, but it will resurface in 2010 on the other side of the harbor, next to Kowloon Station at the top of a 108-story building.

Meanwhile, the hottest trend in the Hong Kong hotel scene is the boutique hotel. Those making recent debuts include

the **Fleming**, 41 Fleming Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/3607 2288), a business boutique hotel with attitude; **Hotel LKF**, a welcome addition to the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district at 33 Wyndham St., Central (☎ 852/3518 9333); **Lan Kwai Fong Hotel @ Kau U Fong**, 3 Kau U Fong, Central (☎ 852/3650 0000), with a hip Chinese decor in the Western District; and the **Luxe Manor**, 39 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/3763 8888), which makes its mark with the most whimsical furnishings I've ever seen in a hotel. Unfortunately, showers instead of tubs seem to be the cleanser of choice for new accommodations, making after-flight relaxing soaks only a dream.

WHERE TO DINE With so many new restaurants popping up, I'm afraid I'll have a coronary just trying to eat at them all. Creating the biggest buzz are **Azure**, on the 29th floor of Hotel LKF (see above), with great views and a dramatic setting; **Pearl on the Peak**, Peak Tower, Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 5123), with even better views and offering high-dollar Australian cuisine; **Zuma** (☎ 852/3657 6388), a swanky Japanese restaurant in the upscale Landmark shopping center, Central; and **Watermark** (☎ 852/2167 7251), with a killer location right above the Central Ferry Piers, unobstructed harbor views, and varied Continental cuisine along with a lunch buffet.

EXPLORING **Peak Tower**, Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 7654), now charges for the privilege of ogling Hong Kong from its

rooftop Sky Terrace observation deck, charging HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) for adults, half-price for seniors and children. HKTB's free Saturday tai chi lessons, previously held at Sky Terrace, have been moved to Harcourt Garden in Admiralty.

New museums in Hong Kong include the **Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum**, 7 Castle Rd., Mid-Levels (☎ 852/2367 6373), which traces the revolutionary's years in Hong Kong and his efforts to overthrow the corrupt Qing Dynasty, and the **Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre**, Kowloon Park, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2208 4400), which highlights past, present, and future preservation efforts of historic buildings throughout Hong Kong.

Travelers flying in or out of Hong Kong International Airport may want to extend their stay at the airport with a round of golf at the **SkyCity Nine Eagles Golf Course** (☎ 852/3760 6688), a nine-hole course open to airport employees, passengers within 7 days of their arrival or departure dates, and members of frequent-flier programs.

Meanwhile, a cruise aboard the **Duk Ling**, an authentic Chinese junk, is no longer free, but it's affordable at HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) a person.

SIDES TRIPS The **Ping Shan Heritage Trail**, a great walk in the New Territories, just keeps getting better. The Old Ping Shan Police Station, built in 1899, has been given a second life as the trail's visitor center, with displays that introduce the customs and history of the Tang clan that settled the area.

MACAU What isn't new in Macau, the Las Vegas of Asia? Several foreign-owned

casino/hotel properties have opened recently, including **MGM Grand**, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen (☎ 853/8802 8888), with an impressive glass-covered conservatory modeled after a Portuguese square; **Wynn Macau**, Rua Cidade de Sintra (☎ 853/2888 9966), boasting an upscale shopping center filled with designer wear; and **Crown Towers**, Avenida de Kwong Tung (☎ 853/2886 8888), Macau's classiest casino/hotel to date, with prices to match. But the biggest changes taking place in Macau are on Cotai, a strip of reclaimed land between Taipa and Colôane and even boasting its own ferry service from Hong Kong. It's here you'll find the **Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel**, Estrada da Baía de N. Senhora da Esperança (☎ 853/2882 8877), Macau's biggest development and boasting the world's largest casino and second-largest building.

Naturally, Macau's new hotels also offer more choices in dining and entertainment. These include French restaurant **Aux Beaux Arts**, with terrace seating in the MGM Grand's conservatory; **Il Teatro** in Wynn Macau, offering South Italian fare with views of a dancing fountain; Japanese restaurant **Roka** and **Cirque du Soleil** in the Venetian Macao-Hotel-Resort; and **Ying** in Crown Towers, serving traditional and modern interpretations of Cantonese cuisine along with views of the Macau skyline.

FAST FACTS Smokers have a rougher time in Hong Kong now that it has gone mostly smoke free in public places, including restaurants; bars have until July 1, 2009 to comply.

The Best of Hong Kong

Hong Kong is such a feast for the senses, it reminds me of a movie set. Maybe I'm an incurable romantic, but when I stand at the railing of the famous Star Ferry as it glides across the harbor, ride a rickety old tram as it winds its way across Hong Kong Island, or marvel at the stunning views afforded from atop Victoria Peak, I can't help but think I must have somehow landed in the middle of an epic drama where the past has melted into the present. So many images float by—wooden boats bobbing up and down in the harbor beside huge ocean liners; crumbling tenements next to ultra-modern high-rises; squalid alleys behind luxury hotels; elderly people pushing wheelbarrows as Rolls-Royces glide by; market vendors selling chicken feet and dried squid while talking on cellphones.

In fact, one of the most striking characteristics of Hong Kong is this interweaving of seeming contradictions and the interplay of the exotic and the technically advanced. There are as many skyscrapers here as you're likely to see anywhere, but they're built with bamboo scaffolding and in accordance with the principles of feng shui. Historic trams rumble through Central, while below ground is one of the most efficient subways in the world, complete with the world's first "contactless" tickets, cards that can be waved over a scanner without even taking them out of your purse or wallet. The city has what are arguably some of the best and most sophisticated restaurants in the world, but it also has *dai pai dong*, street-side food stalls. Hong Kong is home to one of the world's largest shopping malls, but lively makeshift street markets are virtually everywhere.

The more you search for in Hong Kong, the more you'll find. Before long, you, too, may find yourself swept up in the drama.

1 THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

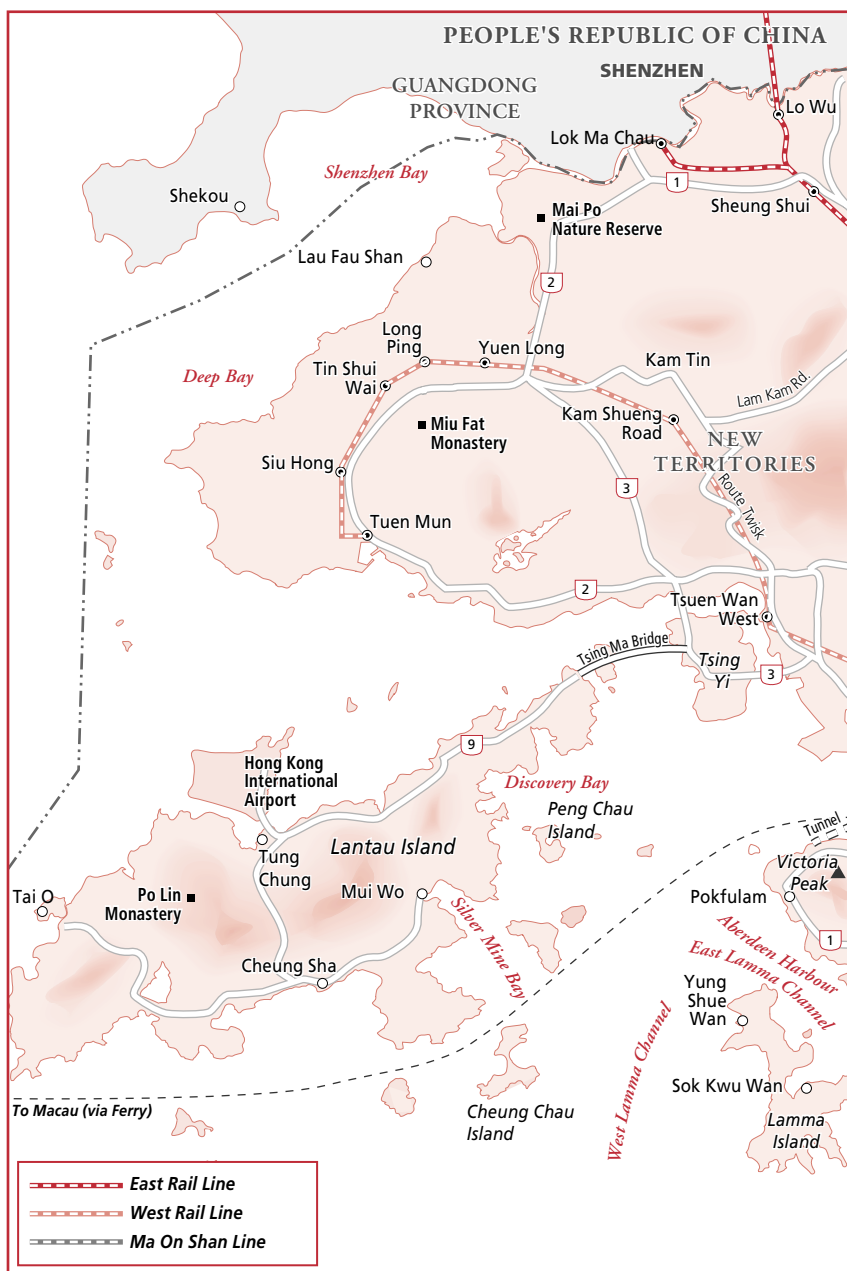
- **Observing a Chinese Festival:** Hong Kong celebrates with several colorful festivals throughout the year, featuring everything from dragon boat races to celebrations honoring Tin Hau, goddess of the sea. Cantonese opera, performed on temporary stages, is also common at Chinese festivals. See "Hong Kong Calendar of Events" in chapter 3.
- **Riding the Star Ferry:** The subway between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island may be quicker, but it doesn't hold a candle to the historic Star Ferry, offering one of the most dramatic—and cheapest—5-minute boat rides in the world. The trip is a good reminder that Hong Kong, with its breathtaking skyline, is dominated by water, with one of the world's busiest harbors. See p. 43.
- **Gazing upon Hong Kong from Victoria Peak:** You don't know Hong Kong until you've seen it from here. Take the funicular to Victoria Peak, famous for its views of Central, Victoria Harbour, South China Sea, Kowloon, and undulating hills beyond, followed by a 1-hour circular hike and a meal with a view. Don't miss the nighttime view, one of the most spectacular and romantic in the world. See p. 172.

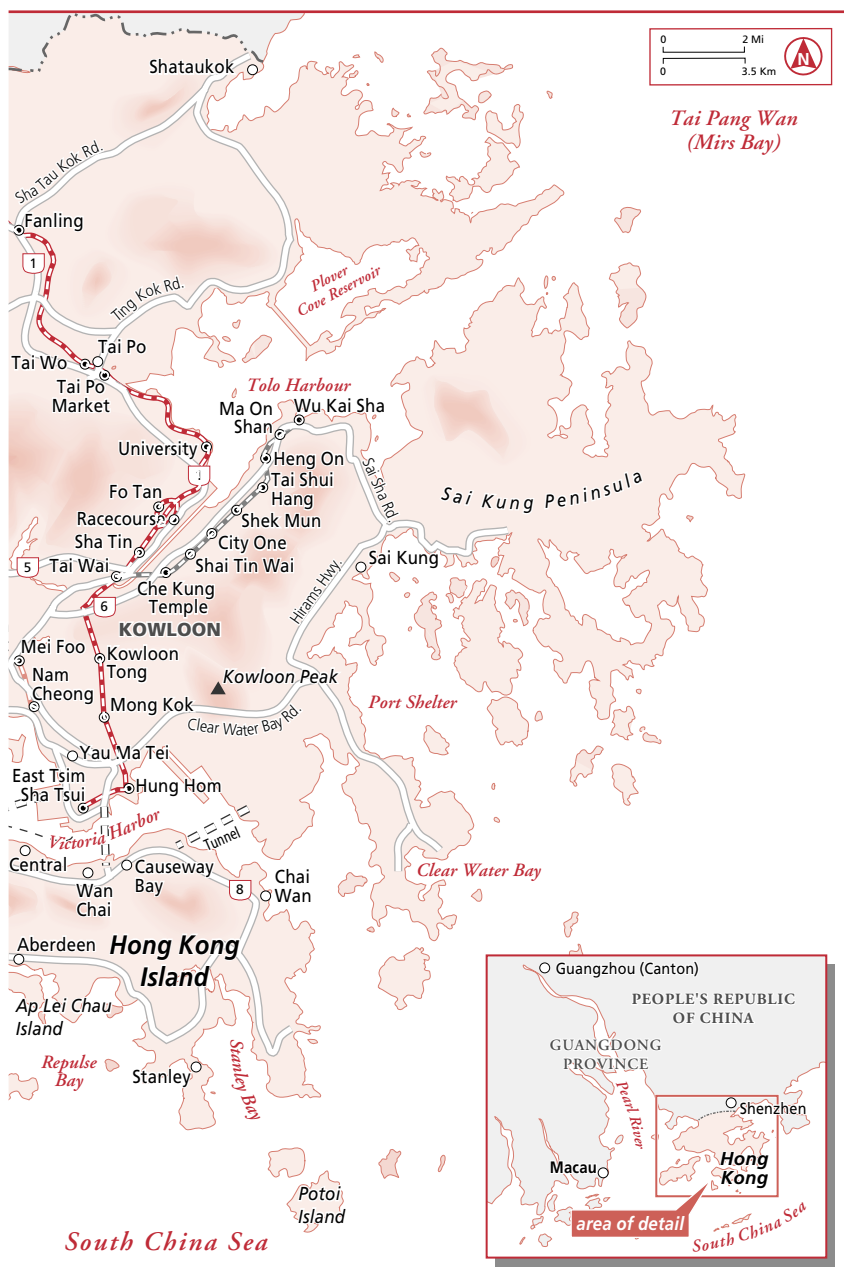
4 Hong Kong Region

THE BEST OF HONG KONG

THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

1





- **Listening to the World's Largest Professional Chinese Orchestra:** Established 30 years ago, the 80-member Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is the world's largest, playing traditional and modern Chinese instruments in orchestrations that combine Chinese and Western musical elements. See p. 240.
- **Celebrating Sundown with a Cocktail:** Many hotel lounges offer spectacular views of the city as well as live music. As the sun disappears, watch the city explode in neon. See "The Bar, Pub & Lounge Scene," in chapter 10, beginning on p. 244, for venues with especially good views.
- **Partying until Dawn in Lan Kwai Fong:** It's standing room only at bars and pubs in Central's most famous nightlife district, where the action spills out onto the street and continues until dawn. Other burgeoning nightlife districts include SoHo, Knutsford Terrace, and Wan Chai. See chapter 10.
- **Paying Respects at the Big Buddha:** Laze on the open aft deck during the 50-minute ferry ride to Lantau island

(and enjoy great views of the harbor and skyline along the way), followed by a hair-raising bus ride over lush hills to see the world's largest, seated, outdoor bronze Buddha, located at the Po Lin Monastery. Complete your pilgrimage with a vegetarian meal at the monastery and a visit to Ngong Ping Village with its shopping and Walking with Buddha museum, and then make your return trip via cable car offering more great views. See the "Lantau" section of chapter 11, beginning on p. 264.

- **Zippering over to Macau:** Macau, for centuries a Portuguese outpost until it was handed back to the Chinese in 1999, is just an hour away by jetfoil and offers a fascinating blend of Chinese and Mediterranean lifestyles, evident in its spicy Macanese cuisine, colorful architecture, temples, churches, and handful of special-interest museums. It's also famous for its Las Vegas-style casinos. Although you can "do" Macau in a day, I strongly urge you to spend at least a couple days here. See chapter 12.

2 THE BEST SPLURGE HOTELS

- **Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong,** 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 800/327-0200 in the U.S., or 852/2721 1211): No hotel lobby boasts a better view of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island than the light-infused lobby of this standout property, right at water's edge in Tsim Sha Tsui. State-of-the-art rooms (most with harbor views), a spa renowned for its anti-jet lag and healing treatments, restaurants that are as fun as they are excellent, and free tai chi and yoga classes make this one of the city's top choices. See p. 85.
- **The Peninsula,** Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 866/382-8388 in the U.S., or 852/2920 2888): The grand

old dame of Hong Kong, this historic hotel, built in 1928, exudes elegance and colonial splendor, with one of the most famous, ornate lobbies in town, a must for afternoon tea. A tower with a top-floor restaurant designed by Philippe Starck, a state-of-the-art spa, classes ranging from cooking to tai chi, Hong Kong's most venerable restaurants, and outstanding service assure this historic hotel a top rating despite newer and more glamorous competitors. See p. 85.

- **Island Shangri-La Hong Kong,** Pacific Place, Central (☎ 866/565-5050 in the U.S., or 852/2877 3838): There's no mistaking you're anywhere but Asia

in Hong Kong Island's tallest hotel, adorned with lush Tai Ping carpets, artistic flower arrangements, and more than 500 paintings, including the world's largest Chinese landscape painting. Spacious rooms combine Asian touches (like Chinese lacquerware TV cabinets) with up-to-date technology (like LCD TVs and DVD players), but the top-floor French restaurant opts for old-world charm as it wows with one of the best dining views in Hong Kong. See p. 87.

- **Mandarin Oriental**, 5 Connaught Rd., Central (☎ 800/5260 6567 in the U.S.,

or 852/2522 0111): This is one of Hong Kong's oldest yet newest hotels, first opened in 1963 but recently renovated from top to bottom. Travelers returning for repeat stays will find familiarity in the Captain's Bar, the Chinnery, Clipper's Lounge, and Mandarin Grill, all back by popular demand, but new are the spa with a 1930s Shanghai ambience, restaurants serving French and international cuisine, and luxuriously remodeled rooms with great sitting rooms where the balconies used to be. See p. 88.

3 THE BEST MODERATELY PRICED HOTELS

- **Eaton Hotel**, 380 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei (☎ 800/223-5652 in the U.S., or 852/2782 1818): This efficient hotel goes the extra mile, with free daily guided tours of the nearby Temple Street Night Market, a four-story glass-enclosed atrium lobby overlooking a garden terrace, a rooftop pool, and free Internet service in its café. See p. 94.
- **The Luxe Manor**, 39 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/3763 8888): This boutique hotel is like no other, with a whimsical decor that resembles a stage setting for *Alice in Wonderland*—but designed by Salvador Dalí. Unusually shaped furniture, faux fireplaces, and other fun touches make a stay here totally out of the ordinary. See p. 96.
- **Lan Kwai Fong Hotel @ Kau U Fong**, 3 Kau U Fong, Central (☎ 852/3650 0000): I love this boutique hotel for several reasons, including its chic Chinese decor and its colorful location in the Western District near Graham Street Market. See p. 99.
- **Bishop Lei International House**, 4 Robinson Rd., Mid-Levels (☎ 852/2868 0828): There's nothing fancy

about this hotel, but I love its location near the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator in a residential neighborhood, its outstanding views from otherwise standard rooms, its coffee shop with an outdoor terrace, and its outdoor pool. A great choice for expat wannabes. See p. 99.

- **Jia**, 1–5 Irving St., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/3196 9000): Designed by Philippe Starck, this boutique hotel is Hong Kong's hippest, with 54 stylish rooms complete with kitchenettes and entertainment centers. Guests also enjoy a host of freebies, including free local calls, free Internet access, free breakfast and cocktail hour, free access to a nearby gym, and—for long-staying guests—a free massage. See p. 101.
- **Lanson Place Boutique Hotel & Residences**, 133 Leighton Rd., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/3477 6888): This Jia competitor offers much of the same at slightly lower prices, including upbeat, contemporary rooms with kitchenettes (and a welcoming basket of goodies), large LCD TVs, and DVD players (there's a free DVD library). Breakfast and Wi-Fi are also free. See p. 101.

4 THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE DINING EXPERIENCES

- **Eating Your Way Through China:** There's no better place in the world to sample regional Chinese cuisine than Hong Kong, where you can eat everything from the ubiquitous Cantonese food to Sichuan, Shanghainese, Hunanese, Beijing, Chiu Chow, and Pekingese dishes. See chapter 6.
- **Stuffing Yourself at a Buffet Spread:** If you have a big appetite or like variety in your meals, the best Hong Kong bargain is the all-you-can-eat buffet spread. Almost all hotels offer buffet lunches and dinners; other restaurants may feature buffets for lunch. Most offer an assortment of international fare, from Japanese sushi and Chinese dishes to pasta and carveries. See chapter 6.
- **Dining with a View:** Enjoy Chinese or Western cuisine at one of Hong Kong's many restaurants that offer spectacular views of either Kowloon (with its glowing neon lights) or Hong Kong Island (with its skyscrapers and Victoria Peak). In fact, Hong Kong boasts so many restaurants with views, the dilemma will be in the choosing. The absolute winners? Those atop Victoria Peak. See "Around Hong Kong Island" in chapter 6, beginning on p. 161.
- **Dining on Dim Sum:** Nothing conveys a sense of Chinese life more vividly than a visit to a crowded, lively Cantonese restaurant for breakfast or lunch, when you can feast on spring rolls, steamed dumplings, and other goodies served in bamboo steamers. See the "Dim Sum" section in chapter 6, beginning on p. 165, for more on Hong Kong's dim sum restaurants.
- **Taking High Tea at a Posh Hotel:** The British rulers may be gone, but their legacy lives on in the afternoon tea. Virtually all upper-class hotels offer afternoon tea, but my favorites are those offered by The Peninsula and Hotel InterContinental. Come for afternoon tea, nibble on finger sandwiches, and gaze away. See p. 169.
- **Relaxing at an Open-Air Seafood Restaurant:** Get rid of stress by relaxing over a meal of fresh seafood at one of Hong Kong's rural waterfront seafood restaurants. My favorite place is Lamma island. See p. 271.

5 THE BEST THINGS TO DO FOR FREE (OR ALMOST)

- **Expand Your Horizons at Hong Kong's Museums:** A Museum Pass allowing entry to seven major museums, covering everything from Chinese art and Hong Kong's history to space, science, and cultural life in the New Territories, costs just HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95). Or, go on Wednesday, when these same museums are absolutely free. For more information on Hong Kong's museums, see chapter 7.
- **Explore Hong Kong's Parks:** Hong Kong's parks are destinations in themselves, offering a wide range of free activities and attractions. Among the most unique are Kowloon Walled City Park, once a no-man's land of slums and now a Chinese garden; Kowloon Park, with free kung fu demonstrations and a small arts fair on Sundays; and Hong Kong Park, with a huge aviary and the Museum of Tea Ware. For

descriptions of Hong Kong's many parks, see chapter 7.

- **Meet the People:** Learn about pearls, jade, feng shui (geomancy), Cantonese opera, Chinese tea, and other cultural traditions on free, 1-hour tours and lectures given by local experts. Inexpensive harbor cruises are also available aboard an authentic junk. To learn more about the Hong Kong Tourism Board's "Meet the People" program, stop by an HKTB Visitor Information & Services Centre for the *Cultural Kaleidoscope* brochure (or find it online at www.discoverhongkong.com by clicking on "Heritage"), which outlines the current free offerings. See p. 193.
- **Get Up Early to Watch Tai Chi:** Before breakfast, head to one of Hong Kong's many parks to watch people going through the slow, graceful motions of tai chi. For the best viewing, go to Kowloon Park, Hong Kong Park, Victoria Park, or the Zoological and Botanical Gardens (see "Parks & Gardens," of chapter 7, beginning on p. 186, for more on these parks and gardens). You can even participate in free practice sessions, held four mornings a week on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront promenade and once a week in Admiralty. See p. 196.
- **Explore the Western District:** Produce, bolts of cloth, live snakes, ginseng, dried seafood, Chinese herbs and medicines, an historic temple, a museum dedicated to Chinese and Western medicine, and antiques and collectibles are just some of the things you'll see while strolling through one of Hong Kong's most fascinating neighborhoods. See p. 203.
- **Stroll Tsim Sha Tsui's Waterfront:** A pedestrian promenade stretches from the Star Ferry eastward along the Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East waterfront, providing close-up views of the harbor and Hong Kong Island with its skyscrapers. After dark, this is a wonderful romantic stroll, with the lights of Hong Kong Island shimmering across the water. **A bonus:** Every evening at 8pm, Hong Kong puts on a spectacular laser-and-light show projected from skyscrapers on both sides of the harbor. The best place to see this colorful extravaganza? On the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront. See p. 211.
- **Get Cultured at the Hong Kong Cultural Center:** Free family shows on Saturdays from 3 to 5pm, which may feature Chinese dance, a magic show, or music, and Thursday Happy Hour from 6 to 7pm spotlighting local groups performing Chinese classical music, puppetry, and other acts, are great entertainment at a price that can't be beat. See p. 211.
- **Imbibe at Happy Hour at a British Pub:** To save money engaged in our favorite sport (we are talking darts here, aren't we?), end a busy day of sightseeing and shopping by rubbing elbows with Hong Kong's working population as they take advantage of happy-hour prices in British pubs throughout the city. Most pubs and bars offer a happy hour that can stretch on for hours, with two drinks for the price of one or drinks at reduced prices. See "The Bar, Pub & Lounge Scene" section of chapter 10, beginning on p. 244, for more on Hong Kong's pubs and bars.

6 THE BEST SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

- **Looking for Chinese Souvenirs:** Hong Kong has some great Chinese emporiums, selling vases, vase stands, porcelain figurines, chinaware, calligraphy brushes, birdcages, jade, jewelry, silk jackets, furniture, teas, and various Chinese crafts and products. See chapter 9.

- **Browsing Antiques Shops on Hollywood Road:** Whether you have thousands of dollars to spend on Ming dynasty heirlooms or just a couple of bucks for a snuff bottle, there's something for everyone in the dozens of antiques shops lining this famous Hong Kong Island road and from outdoor vendor stalls on nearby Cat Street. A sightseeing bonus is Man Mo Temple (p. 183), Hong Kong's oldest temple, on Hollywood Road. See p. 203 and the "Antiques & Collectibles" section of chapter 9, beginning on p. 223.
- **Window-Shopping on Nathan Road:** Open-fronted clothing boutiques, jewelry stores, camera shops, tailors, tourists from around the world, international cuisine, huge neon signs, and whirling traffic combine to make this boulevard Hong Kong's most famous shopping street. See p. 212.
- **Feeling Groovy at Shanghai Tang:** This 1930s-style Chinese department store is oh-so-chic, with lime-green- or fuchsia-colored jackets, 1930s reproduction home decor, and more. The shopping bag that comes with your purchase is a bonus—just way too cool—and the shop's free postcards are also pretty fab. See p. 227.
- **Bargaining at a Street Market:** Hong Kong has more street markets than you can shake a stick at, located on both

sides of the harbor and in operation from morning to night. Most famous is Temple Street Night Market, where you can shop for casual clothing, music, toys, and accessories; enjoy a meal at a *dai pai dong* (roadside food stall); watch amateur street musicians; and have your fortune told. See p. 233.

- **Bargain-Hunting in Stanley:** Stall after stall of casual wear, silk clothing, tennis shoes, accessories, and souvenirs and crafts imported from China make this a shopper's paradise. And after a day of bargaining, I like to recuperate in one of Stanley's trendy yet casual restaurants. See p. 234.
- **Shopping for Everything at a Mall:** Hong Kong is famous for its shopping malls, and with good reason. Ranging from humongous affairs like Harbour City to chic, high-end complexes like ifc mall, shopping malls are great escapes on humid or rainy days and offer everything from clothing and toys to electronics and antiques. See "Megamalls & Shopping Centers" in chapter 9, beginning on p. 235.
- **Visiting a Tailor:** Nothing beats the satisfaction of having something custom-made to fit you perfectly. If this is your dream, make a trek to a tailor one of your first priorities so that you'll have time for several fittings. See p. 236.

7 THE BEST ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

- **Running Free in Hong Kong's City Parks:** Hong Kong's parks are great destinations for families. Children can go swimming or explore playgrounds at Kowloon Park (including one with restored fortifications and cannon emplacements), see jaguars and monkeys at the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, and walk through an aviary at Hong Kong Park. See p. 186.
- **Cavorting with Mickey at Hong Kong Disneyland:** The smallest of the world's Disney properties, Hong Kong Disneyland nevertheless has the usual attractions, high-powered shows, and fireworks extravaganzas, as well as the world's only Fantasy Gardens, where kids can meet famous Disney characters. A must for families crossing all Disney properties off their to-do list. See p. 189.

- **Regressing to Childhood at Ocean Park:** Southeast Asia's largest oceanarium and fun park boasts one of the world's longest and fastest roller coasters among its many thrill rides; a great cable-car ride with breathtaking views of the South China Sea; and playgrounds just for kids. If it's wildlife you're wild about, you'll find the world's largest reef aquarium, a shark tank with an underwater pedestrian tunnel, a fascinating collection of weird and

wonderful goldfish, an aviary, pandas, and a dolphin and killer whale show. A must for kids of all ages. See p. 189.

- **Heading for the Beach:** Life's a beach at a number of Hong Kong Island destinations, but to make an excursion out of it, take a ferry (kids love that!) to one of the outlying islands like Cheung Chau or Lamma, where there are beaches with lifeguards, changing rooms, and showers. See p. 195, 267, and 269.

8 THE BEST OFFBEAT EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a Tram:** Take a double-decker tram ride from one end of Hong Kong Island to the other for an unparalleled view of life in the crowded city as you pass skyscrapers, street markets, traditional Chinese shops, and department stores. See p. 43.
- **Hopping Aboard the Central-Mid-Levels Escalator:** Hop aboard the world's longest covered people mover as it snakes its way uphill in a series of escalators. You can hop off at one of 29 exits to enjoy a drink or meal at one of the many establishments along its link, or take it to the top for a 20-minute ride. See p. 46.
- **Having Your Fortune Told:** Want to know about your future love life, marriage, family, or career? Consult one of Hong Kong's many fortune-tellers; those who speak English can be found at Man Mo Temple in the Western District, Wong Tai Sin temple, and the Tin Hau Temple near the Temple Street Night Market. See p. 183, 183, and 216, respectively.
- **Hearing the Birds Sing at Yuen Po Street Bird Garden:** See pampered

birds at this unusual garden, brought by their owners so they can sing and communicate with other birds on their daily outing. Vendors sell exotic birds, wooden birdcages, porcelain bird dishes, and other paraphernalia. See p. 187 and 210.

- **Escaping to the New Territories:** The New Territories are a vast area stretching from the densely populated Kowloon to the Chinese border. Almost half of Hong Kong's population is housed here in huge satellite towns, but pockets of rural life and preserved country parks remain. One of the best things to do is follow a self-guided hike that will take you past traditional Chinese homes, temples, and other buildings in a small village. See p. 255.
- **Hiking Across Lamma:** An excursion to this outlying island will do your soul good. Start with the 35-minute ferry trip, followed by a 90-minute hike across the island, perhaps some swimming at a beach, and finally a meal of fresh seafood at an open-air waterfront restaurant. See the "Lamma" section of chapter 11, beginning on p. 269.

Hong Kong in Depth

Like many destinations around the world, Hong Kong is a product of its geography, history, and people. With a population approaching seven million and a total land area less than half the size of Luxembourg (or Rhode Island), Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. The best place to appreciate this is atop Victoria Peak, where you can feast your eyes on Hong Kong's famous harbor and, as far as the eye can see, high-rise apartments and office buildings. If Hong Kong were a vast plain, it would be as ugly as Tokyo. But it's saved by undulating mountain peaks, which cover virtually all of Hong Kong and provide dramatic background to the cityscape and coastal areas. Indeed, viewed from Victoria Peak, Hong Kong is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Hong Kong offers visitors something highly unique—the chance to experience a vibrant Chinese city without sacrificing the comforts of home. To be sure, much of Hong Kong's Western fabric comes from the legacy left by the British, who ruled the colony until 1997, when it was handed back to China as a Special Administrative Region (thus the SAR abbreviation you'll see there and throughout this book). British influence is still evident everywhere, from Hong Kong's school system to its free-market economy, from its rugby teams to its double-decker buses, and from English pubs and tea in the afternoon to (my favorite) orderly queues. But though the city was molded by the British, it has always been, at heart, Chinese, with Chinese medicine shops, street vendors, lively dim sum restaurants, old men taking their caged birds for walks, and colorful festivals.

Hong Kong was founded as a place to conduct business and to trade, and it continues to serve that purpose both aggressively and successfully. Hong Kong is the “Wall Street of Asia,” with banking, international insurance, advertising, and publishing among its biggest industries. Hong Kong also boasts the world's eighth-largest trading economy and is one of the world's leading exporters of toys, garments, and watches. Little wonder, then, that as a duty-free port, Hong Kong attracts approximately 28 million visitors a year, making tourism one of its leading industries.

This chapter highlights how Hong Kong came to be the way it is today, providing, I hope, some insight for the experiences you will surely have of your own.

1 HONG KONG TODAY

Even though the 1997 handover is more than a decade gone, the most common question I get about Hong Kong is: “How much has Hong Kong changed?”

If it hadn't dominated the news, I doubt the average tourist would even notice there'd been a handover. Entry formalities for most nationalities remain unchanged.

English remains an official language, and the Hong Kong dollar, pegged to the U.S. dollar, remains legal tender. Scores of lanes, roads, and sites are still named after Hong Kong's former governors, and Queen Victoria's statue still graces Victoria Park. In hotels, restaurants, and shops that cater to tourists, it's business as usual.

Chinese Medicine for What Ails You

For most minor ailments, many Chinese are more likely to pay a visit to their neighborhood medicine store than see a doctor. Most traditional medicine stores cater solely to the practice of Chinese herbal medicine, with some cures dating back 2,000 years. The medicinal stock, however, includes much more than roots and plants—take a look inside one of Hong Kong's many medicinal shops and you'll find a bewildering array of jars and drawers containing everything from ginseng and deer's horn to fossilized bones and animal teeth. Deer's horn is said to be effective against fever; bones, teeth, and seashells are used as tranquilizers and cures for insomnia. In prescribing treatment, herbalists take into account the patient's overall mental and physical well-being in the belief that disease and illness are caused by an imbalance in bodily forces. In contrast to Western medicine, treatment is often preventive rather than remedial. Visitors particularly interested in traditional Chinese medicine will want to visit the **Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences** (p. 181).

Acupuncture is also alive and well in Hong Kong. With a history in China that goes back 4,000 years, acupuncture is based on 365 pressure points, which in turn act upon certain organs; slender, stainless-steel needles are used, which vary in length from 1.3 to 25 centimeters ($\frac{1}{2}$ –10 in.). Most acupuncturists also use moxa (dried mugwort), a slow-burning herb that applies gentle heat. I'm also a fan of foot reflexology, a treatment in which various pressure points in the foot—each one corresponding to a specific organ or body part such as the kidney, brain, colon, for example—are massaged to promote health.

Today, as before the handover, you'll see ducks hanging by their necks in restaurant windows, bamboo scaffolding, herbal-medicine shops, street-side markets, Chinese characters on huge neon signs, wooden fishing boats, shrines to the kitchen god, fortune-tellers, temples, laundry fluttering from bamboo poles, and dim sum trolleys; you'll still hear the click-clack of mah-jongg tiles and the complexities of Cantonese. All these sensory experiences create an atmosphere that has always been undeniably Chinese.

The most visible difference after the handover was the immediate replacement of the Union Jack and colonial Hong Kong flag with China's starred flag and the new Hong Kong Special Administrative

Region's flag emblazoned with the baubinia flower. In addition, new coins bearing the baubinia were minted (the old coins with the queen's head remain valid but are being snapped up by collectors) and new stamps were issued. The words "Royal" and "ER" (Elizabeth Regina) disappeared throughout Hong Kong, along with royal crests, crowns, and coats of arms. The police sported new badges.

Of course, the British population also noticeably declined after the handover (dropping from more than 20,000 in 1998 to less than 14,000 by 2005), due primarily to the completion of large construction projects such as the new airport, the departure of the British military, and stricter regulations making it more difficult for

casual workers to remain in the SAR. Although the number of U.K. residents was never huge (less than 2% before the handover), British presence loomed understandably larger when Hong Kong was a colony.

In my opinion, the biggest change since the handover is that Hong Kong seems even more Chinese, with more in common with Shenzhen across the Chinese border than with its former colonizer. Hong Kong is overwhelmingly Chinese—some 95% of its residents are Chinese, more than half of whom were born in Hong Kong. Most Hong Kong residents (referred to as Hongkongers in the local press) are Cantonese from southern China, the area just beyond Hong Kong's border—hence, Cantonese is the most widely spoken language of the region. But the Chinese themselves are a diverse people, and today Hongkongers hail from different parts of China, with the city's many Chinese restaurants specializing in Cantonese, Sichuan, Chiu Chow, Pekingese, Shanghaiese, and other regional foods serving as delicious testaments of the city's diversity.

Of course, Hong Kong has more links now—financially and emotionally—with mainland China than it ever had in the past. Tourists from Europe, North America, and Japan are now outnumbered by visitors from mainland China, especially since the 2003 introduction of relaxed travel laws that eliminated the requirement that they visit Hong Kong only in tour groups, thereby allowing them to travel to Hong Kong on their own. Today, mainland Chinese make up more than half of all visitor arrivals into Hong Kong.

Perhaps most striking about Hong Kong since the handover is that it suffers from an identity crisis: What should be its role in a greater China? Long serving as the manufacturing liaison between China and the rest of the world, Hong Kong is now challenged by a dazzling, dynamic, confident Shanghai. Hong Kong

manufacturers have moved across the border to Shenzhen to take advantage of lower production costs. Guangzhou threatens to take over Hong Kong's role as a transportation hub. Pollution, primarily from rapid industrial development in the Pearl River Delta, has reached an all-time high, threatening not only the health of its citizens but also Hong Kong's status as a major tourist destination. Even diminutive Macau, touted as Asia's Las Vegas, now challenges Hong Kong's historic role as the region's number-one tourist destination, attracting more annual visitors, particularly from the mainland.

All these issues—worsening pollution, the high cost of living in Hong Kong compared to China, a growing tendency for foreign companies to base their workers on the mainland, and the lure of job opportunities in Macau—have led to a decline of professionals living in Hong Kong, both foreign and Chinese. In fact, even though Hong Kong still allows a quota of 150 mainlanders to migrate daily, fewer than that now take up the offer, with young arrivals accounting for fewer than 25% of the migrants.

But if you ask me, Hong Kong isn't going to fade away as a global capital any time soon. The economy is on a rebound from the damage done by SARS and it seems increasingly clear that Hong Kong's future lies as a financial center, not as a low-cost manufacturing base it enjoyed in the past. Average hotel occupancy rates remain high, due largely to tourism from the mainland, and Hong Kong's reputation as a convention destination and a hub for international business. Several new tourist attractions, shopping centers, and posh hotels have recently opened, new restaurants are blossoming all over the city, and the nightlife scene has never been more robust.

I'm heartened, too, by a new generation of Hongkongers who show a heightened awareness for social issues that were largely

ignored by the older generation—indicative, perhaps, of greater freedoms since the handover but also of a greater global awareness. These issues include concerns for the environment, Hong Kong's cultural and architectural heritage, education, and social equity. Grass-roots movements are growing to fight pollution (<http://cleartheair.org.hk>), protect Victoria Harbour from excessive land reclamation (www.harbourprotection.org and www.friendsoftheharbour.org), and even to save the Central Street Market on Graham Street from developers (www.savethestreetmarket.com). Hopefully, growing public sentiment will curb the unbridled development that has ruled Hong Kong in the past and nudge it toward being a model city for the rest of China.

Still, no one can predict the future, as Hong Kong has always been a city in

transformation. The Hong Kong I am writing about now is not the same city that existed just a few short years ago and is not the Hong Kong you'll probably experience when you go there. Changes occur at a dizzying pace here: Relatively new buildings are torn down to make way for even newer, shinier skyscrapers; whole neighborhoods are obliterated in the name of progress; reclaimed land is taken from an ever-shrinking harbor; and traditional villages are replaced with satellite towns. Hong Kong's city skyline has surged upward and outward so dramatically since my first visit in 1983, it sometimes seems like decades must have elapsed each time I see it anew. Change is commonplace, and yet it's hard not to lament the loss of familiar things that suddenly vanish; it's harder still not to brood over what's likely to come.

2 LOOKING BACK AT HONG KONG

Although some people might erroneously believe that Hong Kong's history began after the British took control of the island in 1842, it actually began millennia before that. Stone, bronze, and iron artifacts indicate that Hong Kong Island has been inhabited for at least 6,000 years, and more than 100 Neolithic and Bronze Age sites have been identified throughout the territory, including a 5,000-year-old kiln unearthed on Lantau island, 4,000-year-old burial grounds, a 2,000-year-old brick tomb, and Neolithic rock carvings.

EARLY SETTLERS

Although the area now called Hong Kong became part of the Chinese empire some 2,230 years ago during the Qin dynasty, it was not until after the 12th century that the area became widely settled. Foremost were settler families, known as the Five Great Clans, who built walled cities complete with moats and gatehouses to protect their homes against roving pirates. First to arrive was the Tang clan, who built at least five walled villages and maintained imperial connections with Beijing for 800 years,

Please Don't Pass the Bread

In 1857, a popular but disgruntled Chinese baker, Cheong Ah Lum, was accused of adding arsenic to his bread, poisoning nearly 300 Europeans in retaliation for the Opium Wars. He was acquitted but was deported to China.

16 until the end of the 19th century. Several of these walled villages remain, along with study halls where members of the Tang clan studied for exams that would gain them coveted entrance into the Imperial Civil Service; you can visit these and other historic buildings built by the Tang clan by walking the Lung Yeuk Tau and the Ping Shan heritage trails (see p. 259 and 261 in chapter 11). The other four clans were the Hau, Pang, Liu, and Man.

The clans were joined by the Tanka people, who lived their whole lives on boats anchored in sheltered bays throughout the territory and were employed as pearl divers in Tolo Harbour; and by the Hoklos, another seafaring people who established coastal fishing villages. They were followed by the Hakka, primarily farmers who cultivated rice, pineapples, and tea. Garrison troops were stationed at Tuen Mun and Tai Po (now major satellite towns in the New Territories) to guard the pearls harvested from Tolo Harbour by Tanka divers, while forts to guard against invasion were constructed at Tung Chung and other coastal regions. By the end of the 19th century, as many as 100,000 people resided in what is now the New Territories.

TEA & OPIUM

Hong Kong's modern history, however, begins a mere 160-some years ago, under

conditions that were far less than honorable. During the 1800s, the British were extremely eager to obtain Chinese silk and tea. Tea had become Britain's national drink, but the only place it was grown was China, from which it was being imported to England in huge quantities. The British tried to engage the Chinese in trade, but the Chinese were not interested in anything offered—only silver bullion would do. The Chinese also forbade the British to enter their kingdom, with the exception of a small trading depot in Canton.

But then the British hit upon a commodity that proved irresistible—opium. Grown in India and exported by the British East India Company, this powerful drug enslaved everyone from poor peasants to the nobility, and before long, China was being drained of silver, traded to support a drug habit. The Chinese emperor, fearful of the damage being wreaked on Chinese society and alarmed by his country's loss of silver, declared a ban on opium imports in the 1830s. The British simply ignored the ban, smuggling their illegal cargo up the Pearl River. In 1839, with opium now India's largest export, the Chinese confiscated the British opium stockpiles in Canton and destroyed them. The British responded by declaring war and then winning the struggle. As a result of this first Opium War, waged until

DATELINE

- **4,000–1,500 B.C.** Early settlers of Asian Mongoloid stock spread throughout South China, including Hong Kong, leaving behind Neolithic artifacts ranging from pottery and stone tools to burial grounds.
- **221 B.C.** Hong Kong becomes part of the Chinese empire with unification of

China by the first emperor of Qin.

- **960–1500s** Pirates roam the seas around Hong Kong; Han Chinese settle in what is now the New Territories.
- **1514** Portuguese traders establish a base in southern China.
- **1839** The Chinese emperor attempts to abolish the opium trade and destroys the British opium stockpile;

the Royal Navy retaliates by firing on Chinese war junks, starting the first Opium War.

- **1841** British naval Capt. Charles Elliot seizes Hong Kong Island and declares himself governor.
- **1842** The first Opium War ends in the Treaty of Nanking, ceding Hong Kong Island to Britain in perpetuity.

Impressions

A barren Island, with hardly a House upon it.

—Lord Palmerston, Britain's Foreign Secretary, in a letter to Hong Kong's first British administrator, Sir Charles Elliot, 1841

1842, China was forced to open new ports for trade, agree to an exorbitant cash indemnity for the loss of the destroyed opium, and cede Hong Kong Island in perpetuity to the British in a treaty China never recognized. Not only was this Treaty of Nanking demoralizing to the Chinese, but it also ensured that their country would remain open to the curse of opium. And although opium was the cause of the war, it was never even mentioned in the Treaty of Nanking.

Following the second Opium War, waged from 1856 to 1858 as the British sought more trading ports and pushed for the legalization of the opium trade, the tip of Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutters Island were added to the colony in 1860. In 1898, Britain decided it needed more land for defense and dictated a lease for the New Territories (despite the 100,000 Chinese living there) and more than 200 outlying islands, for 99 years, until 1997. The only piece of land the British didn't acquire was a Chinese fort, constructed in 1847 to defend Kowloon after the British

takeover of Hong Kong Island (today the site is the Kowloon Walled City Park; see p. 187).

THE PROMISED LAND

When the British took control of Hong Kong Island in 1842, some 7,000 Chinese lived on the island in farming and fishing communities. Although Hong Kong had a deep and protected harbor, no one, including the Chinese, was much interested in the island itself, and many in the British government considered its acquisition an embarrassing mistake. No sooner had the island been settled than a typhoon tore through the settlement. Repairs were demolished only 5 days later by another tropical storm. Fever and fire followed, and the weather grew so oppressive and humid that the colony seemed to be enveloped in a giant steam bath.

Yet, while the number of headstones in the hillside cemetery multiplied, so too did the number of the living, especially as word spread of the fortunes being made by merchants who had established trading houses

■ **1846** Hong Kong's population is 24,000. First horse races held at Happy Valley.

■ **1856** Chinese officials searching for pirates arrest the crew of a British ship, prompting the second Opium War, which ends in 1858.

■ **1860** Victorious in the second Opium War and seeking a foothold on the mainland, Britain forces China to cede Kowloon Peninsula and

Stonecutters Island to the British in perpetuity in the First Convention of Peking. Population reaches 94,000.

■ **1865** Hongkong and Shanghai Bank founded.

■ **1888** The Victoria Peak Tram is completed, reducing the journey to the Peak from 3 hours to 8 minutes.

■ **1898** With the signing of the Second Convention of Peking, the New Territories are leased to Britain for 99

years, for which Britain pays nothing.

■ **1900** Hong Kong's population is 263,000.

■ **1904** The street tramway system is constructed along the waterfront on Hong Kong Island.

■ **1911** The Manchu dynasty is overthrown by Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist revolution; refugees flood into Hong Kong.

continues

You've Got to Be Kidding!

The Chinnery, a bar in the Mandarin Oriental hotel with more than 100 single-malt whiskeys, remained off-limits to women until, incredibly enough, 1990.

for their booming trade in silk, tea, spices, and opium. By the turn of the 20th century, the number had swelled to 300,000. British families lived along the waterfront and called it Victoria (now the Central District), slowly moving up toward the cooler temperatures of Victoria Peak (still home of stately mansions, Victoria Peak is one of Hong Kong's main attractions; see p. 172). The Chinese, barred from occupying the Peak and other European-only neighborhoods, resided in a shantytown farther west, now called the Western District. Conditions were so appalling that when the bubonic plague struck in 1894, it raged for almost 30 years, claiming more than 20,000 lives (the Pathological Institute, established to combat the plague, now houses the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences; see p. 181).

Hong Kong's growth in the 20th century was no less astonishing in terms of both trade and population. In 1900, approximately 11,000 ships pulled into Hong Kong harbor; just a decade later, the number had doubled. In 1911, the

overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in China sent a flood of refugees into Hong Kong, followed, in 1938, by an additional 500,000 immigrants. Another mass influx of Chinese refugees arrived after the fall of Shanghai to the Communists in 1950. From this last wave of immigrants, including many Shanghai industrialists, emerged the beginnings of Hong Kong's now-famous textile industry. Throughout the 1950s, Hong Kong grew as a manufacturing and industrial center for electronics, watches, and other low-priced goods. By 1956, Hong Kong's population stood at 2.5 million.

CHANGE, UNREST & THE LAST OF THE BRITISH

As a British colony, Hong Kong was administered by a governor appointed by the queen. There were no free elections, and the Legislative Council, Hong Kong's main governing body (popularly referred to as Legco), was also appointed. As 1997 drew nearer, marking the end of the 99-year lease on the New Territories, it

- **1925** Hong Kong's first and only general strike; Nationalists and Communists join in a United Front, organizing anti-foreign strikes and boycotts in China that spread to Hong Kong, paralyzing the economy.
- **1938** Japan seizes Canton; Hong Kong becomes an arms-smuggling route for the Nationalist forces, now under Chiang Kai-shek;
- 500,000 Chinese refugees flee into Hong Kong.
- **1941** Japanese forces occupy Hong Kong and begin deporting residents to the mainland to ease food and housing shortages.
- **1945** The British resume control of Hong Kong following World War II. Hong Kong's prewar population of 1.6 million now stands at 600,000.
- **1949** Mao declares the founding of the People's Republic; a subsequent flood of refugees to Hong Kong causes the Communist government to seal the Chinese-Hong Kong border.
- **1950** Mass influx of refugees continues following the fall of Shanghai to the Communists. Population of Hong Kong reaches two million.

soon became clear that China had no intention of renewing the lease or renegotiating a treaty it had never recognized in the first place.

Finally, after more than 20 rounds of talks and meetings, Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, agreeing to transfer all of Hong Kong to Chinese Communist rule on June 30, 1997. China declared Hong Kong a Special Administrative Region, granting it special privileges under a "one country, two systems" policy that guaranteed Hong Kong's capitalist lifestyle and social system for at least 50 years after 1997. Under provisions set forth in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and in Hong Kong's constitution, the Basic Law, Hong Kong would remain largely self-governing, and its people would retain rights to their property, to freedom of speech, and to travel freely in and out of Hong Kong. Throughout the negotiations, however, Hong Kong's residents were never consulted.

Then came the events of June 1989 in Tiananmen Square, in which hundreds of students and demonstrators were attacked by Chinese authorities in a brutal move to quash the pro-democracy movement. China's response to the uprising sent shock waves through Hong Kong and led to rounds of angry protest.

Those who could emigrate did so, primarily to Australia, Canada, and the United States; at its height, more than 1,000 people were emigrating each week. After all, nearly half of Hong Kong's Chinese are refugees from the mainland, and as one Hong Kong Chinese told me, his family fled to escape Communist rule, so why should he stay after 1997? Approximately 90% of Hong Kong's Chinese, however, remained confident (or at least hopeful) that China realized it had more to gain by keeping Hong Kong as it was. In a move that angered Communist China, Hong Kong Chinese were granted more political autonomy during the last few years of the colony's existence than in all the preceding 150 years, including various democratic reforms such as elections for the Legislative Council. Some early emigrants began returning to Hong Kong, confident they could do better in their native country and willing to wait to see how life might change under the Chinese. Now they had a safety net: foreign passports.

On June 30, 1997, the last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, sailed out of Hong Kong, four thousand Chinese troops marched in, and Tung Chee-hwa, appointed by Beijing, became the new chief executive of the Special Administrative Region (SAR). Mainland China celebrated

- **1953** Following a huge fire in a squatter camp, Hong Kong begins an ambitious public housing program to house its still-growing population of refugees.
- **1966** A fare increase on the Star Ferry prompts clashes between Chinese and the police.
- **1967** The Cultural Revolution in China leads to pro-Communist riots in Hong

Kong; 51 people are killed, and hundreds more are wounded or arrested in the fighting.

- **1972** First cross-harbor tunnel opens.
- **1979** Establishment of Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway subway system. Hong Kong governor Sir Murray MacLehose goes to Beijing for the first Sino-British discussions on the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule.

- **1981** British Parliament downgrades Hong Kong passports to prevent an exodus of Hong Kong Chinese to the United Kingdom.
- **1984** China and Britain sign the Joint Declaration for the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997.
- **1989** Events at Tiananmen Square in Beijing send shock waves through Hong Kong. Some 80,000 demonstrators

continues

20 the event as the end of more than 100 years of shame. On July 1, it dissolved Hong Kong's elected Legislative Council and replaced it with a handpicked Provisional Legislature until a new Legislative Council, with both elected and appointed members, could be formed.

AFTER THE HANDOVER

Hong Kong's first elections under Chinese rule, held in May 1998, allowed for one-third of the 60-member legislature to be elected by direct popular vote, with the Democrats—Hong Kong's largest party—winning the most seats (although full suffrage, with a fully elected legislature and chief executive, is declared a goal in the Basic Law, it has no timetable). Meanwhile, like the rest of Asia, Hong Kong was hit hard by economic recession, made worse by manufacturers moving across the Chinese border into Shenzhen to take advantage of cheaper land prices and cheaper wages. Approval ratings for the government plunged, especially after unemployment hit 4.5%, a 15-year high.

After the handover, the SAR began allowing 150 mainland Chinese to migrate to Hong Kong every day—more than 54,000 a year. In January 1999, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal ruled that the Basic Law also granted automatic Hong Kong residency to any mainland

Chinese with one Hong Kong parent, even if that parent gained residency after the child was born. However, fearing an explosion of unplanned population growth, with an estimated 1.6 million additional qualified immigrants potentially pouring in from the mainland, coupled with increased unemployment, Tung Chee-hwa asked Beijing to review the immigration ruling, a move interpreted by critics as a threat to the judicial independence of the SAR. China responded by overturning the immigration judgment issued by Hong Kong's highest court and providing a narrower interpretation of the Basic Law, thereby cutting the number of potential new immigrants over the next decade from 1.6 million to about 200,000. Only mainland children who were born *after* a parent received legal resident status were given a "right of abode." In January 2002, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal affirmed the Chinese government's reversal of its earlier ruling and ordered 7,300 "unlawful migrants" to leave the SAR by March 31. Only 3,000 complied; the remaining 4,300 were forcibly removed to the mainland by police.

But the biggest rift in Hong Kong–Beijing relations came in 2003, when an anti-subversion bill was introduced by Tung Chee-hwa's Beijing-backed administration. The measure, meant to outlaw

brave a typhoon in support of the pro-democracy uprising.

- **1997** Britain transfers Hong Kong to Communist China, ending 156 years of British rule. Hong Kong's first outbreak of avian flu at the end of the year, killing six people, prompts the new government to order the slaughter of 1.3 million chickens.

- **2003** An outbreak in Hong Kong of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) spreads around the globe, infecting more than 8,000 people and delivering a shocking blow to Hong Kong's economy.

- **2007** Hong Kong becomes mostly smoke-free, including its restaurants; bars are given until July 2009 to comply

with the smoking ban. China announces it will allow Hong Kong to directly elect its chief executive in 2017 and all its Legislative Council members in 2020.

SARS & Avian Flu

While no one can be certain that new outbreaks of SARS and avian flu will never happen (the last outbreaks for both in Hong Kong occurred in 2003), Hong Kong is ready. The temperatures of all passengers passing through border controls—at the Hong Kong airport, the border checkpoint between Hong Kong and mainland China, and ferry terminals serving Macau and beyond—are thermally scanned for fever, and hand sanitizers are strategically placed throughout Hong Kong.

subversion, sedition, treason, the theft of state secrets, and other crimes against the state, brought more than 500,000 protesters to Hong Kong's streets on July 1, 2003, making it the SAR's largest protest since the Tiananmen Square massacre. Opponents of the measure said it would erode political freedoms and curb free speech. Although Tung Chee-wa withdrew the bill, some critics contend he did so only after a key ally quit his Cabinet, leaving him with insufficient support to enact the law.

Another blow to Hong Kong democracy came in 2004, when Beijing ruled against a public election for Hong Kong's chief executive in 2007 and declared that there would be no universal suffrage for the Legislative Council election slated for 2008. Hong Kong's pro-democracy leaders responded that Hong Kong's autonomy had been violated, with the core principals of the Basic Law and the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration—that Hong Kong would be ruled by the people of Hong Kong—replaced by a Beijing dictatorship. In September 2004, elections for the 60-member Legislative Council allowed an increase in the number of elected members from 24 to 30.

The biggest news to garner international attention was not Hong Kong's long struggle for autonomy, but rather its role in the eruption of a mysterious, flu-like illness in the spring of 2003. Spreading

from a Hong Kong hotel, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) infected more than 8,000 people in 29 countries over the next few months, killing more than 700 of them. In Hong Kong, which together with China suffered the most, the illness sickened 1,775 people and claimed almost 300 lives. Needless to say, SARS was a major blow to Hong Kong's economy, reducing the city to a tourist ghost town and costing it \$4 to \$6 billion in retail trade and business. Unemployment hit 8.7%, the highest since the statistic was first recorded in 1981. To encourage tourism and boost the local economy, Hong Kong turned to action film star Jackie Chan as its international spokesperson.

In March 2005, Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's only leader since the handover, unexpectedly announced his resignation, citing ill health and igniting rumors that Beijing had forced his exit in an effort to curb Hong Kong's growing discontent and resultant push for greater democracy. Donald Tsang, a career civil servant educated at Harvard and backed by Beijing, was chosen to finish out Tung's remaining 2 years of office and in 2007 was selected for an additional 5-year term. In 2007, China finally announced it will allow Hong Kong to directly elect its own leader in 2017 and all its lawmakers by 2020. More than 20 years after the handover, Hong Kong will finally be a democracy.

3 THE LAY OF THE LAND

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), with a population of 6.9 million, is located at the southeastern tip of the People's Republic of China, some 1,996km (1,237 miles) south of Beijing; it lies just south of the tropic of Cancer at about the same latitude as Mexico City, the Bahamas, and Hawaii. Some people who have never been to Asia may think of Hong Kong as an island—and they'd be right if it were 1842. But not long after the colony was first established on Hong Kong Island, the British felt the need to expand, which they did by acquiring more land across Victoria Harbour on the Chinese mainland. Today, Hong Kong Island is just a small part of the SAR, which covers 1,100 sq. km (425 sq. miles) and measures 49km (30 miles) north to south and 73km (45 miles) east to west—much of it mountainous.

Hong Kong can be divided into four distinct parts: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, the New Territories, and the outlying islands. On **Hong Kong Island** are the Central District (Hong Kong's main financial and business district and usually referred to simply as Central), the Western District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay, all on the island's north side. Hong Kong Island is the home to such major attractions as Hong Kong Park, Victoria Peak, Stanley Market, Ocean Park, Aberdeen, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, and several shopping malls.

Across Victoria Harbour, at the tip of **Kowloon Peninsula**, is Tsim Sha Tsui and its many hotels, restaurants, museums, and

shops, as well as Tsim Sha Tsui East, and the Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok districts.

The **New Territories** are by far the largest area, stretching north of Kowloon all the way to the Chinese border. Once a vast area of peaceful little villages, fields, and duck farms, the New Territories in the past few decades have witnessed a remarkable mushrooming of satellite towns with huge public-housing projects. Sha Tin, with a population close to 700,000 and home to one of Hong Kong's two horse-racing tracks, is the largest; in all, the New Territories house approximately half of the SAR's population. And yet, much of the New Territories remains open and uninhabited. Close to 70% of Hong Kong's total land-mass is rural, with 23 country parks and 14 nature reserves accounting for more than 40% of Hong Kong's land area.

As for Hong Kong's 260 **outlying islands**, most are barren and uninhabited; those that aren't lend themselves to excellent exploration into Hong Kong's past. Lantau, Lamma, and Cheung Chau are three of the region's best known and most easily accessible islands, where a gentler, slower, and more peaceful life prevails. Lantau, boasting the world's largest seated bronze Buddha (located at a monastery noted for its vegetarian meals), is the most popular destination, accessible by ferry and cable car. Lamma is famous for its open-air waterfront seafood restaurants, beaches, pleasant hiking trails, and expat community, while Cheung Chau makes for a pleasant half-day excursion with its lively traditional village, boat population, and beach.

4 HONG KONG'S ARCHITECTURE

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

If you never ventured much beyond the waterfronts of Victoria Harbour, you might easily believe that Hong Kong is

nothing more than chrome-and-glass skyscrapers, huge housing projects, shopping malls, and miles of glowing neon signs heralding countless open-fronted shops.

Feng Shui: Restoring a Balance with Nature

Feng shui, which translates literally as “wind water,” is an ancient method of divination in which harmony is achieved with the spirits of nature. Virtually every Hong Kong Chinese believes that before a house or building can be erected, a tree chopped down, or a boulder moved, a geomancer must be called in to make certain that the spirits inhabiting the place aren’t disturbed. The geomancer, who uses a compasslike device as an aid, determines the alignment of walls, doors, desks, and even beds, so as not to provoke the anger of the spirits residing there. He does this by achieving a balance among the eight elements of nature—heaven, earth, hills, wind, fire, thunder, rain, and ocean. Also considered are the spirits of yin (male-active) and yang (female-passive) forces that control our world.

Even non-Chinese-owned companies in Hong Kong comply with feng shui principles, if only to appease their Chinese employees. But it doesn’t hurt to be safe; tales abound of ill luck befalling those working or living inside buildings that ignored the needs of resident spirits.

Since facing the water is considered excellent feng shui, when the Regent Hotel (now the InterContinental) was constructed, it incorporated a huge glass window overlooking the harbor (which served the dual purpose of allowing the mythical nine Kowloon dragons to pass through the building on their way to the harbor to bathe). The next best thing, if you can’t look out over water, is to bring the water inside, which is why many offices, shops, and restaurants have aquariums. Another way to deflect evil influences is to hang a small, eight-sided mirror outside your window. Other Chinese touches are incorporated into modern architecture—the HSBC bank (formerly the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank), for example, is guarded by a pair of bronze lions, protecting its occupants.

Hong Kong was inhabited long before the British arrived, and some precolonial Chinese architecture still survives in the hinterlands. Several rural villages boast buildings and temples with fine woodcarving and are examples of centuries-old Chinese craftsmanship. Especially fascinating are the walled villages in the **New Territories**, a few of which are still inhabited, and one of which has been meticulously restored and turned into a museum of traditional lifestyles (see p. 255 in chapter 11). These villages were built from the 14th through the 17th centuries by clan families to protect themselves from roving bandits, invaders, and even wild tigers. A

few of the clans’ ancestral halls, study halls, homes, and courtyard mansions also survive, best seen on walks along the **Lung Yeuk Tau** and **Ping Shan Heritage Trails** in the New Territories (also in chapter 11).

Also surviving are some of Hong Kong’s temples, most famous of which is **Man Mo** on Hollywood Road, built in the 1840s and dedicated to the gods of literature and war (p. 183). Not quite as old but surrounded by a colorful street market is the **Man Mo Temple** in Tai Po (p. 259). Remains of old forts and garrison towns erected by the Chinese government during the Ming and Qing dynasties include

24 foundation remnants in what is now the **Kowloon Walled City Park** (p. 187).

Some colonial architecture also remains. Early Western-style buildings, with their long verandas and wooden shutters, were built with local materials and designed to accommodate the colony's humid climate. The **Flagstaff House**, in Hong Kong Park, is the oldest surviving colonial-style building, constructed in 1846 and now home to a museum of tea ware (p. 182). The **former Supreme Court** in Central features Greco-Victorian columns and Chinese wood beam eaves. Today it houses the Legislative Council chamber. Other imposing colonial buildings on Hong Kong Island include the **former French Mission Building**, **St. John's Cathedral**, the **Western Market**, and the **Central Police Station** (see Walking Tours 1 & 2 in chapter 8 for more information on these buildings).

On the Kowloon side, one of Hong Kong's most familiar landmarks is the 1921 **clock tower** next to the Star Ferry terminus at Tsim Sha Tsui; it is all that remains of the old railway station that once linked the colony with China and beyond. The **Hong Kong Observatory**, on a banyan-covered hill above Tsim Sha Tsui, is a handsome two-story structure with arched windows and long verandas. Built in 1883, it continues to monitor Hong Kong's weather but is closed to the public (you can catch a glimpse of it behind iron gates). The most imposing colonial structure in Tsim Sha Tsui, however, is undoubtedly the **former Marine Police Headquarters**, occupying a commanding position overlooking the harbor. It is presently undergoing a painstaking renovation that will transform it into a posh heritage hotel in late 2009.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Construction in Hong Kong has been going on at such a frenzied pace that if you

haven't been here in 20 years (or even 10), you probably won't recognize the skylines on both sides of the harbor. One of the first major changes to the skyline was the extension of the **Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre** on reclaimed land on the Wan Chai waterfront, boasting the world's largest plate-glass window and a three-tiered roof said to resemble a gull's wings in flight. The 78-story **Central Plaza**, located near the Wan Chai waterfront, boasts an Art Deco style with eye-catching nighttime lighting that changes color with each quarter-hour, thereby giving the time. The **HSBC bank**, designed by British architect Norman Foster, features entire floors suspended from steel masts and a 48m-tall (160-ft.) sun scoop on the roof that uses 480 mirrors to reflect sunlight down into the bank's atrium and public plaza. Atop Victoria Peak is the **Peak Tower**, topped by a crescent-shaped bowl not unlike a wok. But Hong Kong Island's tallest building is the 88-story **Two IFC** (International Finance Centre) tower beside Hong Kong station, which at 415m (1,362 ft.) was the fourth-tallest building in the world at its completion in 2003.

All of Hong Kong's present skyscrapers, however, will soon be eclipsed by new construction going on at **Union Square**, in West Kowloon next to Kowloon Station. The massive development will include three 75-story residential towers, one of Asia's largest indoor shopping malls, and a 108-story building housing the world's highest elevated hotel (a Ritz-Carlton) upon its completion in 2010.

Even though Hong Kong's structures are Western, they are built using bamboo scaffolding and constructed according to ancient Chinese beliefs, especially the 3,000-year-old Taoist principle of feng shui that allows humankind to live in peace with the environment and nature, ensuring good luck, prosperity, wealth, health, and happiness. Even today, most office and apartment buildings in Hong

Kong have been laid out in accordance to feng shui principles (see box “Feng Shui: Restoring a Balance with Nature”).

No discussion of Hong Kong’s buildings would be complete without a mention of its most prevalent structures: housing for its 6.9 million inhabitants. Because of Hong Kong’s dense population and limited land space, with more than 43,000 people per sq. km (.4 sq. mile) in Kowloon, Hong Kong has long been saddled with acute housing deficiencies. Just a few decades ago, in an area called Mong Kok in northwestern Kowloon, an astounding 652,910 people were packed in per square mile. One house designed for 12 people had 459 living in it, including 104 people who shared one room and four people who lived on the roof.

After 1953, when a huge fire left more than 50,000 squatters homeless, Hong Kong pursued one of the world’s most ambitious housing projects, with the aim of providing every Hong Kong family with a home of its own. By 1993, half of Hong Kong’s population lived in government-subsidized public housing, a higher proportion than anywhere else in the world (today, that number stands at about 30%, as new housing is constructed by the private sector).

Most public housing is clustered in the New Territories, in a forest of high-rises that leaves foreign visitors aghast. Each apartment building is at least 30 stories tall, containing about 1,000 apartments and 3,000 to 4,000 residents. Seven or eight apartment buildings comprise an

estate, which is like a small town with its own name, shopping center, recreational and sports facilities, playgrounds, schools, and social services. A typical subsidized apartment is indescribably small by Western standards—approximately 23 sq. m (250 sq. ft.), with a single window. It consists of a combination living room/bedroom, a kitchen nook, and bathroom, and is typically shared by a couple with one or two children. According to government figures, every household in Hong Kong has at least one TV; many have one for each member of the household, even if the house consists of only one or two rooms.

But as cramped, unimaginative, and sterile as these housing projects may seem, they’re a vast improvement over the way much of the population used to live and the way Hong Kong’s poorest live even to this day. An estimated 100,000 live in flats that have been divided into “cage homes,” tiered bunk beds encircled by wire mesh. As many as 30 occupants may inhabit a single flat.

Because of Hong Kong’s land value, even families who can afford private housing often live in what would be considered cramped quarters in the West. One young woman told me she lived in Tsim Sha Tsui in a 46-sq.m (500-sq.-ft.) flat, which she shared with four other members of her family. At the other end of the extreme, of course, are Hong Kong’s wealthy class, many with villas nestled on hills on Hong Kong Island or luxury apartments in ritzy developments like Discovery Bay on Lantau Island.

5 HONG KONG IN POPULAR CULTURE: BOOKS & FILM

BOOKS

If you want to read something about Hong Kong before setting out on your trip, good places to start are *A Concise History of Hong Kong* by John Carroll (Rowman &

Littlefield, 2007) or *A Modern History of Hong Kong* by Steve Tsang (I.B. Tauris, 2007), both of which give a thorough historical account of the colony’s ignoble beginnings through the 1997 handover. I

love looking at pictures of old Hong Kong, and especially fascinating is Nigel Cameron's *An Illustrated History of Hong Kong* (Oxford University Press, 1991), with photographs that show Hong Kong of yore and vividly illustrate how much the city has changed. An even more thorough pictorial history is presented in *Old Hong Kong* (FormAsia Books Ltd., 2002), edited by Trea Wiltshire and covering Hong Kong from 1860 through the June 1997 handover.

Life in the infamous Walled City is the subject of Greg Girard and Ian Lambor's *City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City* (Watermark Publications, 2003), complete with photographs of a life now vanished. Even though it remains slightly dated, one of my favorite books is Jan Morris's *Hong Kong* (Vintage, 1997), which traces the evolution of the British colony from its birth during the Opium Wars to just before the handover. This book gives a unique perspective on the workings of the former colony and imparts an astonishing wealth of information, making it fascinating armchair reading. Business travelers may want to pick up *Culture Shock! Hong Kong: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Marshall Cavendish, 2007) by Betty Wei and Elizabeth Li.

For an intimate view of Hong Kong, a longtime favorite is *Hong Kong: Borrowed Place, Borrowed Time* (Praeger, 1968) by Richard Hughes, a foreign correspondent who lived in Hong Kong for several decades and was said to have been the inspiration for several characters in John Le Carré's novels. Similarly, another exceptional read is Austin Coates's *Myself a Mandarin* (Oxford in Asia Paperbacks, 1988), which gives a passionate firsthand account of the author's experiences working as a Special Magistrate in Hong Kong's New Territories. *Gweilo: Memories of a Hong Kong Childhood* (Bantam, 2005), written by Martin Booth just before he died of a brain tumor, is a poignant memoir

of growing up in Hong Kong in the 1950s. Enjoying unrestricted freedom, Booth as a child even entered the notorious Kowloon Walled City.

A great accompaniment to any guidebook is *Travelers' Tales Hong Kong* (Travelers' Tales, 2000), an anthology edited by James O'Reilly and filled with personal accounts and essays by well-known writers about life in Hong Kong, including those by Jan Morris, Bruce Chatwin, and Paul Theroux. *Hong Kong: Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth* (Oxford University Press, 1996), edited by Barbara-Sue White, is a collection of poems, short stories, novel excerpts, letters, speeches, and diaries with ties to Hong Kong, written by both Chinese and people of other nationalities from all walks of life—soldiers, doctors, politicians, writers, and others, from Queen Victoria to Jules Verne and ranging from historical accounts dating from the Song dynasty to the present day.

Fictional accounts that depict the character of Hong Kong are the classics: Richard Mason's *The World of Suzie Wong* (World Pub., 1957) and Han Suyin's *A Many-Splendored Thing* (Little Brown, 1952), an autobiographical account of life in Hong Kong shortly after the Chinese revolution in the late 1940s and early 1950s. James Clavell's *Tai-Pan* (Atheneum, 1966) is a novel about Hong Kong's beginnings; *Noble House* (Delacorte Press, 1981) is its sequel. John Le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* (G. K. Hall, 1977) details the activities of George Smiley, acting head of the British Secret Service in Hong Kong. *The Monkey King*, by Timothy Mo (Paddleless Press, 2000), is a hilarious account of a Macau native who marries into a dysfunctional Cantonese family in 1950s Hong Kong. Paul Theroux's *Kowloon Tong* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997) is the story of a British expatriate born and raised in Hong Kong but who lives as an outsider, never learning Chinese and failing to understand what's at stake

when he's offered a large sum of money by a Chinese mainlander for his family business just before the handover. *Fragrant Harbor* (Penguin, 2003) by John Lanchester is a historical novel that brings to life Hong Kong from the 1930s to the present, as seen through the eyes of an Englishman in love with a Chinese woman and spying for the Empire during the Japanese occupation. Finally, in *The Train to Lo Wu* (Dial Press, 2006), author Jess Row gives food for thought in seven short stories about dysfunctional foreigners and Chinese struggling to make sense of life in today's Hong Kong.

FILMS

Several classic novels, described above, were made into movies, including *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), shot mainly in Wan Chai and starring William Holden and Nancy Kwan; *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* (1955), also starring Holden and considered the first Hollywood film to put Hong Kong on the international movie map; and *Tai Pan* (1986), shot entirely on location in Hong Kong, Macau, and the Pearl River Delta.

Popular movies shot in Hong Kong have included three films in the 007 series: *You Only Live Twice* (1967), *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974), and *Die Another Day* (2002). Other movies with scenes shot in Hong Kong include *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1967), *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (2003), *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (2005),

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer (2007), and *The Dark Knight* (2008).

Of course, you can't talk about films without mentioning Hong Kong's long tradition of kung fu movies. The film that introduced martial arts to the Western world was *Enter the Dragon* (1973) starring Bruce Lee. Jackie Chan, who has long served as an ambassador for Hong Kong tourism, directed and starred in *Police Story* (1985), which shows the actor performing his own stunts in many memorable large-scale action scenes. Chan returns to Hong Kong in scenes appearing in *Rush Hour 2* (2001).

As for local filmmakers, probably none is as internationally known as Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, who first hit the international radar with his *Chungking Express* (1994), which follows the lives of two cops in Hong Kong and the mysterious women they fall in love with. *In the Mood for Love* (2000), set in 1960s Hong Kong, is a slow-paced film about a man and a woman who rent rooms next to each other; although it doesn't provide any views of Hong Kong, I think it's worth seeing just for the different cheongsams (Chinese-style dresses) actress Maggie Cheung wears for each scene.

Infernal Affairs (2002), directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, is a crime-thriller about a police officer (Tony Leung) who infiltrates the triad crime gang and a triad member (Andy Lau) who infiltrates the police department. Its success spawned two more films and was remade in 2006 by Martin Scorsese as *The Departed*, which went on to receive four Academy Awards.

6 EATING & DRINKING IN HONG KONG

Dining is one of *the* things to do in Hong Kong. Half the population dines in the city's estimated 9,000 eateries every day. Not only is the food excellent, but the range of culinary possibilities is nothing short of staggering. Hong Kong also has

what may well be the greatest concentration of Chinese restaurants in the world. In a few short days, you can take a culinary tour of virtually every major region of China, dining on Cantonese, Sichuan, Shanghainese, Pekingese, Chiu Chow, and

other Chinese specialties. Some restaurants are huge, bustling, family affairs, countless others are mere holes in the wall, and a few of the trendiest are Shanghai chic, remakes of 1930s salons and opium dens, or strikingly modern affairs with sweeping views of the city.

Back in the 1980s, Hong Kong's most well known, exclusive restaurants, both Chinese and Western, were located primarily in hotels. That's not surprising when you realize that first-class hotels were accustomed to catering to well-traveled visitors who demanded high quality in service, cuisine, and decor. In a welcoming trend that began near the end of the last century, however, enterprising, ambitious, and talented chefs began opening establishments in ever-greater numbers, often in modest but imaginative surroundings or in swanky digs on top floors of high-rises. These included ethnic restaurants as well as eateries offering completely unique dishes, with limited but intriguing menus. A cluster of these restaurants even created a whole new dining enclave, located on the steep hill alongside the Central-Mid-Levels Escalator that connects Central with the Mid-Levels. Dubbed "SoHo" for the region "south of Hollywood Road," it blossomed into an ever-growing dining and nightlife district, making it Hong Kong's most exciting culinary scene.

Today, what began as a trickle in SoHo has now engulfed virtually all of Hong Kong. Restaurants stretch from the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district all the way to SoHo and beyond. Knutsford Terrace, an alley in Tsim Sha Tsui that has been struggling to establish itself as a Kowloon dining mecca for more years than I can remember, has finally succeeded, with one packed venue after the other offering

alfresco dining. All shopping centers offer a long list of dining possibilities, some quite excellent, and with Hong Kong's never-ending land reclamation and development, you can expect more restaurants to have opened before you finish reading this book. With such an explosion of new restaurants, even local foodies have trouble keeping up.

Unfortunately, the small-time entrepreneurs who served as catalysts for today's culinary explosion probably wouldn't make it in today's competitive climate, at least not in SoHo or any other place where rents have risen dramatically. Today, Hong Kong's restaurant business is mostly a group thing, with most trendy newcomers part of a well-marketed chain.

On the other hand, there has never been as many dining possibilities as there are now, with French, Italian, American, Mexican, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Thai, and other ethnic eateries available even in far-flung parts of Hong Kong. Other welcome trends are the inclusion of vegetarian and healthy foods on many menus and the growing popularity of crossover, East-meets-West fusion cuisine, which capitalizes on ingredients and flavors from both sides of the Pacific Rim. And of course, hotel restaurants remain among the best in town, from legendary classics to innovative cutting edge.

I'm convinced that you can eat as well in Hong Kong as in any other city in the world. And no matter where you eat or how much you spend, it's sure to be an adventure of the senses. Little wonder, then, that a common greeting among Chinese in Hong Kong translates literally as "Have you eaten?" In Hong Kong, eating is the most important order of the day.

Planning Your Trip to Hong Kong

Much of the anxiety associated with travel comes from a fear of the unknown—not knowing what to expect can give even seasoned travelers butterflies. This chapter will help you prepare for your trip to Hong Kong—but don't stop here. Reading through the other chapters before leaving will also help you in your planning. Just learning that Hong Kong has hiking trails and beaches, for example, may prompt you to pack your hiking boots or swimsuit. In any case, Hong Kong doesn't require the advance preparations that some other Asian destinations require, such as visas for most nationalities or inoculations. However, keep in mind that information given here may change during the lifetime of this book. For additional help in planning your trip and for more on-the-ground resources in Hong Kong, see the "Fast Facts, Toll-Free Numbers, & Websites" appendix on p. 320.

1 VISITOR INFORMATION & MAPS

The **Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)** offers a wealth of free information for travelers.

HKTB ONLINE

You can have a virtual visit to Hong Kong by visiting HKTB's home page at **www.discoverhongkong.com**. The site provides a comprehensive overview of Hong Kong—maps of the region, major attractions, a detailed weekly calendar of performing arts and festivals, listings for hotels and restaurants, suggested itineraries, and guided tours. It even provides e-ticketing service so you can book shows, events, and concerts online before your arrival.

For detailed digital maps of Hong Kong, go to www.centamap.com or yymap.com.

OVERSEAS

Although the information stocked by HKTB offices abroad is sometimes not as up-to-date or as thorough as that available in Hong Kong itself or through the Internet

(see above), it's worth contacting a local HKTB office before leaving home for general information and a map.

In the **United States**: General information can be obtained by calling ☎ **800/282-4582**. HKTB offices are located at 115 E. 54th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10022-4512 (☎ **212/421-3382**; fax 212/421-8428; nycvwo@hktb.com); and 10940 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 2050, Los Angeles, CA 90024-3915 (☎ **310/208-4582**; fax 310/208-1869; laxvwo@hktb.com).

In **Canada**: Hong Kong Trade Centre, 9 Temperance St., Toronto, ON, Canada M5H 1Y6 (☎ **800/563-4582** or 416/366-2389; fax 416/366-1098; yyzww@hktb.com).

In the **United Kingdom**: 6 Grafton St., London W1S 4EQ, England (☎ **20/7533-7100**; fax 20/7533-7111; lonww@hktb.com).

In **Australia**: Hong Kong House, Level 4, 80 Druitt St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia (☎ **02/9283-3083**; fax 02/9283-3383; sydww@hktb.com).

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

PASSPORTS

For information on how to get a passport, go to “Passports” in the appendix (p. 320).

VISAS

The only document most tourists need to enter the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is a passport, valid for at least 1 month beyond the planned departure date from Hong Kong. Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and other British Commonwealth citizens can stay for 90 days without a visa, while citizens of the United Kingdom can stay for 180 days without a visa. Immigration officers may also ask arriving visitors for proof of onward travel or a return ticket (unless they are in transit to mainland China or Macau) and proof that they have adequate funds for their stay in Hong Kong (generally, a confirmed hotel reservation and a credit card will suffice).

Once in Hong Kong, visitors must carry photo identification at all times, such as a passport or driver's license. Safeguard your passport in an inconspicuous, inaccessible place like a money belt. If you lose it, visit the nearest consulate of your native country as soon as possible for a replacement. As an extra safety precaution, it's a good idea to photocopy your passport; keep a copy separate from your passport, such as in your luggage, and give a copy to family or friends at home.

If you plan to make an excursion to **mainland China**, you'll need a visa, which can be obtained easily in Hong Kong. Applications require one photo and generally take 3 working days to process. Your passport must have at least 6 months validity beyond your planned date of departure (see section 3, “China,” in chapter 11 on p. 272 for information on obtaining a visa to China).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

No shots or inoculations are required for Hong Kong, but you will need proof of a vaccination against cholera if you have been in an infected area during the 14 days preceding your arrival. For information on SARS, see “Staying Healthy” (p. 50).

CUSTOMS

Visitors 18 and older are allowed to bring into the SAR duty-free a 1-liter (34-oz.) bottle of alcohol and 60 cigarettes (or 15 cigars or 75 grams of tobacco). For more information, go to www.info.gov.hk/customs.

What You Can Take Home from Hong Kong

U.S. Citizens: For specifics on what you can bring back and the corresponding fees, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at www.cbp.gov. (Click on “Travel,” and then click on “Know Before You Go! Online Brochure”) Or contact the **U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP)**, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (☎ 877/287-8667) and request the pamphlet.

Canadian Citizens: For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare*, issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens: For information, contact **HM Revenue & Customs** at ☎ 0845/010-9000 (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens: A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go*. For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ☎ 1300/363-263, or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

New Zealand Citizens: Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers*. For more information, contact

New Zealand Customs, The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (☎ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; **www.customs.govt.nz**).

3 WHEN TO GO

Hong Kong's peak tourist season used to be in spring and fall, but now tourists come to Hong Kong virtually year-round, especially from neighboring mainland China. It's best, therefore, to make hotel reservations in advance, particularly if you're arriving during the Chinese New Year, one of the festivals described below, or the two peak vacation periods for mainland Chinese (the so-called "Golden Weeks" beginning May 1 and Oct 1). In addition, major conventions and trade fairs can also tie up the city's best hotels, particularly in spring (Mar–Apr) and autumn (Oct–Nov); check www.discoverhongkong.com for an updated calendar. If you're on a budget, keep in mind that many Hong Kong hotels offer package deals and cheaper rates in summer and winter.

CLIMATE

Because of its subtropical location, Hong Kong's weather is generally mild in winter and uncomfortably hot and humid in summer, with an average annual rainfall of 2.3m (89 in.). The most pleasant time of year is late September through early December, when skies are clear and sunny, temperatures are around 70° to 78°F (21°–26°C), and the

humidity drops to 70%. January and February are the coldest months, when temperatures can drop to 50°F (10°C) but usually stay between 50° and 60°F (14°–20°C). You'll want a jacket during this time.

In spring (Mar–May), the temperature can range between 64° and 81°F (18°–27°C) and the humidity rises to about 82%, with fog and rain fairly common. That means you'll need a raincoat and the cloud-enveloped Victoria Peak won't provide much of a view. By May, it can also be quite hot and muggy.

By summer (late May to mid-Sept), temperatures are often between 89° and 99°F (32°–37°C), humidity can be 90% or more, and there's little or no relief, even at night. If you're visiting the SAR this time of year, you'd be prudent to carry a hat, sunblock, sunglasses, and plenty of bottled water with you wherever you go. You'll also want a light jacket for air-conditioned rooms and an umbrella. This is when Hong Kong receives the most rain; it's also typhoon season. However, Hong Kong has a very good warning system, so there's no need to worry about the dangers of a tropical storm.

Hong Kong's Average Monthly Temperatures & Days of Rain

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (C°)	16	16	19	22	26	28	29	29	28	25	21	18
Temp. (F°)	61	61	66	72	79	80	84	84	80	77	70	64
Days of Rain	5.6	9.4	10.4	11.6	15.4	18.7	17.7	17.4	14.8	8.1	5.6	4.2

Understanding the Deluge: Tropical Storm Warnings

It's not likely you'll experience a tropical storm during your stay in Hong Kong, but if you do, consider it part of your Asian experience. Called typhoons (after the Cantonese *dai fung*, which translates as "big wind") and cyclones in this part of the world and called hurricanes in the West, these severe tropical storms can vent their fury from May to November but are especially prevalent in September. There's no need to worry that a storm may sneak up on you unaware—storms are tracked and monitored and are rated according to their strength. Their approach dominates local news, but even if you don't read the newspapers or listen to the evening news, you'll see other telltale signs of a coming typhoon—MTR stations, hotel lobbies, and businesses post notices, and shopkeepers cover their windows with storm shutters.

Whenever a severe tropical rainstorm or typhoon is approaching Hong Kong, an alert is broadcast continuously on TV and the radio to keep you informed of the storm's movements. To keep people better informed of the severity of a storm, a system of numbers has been developed that begins at Typhoon Signal No. 1, continues to Typhoon Signal No. 3, and then jumps to Typhoon Signal No. 8 and up. (The numbers in between were dropped when the long range proved too confusing.)

Typhoon Signal No. 1 goes up when a tropical storm that could escalate into a typhoon has moved within an 800km (497-mile) radius of Hong Kong. Although public transportation and organized tours and outdoor activities continue as scheduled, this signal indicates that the public should be on alert. Most locals, however, are rather indifferent to a No. 1, especially since this condition can last for several days, with little physical indication of an approaching storm.

Typhoon Signal No. 3 is given when the winds have escalated, accompanied, perhaps, by heavy rains. By this time, organized guided tours and harbor cruises have generally been suspended. Visitors should check with authorities before venturing on day trips to the outlying islands or Macau. Some businesses may close, as employees head for home while public transportation is still running.

Typhoon Signal No. 8 indicates that the gale has reached Hong Kong. Banks, offices, museums, and most shops and restaurants close, and road, ferry, rail, and air transport is suspended. You should never take a Signal No. 8 lightly, but rather, remain in your hotel and celebrate with a typhoon party, which is pretty much what everyone else does. There's nothing like a tropical storm to set the adrenaline running. The last time a No. 10 typhoon reached Hong Kong was in 1999.

Full details of Hong Kong's typhoon warning system can be found in the local telephone directory. For information during a storm, listen to TV or radio broadcasts or call the Hong Kong Observatory at ☎ **852/2835 1473** or check its website at www.hko.gov.hk.

HOLIDAYS

Hong Kong has 17 public holidays a year, including some of the festivals described below. The majority are Chinese and are therefore celebrated according to the lunar calendar, with different dates each year (for a rundown of Hong Kong's 2009 holidays, see "Fast Facts: Hong Kong & Macau" in the appendix; for 2010 lunar

holidays, which had not yet been determined when this book went to press, go to www.info.gov.hk/en/about/about/hk/holiday/index.htm). Since most shops, restaurants, and attractions remain open except during the Chinese New Year, the holidays should not cause any inconvenience to visitors. Banks, however, are closed.

HONG KONG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

If you're lucky, your trip might coincide with one of Hong Kong's colorful festivals. The only festival that shops and offices close for is the Chinese New Year, though some in Tsim Sha Tsui remain open to cater to tourists.

Below are the most popular events, including Chinese festivals and festivals of the arts. Your best source for additional information on all of these events is the **Hong Kong Tourism Board** (☎ 852/2508 1234 in Hong Kong; www.discoverhongkong.com), which can provide detailed information on where events are being staged and how to get there. For several of the festivals, HKTb even offers organized tours, which are one of the best ways to secure front-row seats without battling the crowds.

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check <http://events.frommers.com>, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

Chinese New Year. The most important Chinese holiday, this is a 3-day affair, a time for visiting friends and relatives, settling debts, doing a thorough housecleaning, consulting fortune-tellers, and worshipping ancestors. Strips of red paper with greetings of wealth, good fortune, and longevity are pasted on doors, and families visit temples. Most shops (except those in tourist areas) close down for at least 2 or 3 days; streets and building facades are decorated with elaborate light displays; flower markets sell peach trees, chrysanthemums, and other good-luck flowers; a colorful parade winds its way along the waterfront, usually on the first day; and a dazzling display of fireworks lights up the harbor, usually on the second day of the holiday. Since this festival is largely a family affair (much

like the Christian Christmas), it holds little interest for the tourist. In fact, if you're planning a side trip into China, this would be the worst time to go, since all routes to the mainland are clogged with Hong Kong Chinese returning home to visit relatives. Late January or early February (Jan 26–28, 2009).

FEBRUARY/MARCH

Hong Kong Arts Festival. This is a month-long celebration with performances by world-renowned orchestras, pop and jazz ensembles, and opera, dance, and theater companies (including experimental theater and Chinese operas); and with ethnic music and art exhibitions. For a schedule of events, venues, and ticket information, call ☎ 852/2824 2430 or HKTb at ☎ 852/2508 1234, or visit the website www.hk.artsfestival.org. February/March.

Hong Kong Sevens Rugby Tournament, Hong Kong Stadium. Known as "The Sevens," this is one of Hong Kong's most popular, and one of Asia's largest, sporting events, with more than 20 teams from around the world competing for the Cup Championship. Tickets (priced at HK\$880/US\$114/£63 for a 3-day pass) are often sold out. For more information, contact the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union at ☎ 852/2504 8311 or check the websites www.hkrugby.com or www.hksevens.com.hk. Fourth weekend in March (Mar 27–29, 2009).

MARCH/APRIL

Ching Ming Festival, all Chinese cemeteries (especially in Aberdeen, Happy Valley, Chai Wan, and Cheung Chau island). A Confucian festival to honor the dead, observed by sweeping ancestral graves, burning incense, offering food and flowers, and picnicking among the graves. Contact HKTb at ☎ 852/2508 1234. Fourth or fifth day of the Third Moon, March/April (Apr 4, 2009).

Hong Kong International Film Festival, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, City Hall, and other venues around town. More than 300 films from more than 40 countries are featured at this 2-week event, including new releases, documentaries, and archival films. Tickets for most events cost HK\$55 (US\$7.15/£3.90). For more information, call ☎ 852/2970 3300, or check www.hkiff.org.hk. Two weeks in March/April.

APRIL

Tin Hau Festival, all Tin Hau temples, especially in Joss House Bay and Yuen Long. This colorful festival celebrates the birth of Tin Hau, goddess of the sea and Hong Kong's most popular deity among fishing folk. The celebration

stems from a legendary fisherman's daughter who could supposedly calm stormy seas and protect fishermen. To pay her tribute, fishing boats are decorated with colorful flags, parades and lion dances fill the streets, and family shrines are carried to shore to be blessed by Taoist priests. A similar festival is held at A-Ma Temple in Macau. Contact HKTb, which organizes special tours of the events, at ☎ 852/2508 1234. Twenty-third day of the Third Moon, usually in April (Apr 18, 2009).

APRIL/MAY

Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Pak Tai Temple, Cheung Chau island. Unique to Hong Kong, this weeklong affair is thought to appease restless ghosts and spirits. Originally held to placate the unfortunate souls of those murdered by pirates, it features a street parade of lions and dragons and Chinese opera, as well as floats with children seemingly suspended in the air, held up by cleverly concealed wires. The end of the festival is heralded by three bun-covered scaffolds erected in front of the Pak Tai Temple, with selected contestants scrambling up them to retrieve the buns, which supposedly bring good luck to those who receive them. HKTb organizes tours of the parade; call ☎ 852/2508 1234. Usually late April or early May (May 2, 2009).

Buddha's Birthday, Buddhist temples throughout Hong Kong. Worshippers flock to pay respect to Siddhartha, founder of Buddhism, and to bathe Buddha statues. The Po Lin Monastery on Lantau island is one of the most popular destinations on this day. Contact the HKTb at ☎ 852/2508 1234. Ninth day of the Fourth Moon, usually either in April or May (May 2, 2009).

MAY/JUNE

Dragon Boat Races (Tuen Ng Festival). Races of long, narrow, gaily painted

boats are powered by 20 to 22 oarsmen who row to the beat of drums. The races originated in ancient China, where legend held that an imperial adviser drowned himself in a Hunan river to protest government corruption. His faithful followers, wishing to recover his body, supposedly raced out into the river in boats, beating their paddles on the surface of the water and throwing rice to distract sea creatures from his body. Qualifying heats are held in Aberdeen, Sai Kung, Cheung Chau, and Lantau, with final races on the main day best seen from Stanley Beach. For a front-row seat, contact HKTb at ☎ **852/2508 1234** for special race-day tours. Fifth day of the Fifth Moon (May 28, 2009).

AUGUST

Yue Lan Festival (Festival of the Hungry Ghosts). Released from the underworld, ghosts are believed to roam the earth for 1 lunar month each year. Religious ceremonies and offerings of food and paper replicas of life's necessities are burned to appease the spirits of discontented ghosts (those who were murdered, died without proper funeral rites, or are without descendants to care for them), in an attempt to prevent the unhappy souls from seeking vengeance on humans. Popular venues are King George V Memorial Park in Kowloon and Moreton Terrace Playground in Causeway Bay. Contact HKTb at ☎ **852/2508 1234** for more information. Fourteenth day of the Seventh Moon (Sept 2, 2009).

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

Mid-Autumn Festival, Victoria Park, Kowloon Park, and Victoria Peak. Held in early autumn, this major festival (sometimes referred to as the Moon Festival) celebrates the harvest and the brightest moon of the year. In honor of the event, local people light lanterns in the shapes of fish, flowers, and even ships and planes, gaze at the moon, and eat mooncakes (sweet rolls with sesame seeds, duck eggs, and ground lotus seeds). The mooncakes commemorate the 14th-century uprising against the Mongols, when written messages calling for the revolt were concealed in cakes smuggled to the rebels. Today the Urban Council organizes lantern carnivals in parks on both Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, where you can join the Chinese for strolls among hundreds of lanterns, making this one of Hong Kong's most charming and picturesque festivals. In addition, don't miss the dragon fire dance in Causeway Bay's Tai Hang district. Contact HKTb at ☎ **852/2807 1234**. Fifteenth day of the Eighth Moon, either in September or October (Oct 3, 2009).

OCTOBER

Chung Yueng Festival, all Chinese cemeteries. The second time of year when ancestral graves are swept and offerings are made. It's also a popular hiking day. Ninth day of the Ninth Moon (Oct 26, 2009).

4 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

GETTING TO HONG KONG

With dozens of airlines and half a dozen cruise lines serving Hong Kong from around the world, it's certainly not difficult to get there. Your itinerary, the amount

of time you have, and your pocketbook will probably dictate how you travel. Below are some pointers to get you headed in the right direction.



Coping with Jet Lag

A major consideration for visitors flying to Hong Kong, especially on long flights from North America or Europe, is jet lag. If you're flying north-south and you feel sluggish when you touch down, your symptoms are the result of dehydration and the general stress of air travel. When you travel east-west or vice versa, however, your body becomes confused about what time it is, and everything from your digestive system to your brain is knocked for a loop. Traveling east is more difficult on your internal clock than traveling west because most peoples' bodies are more inclined to stay up late than to fall asleep early.

Here are some tips for combating jet lag:

- **Reset your watch** to your destination time before you board the plane.
- **Drink lots of water** before, during, and after your flight. Avoid alcohol.
- **Exercise and sleep well** for a few days before your trip.
- Exercise during the flight by walking around the cabin and flexing your arms, hands, legs, and feet.
- If you have trouble sleeping on planes, **fly eastward on morning flights**.
- **Daylight** is the key to resetting your body clock. At the website for **Outside In** (www.bodyclock.com), you can get a customized plan of when to seek and avoid light.
- Once you reach Hong Kong, schedule your day according to local time.

By Plane

Because the flight to Hong Kong International Airport (HKG) is such a long one (almost 16 hr. from Chicago, 12 hr. from London, and 9 hr. from Sydney), you may wish to splurge for a roomier seat and upgraded service, including special counters for check-in, private lounges at the airport, and better meals, as well as a higher ticket price when choosing your carrier. You should also consider a mileage program, since this round-trip flight will earn you a lot of miles.

Airlines that fly between North America and Hong Kong include Air Canada, Cathay Pacific Airways (Hong Kong's own airline), Continental Airlines, Japan Airlines, Korean Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Philippine Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and United Airlines.

From the United Kingdom, Cathay Pacific, Qantas, and Virgin Atlantic Airways offer daily nonstop service from London to Hong Kong. All three airlines

also offer flights from Australia, while Cathay Pacific and Air New Zealand also offer service from New Zealand.

Dragonair is a Hong-Kong-based airline that serves many cities in Asia. Likewise, sister airlines Hong Kong Airlines and Hong Kong Express are both based in Hong Kong and service some 30 cities in Asia.

For contact information and websites for these airlines, as well as other airlines that fly into Hong Kong, see the appendix, p. 320.

Arriving at Hong Kong International Airport

No one who ever flew into Hong Kong's former Kai Tak Airport could quite forget the experience of landing in one of the world's most densely populated cities. The runway extended out into the bay, past apartments so close you could almost reach out and touch the laundry fluttering from the bamboo poles.

But Kai Tak, which ranked as the world's third-busiest airport in 1996, was retired in 1998. Taking its place is the **Hong Kong International Airport** (☎ 852/2181 8888; www.hongkongairport.com), more than four times the size of Kai Tak when it opened and now consisting of two terminals. Situated just north of Lantau island on Chek Lap Kok island and reclaimed land, about 32km (20 miles) from Hong Kong's central business district, the state-of-the-art airport is one of the world's most user-friendly.

Regardless of which terminal you arrive in, after Customs you'll find yourself in the arrivals hall. One of the first things you should do is stop by one of three **Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)** counters, where you can pick up a map of the city, sightseeing brochures, and a wealth of other information, as well as get directions to your hotel. They're open daily from 7am to 11pm. iCyberLink computers provide access to www.discoverhongkong.com 24 hours a day.

Also in the arrivals hall is the counter of the **Hong Kong Hotel Association** (☎ 852/2383 8380 or 852/2769 8822; www.hkha.com.hk), where you can book a room in one of its 90-some member hotels without paying a service fee; it's open daily from 6am to midnight. Note that while they do not have information on rock-bottom establishments, they can book rooms in several low-priced lodgings.

If you plan on traveling to Macau sometime during your stay in Hong Kong, stop by the **Macau tourist information counter**, in the arrivals lobby of Terminal 1, at AO6; it's open daily from 9am to 1pm, 1:45 to 6pm, and 6:45 to 10pm. However, if you are traveling directly to Macau from Hong Kong International Airport via the Ferry Transfer service, *do not pass through immigration*. Rather, follow signs to the Ferry Transfer desk where you can purchase ferry tickets and proceed

directly to the ferry pier (see chapter 12, "Macau," for more information).

You can **exchange money** at the arrivals hall, but since the rate here is rather unfavorable, it's best to exchange only what you need to get into town—about US\$50 (£25) should do it.

If you need to leave luggage at the airport, a **luggage-storage counter** is located on the departure floor. Other facilities include a post office, a medical center, shops, and restaurants. Wi-Fi is available free throughout the entire airport.

Getting into Town from the Airport

The quickest way to get to downtown Hong Kong is via the sleek **Airport Express Line** (☎ 852/2881 8888; www.mtr.com.hk), which is straight ahead after passing Customs and entering the arrivals hall. Trains run every 12 minutes between 5:50am and 1:15am and take 20 minutes to reach Kowloon Station (off Jordan Rd. and accessible to hotels in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei) and 24 minutes to reach Hong Kong Station, on Hong Kong Island in the Central District. From both Kowloon and Hong Kong stations, free shuttle bus service transfers passengers to most major hotels, departing every 12 to 24 minutes between 6:18am and 11:10pm (see www.mtr.com.hk for a list of hotels served).

Fares for the Airport Express are HK\$90 (US\$12/£5.85) to Kowloon and HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) to Central; round-trip tickets are HK\$160 (US\$21/£10) and HK\$180 (US\$23/£12), respectively. Or, if you're in Hong Kong only 3 days, consider purchasing the Airport Express Travel Pass for HK\$300 (US\$39/£19), which allows unlimited travel by public transportation for 3 days and includes the trip from and to the airport. If you're in Hong Kong longer than 3 days, a cheaper alternative for HK\$220 (US\$29/£14) includes a single journey to or from the airport plus 3 days of public transportation (see "Getting

Around” below for more information and other ticket options).

In addition to the Airport Express train, dedicated airport buses connect the airport with major downtown Hong Kong areas. Easiest if you have lots of luggage is the **Airport Hotelink** (☎ 852/3193 9333; www.trans-island.com.hk), which provides door-to-door service between the airport and major hotels. Tickets, available at counters in the airport arrivals hall of both terminals, cost HK\$130 (US\$17/£8.45) to Kowloon and HK\$140 (US\$18/£9.10) to Hong Kong Island, with buses departing every 30 to 60 minutes. It takes about 30 to 40 minutes to reach Tsim Sha Tsui, depending on the traffic.

Slower and cheaper, with more stops, are **Cityflyer Airbuses** (☎ 852/2873 0818; www.nwstbus.com.hk), also with ticket counters in the arrivals hall (if you pay onboard, you must have exact fare or use an Octopus card; p. 40). Most important for tourists are Airbus A21, which travels through Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, Jordan, and down Nathan Road through Tsim Sha Tsui on its way to the KCR East Rail Hung Hom Station; and Airbus A11, which travels to Hong Kong Island, with stops in Central, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay. Buses depart every 10 to 30 minutes, with fares costing HK\$33 (US\$4.30/£2.15) to Kowloon and HK\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60) to Central and Causeway Bay.

The easiest way to travel from the airport, of course, is to simply jump in a **taxi**, since taxis are quite cheap in Hong Kong but expensive for the long haul from the airport. Depending on traffic and your final destination, a taxi to Tsim Sha Tsui costs approximately HK\$300 (US\$39/£19) and takes 30 to 45 minutes, while a taxi to the Central District will cost about HK\$365 (US\$47/£24) and will take 35 to 50 minutes. An extra luggage charge of HK\$5 (US\$65¢/32p) applies to each piece of baggage.

Departing from the Airport

Passengers flying Cathay Pacific, Continental, Northwest Airlines, United, and many other airlines are offered the extra benefit of being allowed to check in for return flights at one of two satellite train stations—at Hong Kong Station in Central and at Kowloon Station, both served by the Airport Express Line (see above). Both allow you advance check-in any time from 24 hours to 90 minutes before your flight: You'll get your boarding pass, and your bags will be transferred to the airport. In addition, a left-luggage service is available at both stations, daily 6am to 1am and useful if your flight is later in the day and you want to do some sightseeing before heading for the airport. Rates per piece of luggage are HK\$35 (US\$4.55/£2.25) for up to 3 hours and HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) for 3 to 24 hours.

If you travel directly to the airport and go through check-in there, plan on arriving about 2 hours before departure of your flight. Although most tickets now include airport departure tax in their price, you may be required to pay the tax (HK\$120/US\$16/£7.80) if yours does not.

A final note about departing: Travelers may not bring sharp objects (knives, cutters, scissors, razor blades, household cutlery) in their carry-on but may pack them in checked bags. Also, gels, aerosols, and liquids in carry-on baggage must fit into one quart-size clear plastic bag; otherwise, check it or it will be confiscated.

By Train

It's unlikely you'll arrive in the SAR by train, unless, of course, you're traveling via China. The Beijing-Kowloon Railway provides a direct link between the two cities in approximately 24 hours. One-way tickets cost HK\$1,191 (US\$155/£77) for a bed in a deluxe, two-bed cabin, HK\$934 (US\$121/£61) for a “soft bed” in a four-bed cabin, and HK\$601 (US\$78/£39) for a “hard bed” in a six-bed cabin. Service is

also available from Shanghai in about 20 hours, costing HK\$508 to HK\$1,039 (US\$66–US\$135/£33–£67) one-way, and from Guangzhou (formerly Canton), costing HK\$190 to HK\$230 (US\$25–US\$30/£12–£15) and taking less than 2 hours.

The end terminus for train travel to Hong Kong is Hung Hom in Kowloon, with MTR service onward to East Tsim Sha Tsui Station and its many hotels.

By Boat

Some 30 international cruise ships make Hong Kong a port of call each year. The SAR's main docking facility for cruise liners is Ocean Terminal, located in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui and part of a massive shopping complex which includes 700 shops and 50 restaurants. Just a stone's throw away is the Star Ferry with service to Hong Kong Island. To accommodate growing demand, another cruise terminal is planned for the former Kai Tak airport runway, with a scheduled opening in 2012.

Extensive ferry service from neighboring Guangdong Province, across the border in mainland China, is offered by the **Chu Kong Passenger Transport Co.** (☎ 852/2858 3876; www.cksp.com.hk). Ferries from Nan Hai (port of call for Guangzhou), Zhu Hai, Shantou, Sanbu, and a dozen other cities arrive at the China HK Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.

TurboJet (☎ 852/2859 3333; www.turbojet.com.hk) operates jetfoil service from Macau and Shenzhen to the Hong Kong Macau Ferry Terminal on Hong Kong Island, with MTR connection to the rest of the city. A limited number of jetfoils also go to the China HK Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.

GETTING AROUND

If you've just been to Tokyo or Bangkok, Hong Kong will probably bring a rush of relief. For one thing, English is everywhere—on street signs, on buses, and in the

subways. In addition, almost 1,000 red and blue directional signs posted on streets and intersections throughout Hong Kong point to attractions and points of interest. The city of Hong Kong is so compact, and its public transportation system so efficient and extensive, that it's no problem at all zipping from Tsim Sha Tsui to Causeway Bay or vice versa for a meal or some shopping. Even the novice traveler should have no problem getting around. Transportation is also extremely cheap. Just remember that cars drive on the left side of the street, English-style, so North Americans need to be careful when stepping off the curb (luckily for most of us, warnings painted on the street at many intersections remind pedestrians which direction to look).

By Public Transportation

Each mode of transportation in the SAR—bus, ferry, tram, and train/subway—has its own fare system and thus requires a new ticket each time you transfer from one mode of transport to another. However, if you're going to be in Hong Kong for a few days, consider purchasing the **Octopus**. This electronic smart card allows users to hop on and off trains, trams, subways, buses and ferries without worrying about purchasing tickets each time or fumbling for exact change. Sold at Customer Service Centres at all MTR stations and some ferry piers, the Octopus costs a minimum of HK\$150 (US\$19/£9.75), including a HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) refundable deposit (minus a HK\$7/US\$90¢/45p handling fee if returned within 3 months), and can be reloaded in HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) and HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) units. Children and seniors pay HK\$70 (US\$9.10/£4.55) for the card, including deposit.

Alternatively, several other stored-value tickets are available for non-Hong Kong residents who will be in Hong Kong fewer than 14 days. The Airport Express Travel Pass, for example, is good for 3 days of unlimited travel: The HK\$300 (US\$39/£19)



Public Transport Tips

Keep in mind that transportation on buses and trams requires the **exact fare**. It's therefore imperative to have lots of loose change with you wherever you go. Even though ferries and subways will give change, you'll find it more convenient if you have exact change, especially during rush hours. Alternatively, and especially if you're in Hong Kong for more than a couple of days, consider purchasing a stored-value **Octopus** card, good for travel on virtually all modes of transportation, including the MTR subway and train system, the Airport Express Line, trams (including the Peak Tram), buses, ferries, and some minibuses, as well as for purchases at specified convenience stores, fast-food outlets, some vending machines, and even for some pay phones. It cannot be used, however, for sampans (privately owned shuttle boats) or for boat service to Macau.

card includes a round-trip from and to the airport on the Airport Express Line; the HK\$220 (US\$29/£14) card includes one trip from or to the airport. Other discount fares are for one-day passes for the New Territories or on certain subway lines.

To use the Octopus, simply sweep the card across a special pad at the entry gate (you'll notice that most commuters don't even bother removing the card from their wallets or purses); the fare is automatically deducted. The Octopus is valid for all MTR lines (including those serving the New Territories), the Airport Express Line (which runs between the airport and Kowloon and Central), all trams (including the Peak Tram), buses, some minibuses, the Star Ferry, and ferries to outlying islands. In addition, the Octopus can be used for purchases at all 7-Eleven, Circle K, and Metro Store convenience stores, fast-food chains like KFC, Starbucks, and McDonald's, some vending machines, and even to make phone calls at Pacific Century Cyber Works (PCCW) public telephones. At the end of your Hong Kong stay, be sure to turn in the Octopus card for a refund of your deposit (minus a HK\$7/US\$90¢/45p handling fee) and any unused value stored in the card. For information, call the Octopus Hotline at ☎ 852/2266 2222 or check its website at www.octopuscards.com.

By Train & Subway

The Star Ferry and trams are so popular and at times so crowded that it's hard to imagine what they must have been like before Hong Kong's subway system was constructed to relieve the human crunch. Hong Kong's **Mass Transit Railway (MTR)** is modern, efficient, clean, and easy to use, and it's also much faster than the older modes of transportation (and sometimes even taxis). Take note, however, that there are no public toilets at any of the stations or on the trains, and that smoking, drinking, and eating are prohibited. The MTR operates daily from 6am to about midnight or 1am, depending on the line and station. For general inquiries, call the MTR 24-hour hotline at ☎ 852/2881 8888 or check its website at www.mtr.com.hk.

Built primarily to transport commuters in the New Territories to and from work and running under the harbor to link Kowloon with Hong Kong Island, the MTR serves about 3.4 million passengers a day. You'll probably want to avoid rush hours, unless you enjoy feeling like a sardine in a can.

ROUTES The 10 lines are color-coded, with the next station displayed above each compartment door and announced in

English, so you shouldn't have any problem finding your way around. Stations are named for the areas they serve: Go to Central MTR station if you're looking for an address in the Central District, to Mong Kok MTR station if you're looking for a place in Mong Kok, Kowloon. Probably the most important line for tourists is the **red-coded Tsuen Wan Line**, which starts in Central on Hong Kong Island, goes underneath Victoria Harbour to Tsim Sha Tsui, and then runs north the length of Nathan Road, with stops at Jordan, Yau Ma Tei, and Mong Kok stations before heading northwest to the satellite town of Tsuen Wan in the New Territories. The **blue-coded Island Line**, with 14 stations, operates on the north side of Hong Kong Island from Sheung Wan (where you'll find the Macau Ferry Pier) east to Chai Wan, passing through Central, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay.

Three other lines, used mainly by commuters, are the **Kwun Tong Line**, which arches from Yau Ma Tei eastward to the New Territories; the **Tseung Kwan O Line**, which runs from North Point on Hong Kong Island and then goes under the harbor before connecting with the Kwun Tong Line; and the **Tung Chung Line**, which mirrors the Airport Express Line as it runs from Hong Kong Station in Central to Kowloon Station and onward to Tung Chung on Lantau island. The newest line, **Disney Resort Line**, branches off the Tung Chung Line to Disneyland. Additionally, the **Airport Express Line**, serving airport passengers, runs between Hong Kong Station in Central and Hong Kong International Airport, with a stop at Kowloon Station.

In 2007, the former Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR), which operated four rail lines in the New Territories as well as through train service to mainland China, merged with MTR to form one vast network of rail service extending from Central on Hong Kong Island through the

New Territories. Most useful for visitors is the **East Rail**, which travels from East Tsim Sha Tsui Station at the tip of Kowloon up to Sheung Shui in the New Territories. That is, Sheung Shui is where you must get off if you don't have a visa to go onward to China. If you do have a visa, you can continue to the border station of Lo Wu and travel onward all the way through China—and even Russia and Europe if you want to, ending up in London. This line has two different kinds of trains: the express through-train to Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing; and the local commuter service for those going to towns in the New Territories.

If you're taking the East Rail commuter train, you'll make stops at Hung Hom, Mong Kok, Kowloon Tong, Tai Wai, Sha Tin, Fo Tan, Racecourse (on horse-racing days only), University, Tai Po Market, Tai Wo, and Fanling before reaching Sheung Shui. The whole trip from East Tsim Sha Tsui to Sheung Shui takes only 39 minutes, so it's the easiest and fastest way to see part of the New Territories. It's also convenient, with trains running every 3 to 8 minutes. Connecting to East Rail at Tai Wai Station is the **Ma On Shan Rail**, useful for visiting Che Kung Temple.

Serving the western part of the New Territories is the **West Rail**, which links Sham Shui Po in West Kowloon with Tuen Mun in the northwestern part of the New Territories in 30 minutes. Extending from the western end of the West Rail is a feeder **Light Rail** transit system, useful for visiting Hong Kong Wetland Park.

FARES Single, one-way tickets start at HK\$4 (US\$0.25) for most lines and increase according to the distance traveled, but the most expensive ride is the trip underneath the harbor, which costs HK\$8.50 (US\$1.10/55p) from Tsim Sha Tsui to Central (still cheap, but outrageous when compared to the Star Ferry's fare of HK\$2.20/US\$0.30/15p for first class). Fares for seniors 65 and older and children ages

3 to 11 start at HK\$3 (US40¢/20p). Fares are indicated by inputting your destination on a touch screen above all vending machines, which accept HK\$10, HK\$5, HK\$2, HK\$1, and HK50¢ coins, as well as HK\$500, HK\$100, HK\$20, and HK\$10 notes, and give back change.

Even if you're traveling long distances, transportation is relatively cheap in Hong Kong. From East Tsim Sha Tsui to Sheung Shui in the New Territories, for example, it costs HK\$11.50 (US\$1.50/75p) for ordinary (second) class and HK\$23 (US\$3/£1.50) for first class for the 39-minute trip.

Your ticket is plastic, the size of a credit card, and you feed it into a slot at the turnstile. It disappears and then shoots up at the other end of the turnstile. *Be sure to save your ticket*—at the end of your journey, you will again insert your ticket into the turnstile (only this time you won't get it back). Since these tickets are used again and again and have a magnetized strip, be careful not to bend or damage them.

As mentioned above, if you think you're going to be doing a lot of traveling on public transportation, consider buying the Octopus, which saves you from having to buy another ticket each time you ride. Numerous transportation passes are also available just for tourists.

By Bus

Hong Kong buses are a delight—especially the British-style double-deckers. They're good for traveling to places where other forms of public transport don't go, such as to the southern part of Hong Kong Island like Stanley or up into parts of Kowloon and the New Territories. Bus numbers containing an "X" are for express buses, with limited stops. Depending on the route, buses run daily from about 6am to midnight, with fares ranging from HK\$1.20 to HK\$45 (US15¢–US\$5.85/8p–£2.90); the fare is halved for children 11 and under and seniors 66 and over. *You must have the exact fare*, which you deposit

into a box as you get on. Make sure, therefore, that you always carry a lot of spare change, or buy an Octopus card. Although final destinations are clearly displayed in English on the front of the bus, drivers often don't speak English, so you may want to have someone at your hotel write down your destination in Chinese, particularly if you're traveling in the New Territories. And with the exception of congested areas like Central or Tsim Sha Tsui where queues of people wait at the stop, you must flag down a bus to make it stop, especially in the New Territories or on an island. If you don't wave your arm, it will just go barreling past. When on board, be sure to push the signal button for your stop.

Hong Kong's buses are operated by two companies: **New World First Bus/Citybus** (☎ 852/2136 8888 for New World First Bus, ☎ 852/2873 0818 for Citybus; www.nwst.com.hk) and **Kowloon Motor Bus** (KMB; ☎ 852/2745 4466; www.kmb.com.hk), which collectively cover Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories. The **New Lantau Bus Co.** (☎ 852/2984 9848) operates on Lantau island.

The two major bus terminals are located at or near both ends of the Star Ferry. On Hong Kong Island, most buses depart from Exchange Square in the Central District or from bus stops in front of the Central Ferry Piers. Some buses also depart from Admiralty Station. In Kowloon, buses depart from in front of the Star Ferry concourse in Tsim Sha Tsui.

The HKTB has individual leaflets for Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories that show bus routes to most of the major tourist spots, indicating where you can catch buses, their frequency and fares, and where to get off. Keep in mind that buses can get very crowded at rush hours and that some buses look pretty ancient—which can make the winding trip to Stanley in a double-decker bus a bone-rattling and exciting experience.

By Tram

Tram lines are found only on Hong Kong Island. Established in 1904 along what used to be the waterfront, these are narrow, double-decker affairs that clank their way 16km (10 miles) in a straight line slowly along the northern edge of the island from Kennedy Town in the west to Shau Kei Wan in the east, with one branch making a detour to Happy Valley. Passing through the Central District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay on Des Voeux Road, Queensway Road, and Hennessy Road, they can't be beat for atmosphere and are easy to ride since most of them go only on one line (those branching off to Happy Valley are clearly marked). In the zeal to modernize Central, it's a wonder that these trams have survived at all. Ever since the advent of the subway, there's been talk of getting rid of them, but this has raised a storm of protest. Comprising the largest fleet of double-decker trams in the world, they are easily one of the most nostalgic forms of transportation in Hong Kong.

Enter the trams from the back and go immediately up the winding stairs to the top deck. The best seats are those in the front row, where you have an unparalleled view of Hong Kong: laundry hanging from second-story windows, signs swinging over the street, markets twisting down side alleys, crowded sidewalks, and people darting in front of the tram you'd swear couldn't have made it. Riding the tram is one of the cheapest ways of touring Hong Kong Island's northern side, and the fare is the same no matter how far you go. Once you've had enough, simply go downstairs to the front of the tram and deposit the exact fare of HK\$2 (US25¢/12p) into a little tin box next to the bus driver as you exit. If you don't have the exact amount, don't panic—no one will arrest you for overpaying a few cents. Children and seniors pay half fare. You can also use the Octopus card. Trams run daily from about 6am to midnight. More information is

available at ☎ 852/2548 7102 or www.hktramways.com.

In addition to the old-fashioned trams, the **Peak Tram** (☎ 852/2849 7654; www.thepeak.com.hk) is a funicular that transports passengers to one of Hong Kong's star attractions: Victoria Peak and its incomparable views. Its lower terminus is on Garden Road in Central, which you can reach via a HK\$4 (US50¢/25p) shuttle bus departing from the Central Ferry Piers at 15- to 20-minute intervals daily from 10am to 11:45pm. The tram itself runs every 10 to 15 minutes from 7am to midnight, with round-trip tickets costing HK\$33 (US\$4.30/£2.15) for adults, HK\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) for seniors and children. You can also use an Octopus card.

By Star Ferry

A trip across Victoria Harbour on one of the white-and-green ferries of the **Star Ferry Company** (☎ 852/2367 7065; www.starferry.com.hk) is one of the most celebrated rides in the world. Carrying passengers back and forth between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon ever since 1898, these boats have come to symbolize Hong Kong itself and are almost always featured in travel articles on Hong Kong Island. They all incorporate the word "star" in their names, like *Night Star*, *Twinkling Star*, or *Meridien Star*.

The Star Ferry is very easy to ride. Simply use your Octopus card or drop your coins into a slot on the ancient-looking turnstile, follow the crowd in front of you down the ramp, walk over the gangway, and find a seat on one of the polished wooden benches. A whistle will blow, a man in a sailor uniform will haul up the gangway, and you're off, dodging fishing boats, tugboats, and barges as you make your way across the harbor. Businesspeople who live in Hong Kong are easy to spot (they're usually buried behind their newspapers); visitors, on the other hand, tend to crowd around the railing, cameras in hand.

The whole trip is much too short, about 7 minutes total from loading pier to unloading dock, with the ride across the harbor taking about 5 minutes. But that 5-minute ride is one of the best in the world, and it's also one of the cheapest. It costs only HK\$1.70 (US20¢/10p) for ordinary (second) class (seniors 66 and over can ride ordinary class for free); if you really want to splurge, it's only HK\$2.20 (US30¢/15p) for first class. First class is located on the upper deck, and it has its own entryway and gangway (follow the signs in the ferry concourse); if it's raining or cold, first class is preferable because of the glass windows in the bow. Otherwise I find ordinary class much more colorful and entertaining because it's the one the locals use and the view of the harbor is often better.

Star Ferries ply the waters daily from 6:30am to 11:30pm between Hong Kong Island's Central District and the tip of Kowloon's Tsim Sha Tsui. Ferries depart every 6 to 8 minutes, except for early in the morning or late at night, when they leave every 10 to 12 minutes.

By Other Ferries

Besides the Star Ferry, many other ferries run to other parts of the city. Ferries from the Central District, for example, also go back and forth to Kowloon's Hung Hom from 7am to 7pm for HK\$6 (US80¢/40p). From Wan Chai, ferry service to Tsim Sha Tsui runs from 7:30am to 11pm and costs HK\$2.20 (US30¢/15p), and to Hung Hom, available from about 7am to 7pm costs HK\$6 (US80¢/40p).

In addition to ferries crossing the harbor between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, a large fleet serves the many outlying islands and the northern part of the mainland. If you want to go to one of the outlying islands, you'll find that most of these ferries depart from the Central Ferry Piers (home also to the Star Ferry) in Central. The latest schedules and fares are available from the Hong Kong Tourism

Board (HKTb). One thing to keep in mind is that on the weekends the fares are higher and the ferries can be unbelievably crowded with locals who want to escape the city, so it's best to travel on a weekday. Even so, the most you'll ever pay for a ferry, even on deluxe class on a weekend, is HK\$31 (US\$4/£2). You can use the Octopus card. See chapter 11, "Side Trips from Hong Kong," for more information on ferries to specific islands.

By Taxi

REGULAR TAXI As a rule, taxi drivers in Hong Kong are strictly controlled and are fairly honest. If they're free to pick up passengers, a red FOR HIRE flag will be raised in the windshield during the day and a lighted TAXI sign will be on the roof at night. You can hail them from the street, though there are some restricted areas, especially in Central. In addition, taxis are not allowed to stop on roads with a single yellow line between 7am and 7pm; they are not allowed to stop at all on roads with a double yellow line. Probably the easiest places to pick up a taxi are on side streets, at a taxi stand (located at all bus terminals), or at a hotel. Taxis are generally abundant anytime except when it's raining, during rush hour (about 5–8pm), during shift change (usually around 4pm), and on horse-racing days from September to May. Since many drivers do not speak English, it's a good idea to have your destination written in Chinese. Passengers are required by law to wear seatbelts.

Taxis on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon are red. Fares start at HK\$16 (US\$2.10/£1.05) for the first 2km (1¼ miles), and then are HK\$1.40 (US18¢/9p) for each additional 200m (about 656 ft.). Waiting time, incorporated in the meter, is HK\$1.40 (US20¢/10p) per minute, luggage costs an extra HK\$5 (US65¢/32p) per piece, and taxis ordered by phone also add a HK\$5 (US65¢/32p) surcharge. Extra charges to pay for the driver's return trip are also permitted for trips through

harbor tunnels and Aberdeen Tunnel. Note, too, the additional charge per bird or animal you might want to bring with you in the taxi! For a tip, simply add HK\$1 to the fare or, for longer rides, round up to the nearest HK\$5. Although taxi drivers can service both sides of Victoria Harbour, they tend to stick to a certain neighborhood and often aren't familiar with anything outside their area.

Taxis in the New Territories are green, with fares starting at HK\$12.50 (US\$1.60/80p) at flag-fall. They cover only the New Territories and are not allowed to transport you back into Kowloon.

If you have a complaint about a taxi driver, call the taxi complaint hotline ((☎ 852/2889 9999)), but make sure you have the taxi's license number. The driver's name, photograph, and car number are displayed on the dashboard. Even better, get a receipt, which will also help you track down lost items left in a taxi.

MINIBUSES These small, 16-passenger buses are the poor person's taxis; although they are quite useful for the locals, they're a bit confusing for tourists. For one thing, although the destination may be written in both Chinese and English, you almost need a magnifying glass to read the English, and by then the vehicle has probably already whizzed by. Even if you can read the English, you may not know the bus's route or where it's going.

The two types of vehicles are distinguishable by color. The green-and-yellow public "light buses" (though also called minibuses) follow fixed routes, have numbers, and charge fixed rates ranging from HK\$2 to HK\$22.50 (US\$25¢–US\$2.90/12p–£1.45), depending on the distance. They also require the exact fare as you enter (they also accept Octopus cards). The most useful ones on Hong Kong Island are probably those that depart from the Star Ferry concourse for Bowen Road and Ocean Park, as well as those that travel

from Central's Lung Wui Road to Victoria Peak or from Causeway Bay to Stanley.

The red-and-yellow minibuses are a lot more confusing and shouldn't be used by anyone not familiar with Hong Kong, because they have no fixed route and will stop when you hail them from the street (except for some restricted areas in Central). However, they're useful for traveling along Nathan Road or between Central and Causeway Bay. Fares range from HK\$2 to HK\$23 (US\$25¢–US\$2.90/12p–£1.65), depending on the distance and demand (higher fares are charged on rainy days, race days, or cross-harbor trips), and you pay as you exit. Just yell when you want to get off.

By Car

Rental cars are not advisable in Hong Kong and hardly anyone uses them, even businesspeople. For one thing, nothing is so far away that you can't get there easily, quickly, and cheaply by taxi or public transport. In addition, there probably won't be any place to park once you get to your destination. If you want a chauffeur-driven car, most major hotels have their own private fleet—you can even rent a limousine. If you're still determined to rent a car or plan to take a driving tour of the New Territories (you are not allowed to enter mainland China), self-drive firms—such as Avis and Hertz—have branches here, along with a couple of dozen local firms. Your hotel concierge should be able to make arrangements. A valid driver's license is required, and, remember, traffic flows on the left-hand side of the street.

By Rickshaw

Rickshaws hit the streets of Hong Kong in the 1870s and were once the most common form of transport in the colony. Now, however, they're a thing of the past—no new licenses have been issued for many years. A couple of ancient-looking men occasionally hang around the Star Ferry

terminal in the Central District, but they're usually either snoozing or reading the paper. I've never once seen them hauling a customer. Rather, they make money by charging up to HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) for tourists who want to take their pictures.

On Foot

One of the great things about Hong Kong is that you can explore virtually the entire city proper on foot, with directional signage posted seemingly everywhere directing you to tourist attractions. You can walk from the Central District all the way through Wan Chai to Causeway Bay in about an hour or so, while the half-hour walk up Nathan Road to Yau Ma Tei is a colorful experience I recommend to all visitors. Unfortunately, land reclamation has been carried out so ambitiously, it may even be possible one day to walk from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon.

In the Central District, mazes of covered, elevated walkways separate pedestrians from traffic, and connect office buildings, shopping complexes, and hotels. In fact, some roads have no pedestrians because they're all using overhead passageways. These walkways can be confusing, though signs direct pedestrians to major

buildings. Tourists will probably find streets easier to navigate if using a map, but walkways are convenient when it rains and are safer, since the walkways keep pedestrians safe from traffic. I was able to pick up a handy "Walkway System in Central" folding map at the Hong Kong Planning and Infrastructure Exhibition Gallery (p. 182), though I can't guarantee it will still be available by the time you get there.

An interesting "people-mover" is the free Central–Mid-Levels Escalator between Central on Des Voeux Road Central and the Mid-Levels on Victoria Peak. It's a series of moving walkways and escalators that snake their way through the Central District up the steep slope of the Peak. Constructed in the hope of alleviating traffic congestion for commuters who live in the Mid-Levels (about halfway up the Peak), the combination escalator/walkway has a total length of just less than .8km (1/2 mile) and transports approximately 27,000 people a day, moving downward in the morning until 10am and then reversing uphill the rest of the day to accommodate those returning home. The escalator has many entrances/exits, so commuters can get on and off as they like.

5 MONEY & COSTS

According to figures released by the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the average per capita spending of overnight visitors to Hong Kong is HK\$5,100 (US\$662/£331) per day on hotels, meals, shopping, and entertainment (frugal travelers, of course, can experience Hong Kong on much less). While Hong Kong may seem expensive compared to many other Asian cities, bargains abound, especially when it comes to off-season hotel rates, meals at local Chinese restaurants, public transportation, and museum admissions. In addition, because the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to

U.S. currency, a falling U.S. dollar doesn't impact the cost of travel for Americans in Hong Kong compared to, say, Europe with the euro.

CURRENCY

The basic unit of currency is the **Hong Kong dollar (HK\$)**, which is divided into 100 cents. Since 1983, when negotiations between Britain and China concerning Hong Kong's future sent public confidence and the value of the Hong Kong dollar into a nose dive, the Hong Kong dollar has been officially pegged to the

The Hong Kong Dollar, the British Pound & the U.S. Dollar

For American Readers Although the official conversion rate is pegged at HK\$7.80 for 1 U.S. dollar, the average rate of exchange at banks and exchange offices is closer to HK\$7.70 (or HK\$1 = US13¢) so this is the rate of exchange used to calculate the U.S. dollar values given in this book (rounded off to the nearest nickel for prices less than US\$10 and to the nearest dollar for prices more than US\$10). While stable since it was pegged to the U.S. dollar, this exchange rate may not be the same when you travel to Hong Kong. Therefore, the following table should be used only as a guide.

For British Readers At this writing, £1 equals approximately HK\$15.4 (or HK\$1 = 7p). This was the rate of exchange used to calculate the pound values in this guide (rounded off to the nearest 5p for prices less than £10 and to the nearest pound for prices more than £10).

The table below shows some sample currency rates of exchange for both the U.S. dollar and the British pound before rounding takes place.

HK\$	US\$	UK£	HK\$	US\$	UK£
0.25	0.03	0.02	150	19.48	9.74
0.50	0.06	0.03	200	25.97	12.99
1.00	0.13	0.07	250	32.47	16.24
2.00	0.26	0.13	300	38.96	19.48
3.00	0.39	0.20	350	45.45	22.73
4.00	0.52	0.26	400	51.95	25.98
5.00	0.65	0.33	450	58.44	29.22
6.00	0.78	0.39	500	64.94	33.47
7.00	0.91	0.46	550	71.43	35.71
8.00	1.04	0.52	600	77.92	38.96
9.00	1.17	0.59	650	84.42	42.21
10.00	1.30	0.65	700	90.91	45.46
15.00	1.95	0.98	750	97.40	48.70
20.00	2.60	1.30	800	103.90	51.95
25.00	3.25	1.63	850	110.39	55.20
30.00	3.90	1.95	900	116.88	58.44
35.00	4.55	2.28	1,000	129.87	64.94
40.00	5.19	2.60	1,250	162.34	81.17
45.00	5.84	2.92	1,500	194.81	97.41
50.00	6.49	3.25	1,750	227.27	113.64
75.00	9.74	4.87	2,000	259.74	129.87
100.00	12.99	6.50	2,250	292.21	146.11

U.S. dollar at a rate of 7.8 (which means that US\$1 equals HK\$7.80), giving the Hong Kong currency greater stability.

Three banks, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), the Bank of China, and the Standard Chartered Bank, all issue their own colorful notes, in denominations of HK\$10, HK\$20, HK\$50, HK\$100, HK\$500, and HK\$1,000. As for coins, they're issued by the government in bronze for HK10¢, HK20¢, and HK50¢ pieces; in silver for HK\$1, HK\$2, and HK\$5; and in nickel and bronze for HK\$10.

Throughout the SAR, you'll see the dollar sign ("¥"), which refers to Hong Kong dollars, not U.S. dollars. To prevent confusion, this guide identifies Hong Kong dollars with the symbol "HK\$" (followed in parentheses by the U.S. dollar and British pound conversion). Although the official conversion rate is pegged at 7.8, you'll receive slightly less at banks, hotels, and currency exchange offices.

For the matter of convenience, all conversions in this book are based on HK\$7.70 to US\$1 and HK\$15.4 to £1. If the exchange rate changes drastically—that is, the Hong Kong dollar is no longer pegged to the U.S. dollar—plan your budget accordingly. For up-to-the minute currency conversions, check www.oanda.com.

When exchanging money in Hong Kong, you'll get the best rate at banks. The exchange rate can vary among banks, however, so it may pay to shop around if you're exchanging a large amount. In addition, most banks also charge commission, which can differ depending on whether you're exchanging cash or traveler's checks (a slightly higher commission is charged for traveler's checks, usually around HK\$10/US\$1.30/65p more). A check during my last visit revealed commissions ranging from HK\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60) for cash at a Wing Lung Bank to HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£3.90) for traveler's checks at a Hang Seng Bank. On the other hand, the exchange

rate is usually slightly better for traveler's checks than for cash. Others may not charge commission but have less favorable exchange rates. There's no commission if you're cashing American Express checks at an American Express, for example, but the exchange rate is generally pretty low, making this a good option only if you're exchanging low quantities of checks.

Ask your hotel where the closest **Hang Seng Bank** (www.hangseng.com) or **Wing Lung Bank** (www.winglungbank.com) is, since I find these generally have favorable rates and lower commissions. The main bank of Wing Lung is at 45 Des Voeux Rd. Central in the Central District (☎ 852/2826 8333), with a convenient Tsim Sha Tsui branch at 4 Carnarvon Rd. (☎ 852/2369 9255), while Hang Seng has a convenient location next to Kowloon Hotel at 4 Hankow Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2198 0575).

Hotels give a slightly less favorable exchange rate but are convenient because they're open at night and on weekends. Money changers are found in the tourist areas, especially along Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. Avoid them if you can. They often charge a commission or a "changing fee," or give a much lower rate. Check exactly how much you'll get in return before handing over your money. If you exchange money at Hong Kong International Airport, change only what you need to get into town—US\$50 or £25 should be enough—because the exchange rate here is lower than what you'll get at banks in town.

I always carry two credit cards (in case there happens to be a problem with one of them), cash, and, for additional safety, traveler's checks.

ATMS

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a

What Things Cost in Hong Kong**US\$/£**

Airport Express Line from airport to Kowloon Station	12/6
MTR subway ride from Tsim Sha Tsui to Central	1.10/55p
Local telephone call (per 5 minutes)	13¢/7p
Double room at The Peninsula (deluxe)	519/260
Double room at The Luxe Manor (moderate)	286/143
Double room at the Booth Lodge (inexpensive)	81/40
Lunch for one at Watermark (moderate)	28/14
Lunch for one at Lin Heung Tea House (inexpensive)	10/5
Dinner for one, without drinks, at SPOON by Alain Ducasse (deluxe)	110/55
Dinner for one, without drinks, at Huton (moderate)	65/32
Dinner for one, without drinks, at Nomads (inexpensive)	23/12
Glass of beer	3.12/1.56
Coca-Cola	1.70/85p
Cup of coffee	3.50/1.75
Admission to the Hong Kong Museum of History	1.30/65p
Ticket to Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra	13/6.50

“cash machine.” There are ATMs throughout Hong Kong, making a credit or debit card the most convenient way to obtain cash since it eliminates the hassle of exchanging money only during banking hours. Be sure you know your 4-digit personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

Note: Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank’s ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions than for domestic ones. In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

Holders of MasterCard (using the Cirrus network) and Visa (using Plus) can use ATMs at the airport and various convenient locations around the city, including the Star Ferry concourses in Kowloon and Central, all major MTR (subway) stations, and major banks such as the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Hang Seng Bank (which have 24-hr.

machines). American Express cardholders have access to Jetco ATMs around town and can also withdraw local currency or traveler’s checks at the Express Cash machines at both American Express offices (see “Fast Facts: Hong Kong & Macau” in the appendix).

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are a safe way to carry money, provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your 4-digit PIN. Keep in mind that you’ll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% “transaction fee” on *all* charges you incur abroad (whether you’re using the local currency or your native currency).

Although many of the smaller shops in Hong Kong will give better prices if you

pay in cash with local currency, most shops accept international credit cards, although some of the smaller ones do not. Look for credit card signs displayed on the front door or near the cash register. Readily accepted credit cards include American Express, Visa, and MasterCard. Note, however, that shops have to pay an extra fee for transactions that take place with a credit card—and they will try to pass on that expense to you. Keep this in mind if you're bargaining (see "The Shopping Scene," in chapter 9, "Shopping"), and make sure the shopkeeper knows whether you're going to pay with cash or plastic. All major hotels and better restaurants accept credit cards, but budget restaurants often don't. If you do pay with a credit card, check to make sure that "HK" appears before the dollar sign given for the total amount.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Although traveler's checks are something of an anachronism now that ATMs have come onto the scene, traveler's checks have

a slight advantage in that they generally fetch a better exchange rate than cash and also offer protection in case of theft.

You can get traveler's checks at most banks. They are offered in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and sometimes \$1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

Be sure to keep a record of the traveler's checks' serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

You'll need your passport to exchange traveler's checks. Traveler's checks can be readily exchanged for Hong Kong dollars at banks, hotels, and currency-exchange offices (banks provide the most favorable rates). Although Thomas Cook and other agencies can issue traveler's checks in Hong Kong currency, I don't think this offers any advantage, since Hong Kong shops, restaurants, and hotels are not as willing as their counterparts in other parts of the world to accept traveler's checks for payment.

6 HEALTH & SAFETY

STAYING HEALTHY

The two major health concerns for travelers to Hong Kong in the past have been **SARS** and **avian flu**. At press time, however, neither poses a threat for those going to the SAR (yes, its name is an unfortunate coincidence). Hong Kong culled its entire poultry population several times after the first reported bird flu outbreak in 1997 (the last reported human case of avian flu in Hong Kong was in 2003), and importation of poultry from mainland China is immediately halted whenever any outbreaks occur there. A ban on selling live chickens in Hong Kong's wet markets, with all slaughterhouses now located in the New Territories, went into effect in 2009.

As for SARS, there have been no major occurrences since the 2003 outbreak sickened 1,755 people in Hong Kong and killed 299 of them. However, Hong Kong monitors all passengers arriving by air, boat, and train by taking their temperatures with a thermal scan. Passengers with pneumonia or fever, as well as those arriving from infected areas, are kept under close monitoring or isolation. To avoid being unnecessarily detained, don't travel with a fever.

As an extra precaution, you might wish to have a flu shot before departing for Hong Kong. Once in Hong Kong, you'll notice dispensers for hand sanitizers virtually everywhere, including restrooms,

Healthy Travels to You

The following government websites offer up-to-date health-related travel advice.

- **Australia:** www.smarttraveller.gov.au
- **Canada:** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html
- **U.K.:** www.nhs.uk/Healthcareabroad/Pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx
- **U.S.:** www.cdc.gov/travel

shops, hotels, and other public places; since good hygiene is the best defense against infectious disease, wash your hands as often as you can.

The United States **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (☎ 800/311-3435; www.cdc.gov) provides up-to-date information on health hazards by region or country—including the latest outbreaks of avian flu—and offers tips on food safety. Health issues, including avian flu, are also monitored by Hong Kong's **Department of Health** (☎ 852/2961 8989; www.dh.gov.hk).

Prescriptions can be filled at Hong Kong pharmacies only if they're issued by a local doctor. To avoid the hassle, be sure to bring more prescriptions than you think you'll need, clearly labeled in their original packages; pack prescription medications in your carry-on luggage. It's also a good idea to carry copies of your prescriptions in case you run out, including generic names in case a local pharmacist is unfamiliar with the brand name. Over-the-counter items are easy to obtain, though name brands may be different from those back home, and some ingredients allowed elsewhere may be forbidden in Hong Kong (and vice versa).

If you're traveling during the hot and humid summer months, limit your exposure to the sun, especially during the first few days of your trip and particularly from 11am to 2pm. Use a sunscreen with a high protection factor. To avoid dehydration, you should also carry a water bottle, especially when hiking. Another concern when

hiking in the New Territories or the islands is snakes. I've never seen one, but of Hong Kong's 49 native species, 9 are venomous.

Generally, you're safe eating anywhere in Hong Kong, even at roadside food stalls. Stay clear of local oysters and shellfish, however, and remember that many restaurants outside the major hotels and tourist areas use MSG in their dishes as a matter of course, especially fast-food restaurants and Chinese kitchens that import products from the mainland (some health experts, however, debunk the widely held Western belief that MSG can cause numbness, weakness, or other ailments). Water is safe to drink except in rural areas, where you should drink bottled water. Nonetheless, most upper-end and many medium-range hotels offer free bottled water in their guest rooms.

What to Do If You Get Sick Away from Home

Hong Kong has many Western-trained physicians. If you get sick, you may want to contact the concierge at your hotel—some upper-range hotels have in-house doctors or clinics. Otherwise, your embassy in Hong Kong can provide a list of area doctors who speak English (p. 320). You can also contact the **International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers** (☎ 716/754-4883, or 416/652-0137 in Canada; www.iamat.org), an organization that lists many local English-speaking doctors and also posts the latest developments in global SARS and avian flu

Avoiding “Economy-Class Syndrome”

Deep vein thrombosis, or as it’s known in the world of flying, “economy-class syndrome,” is a blood clot that develops in a deep vein. It’s a potentially deadly condition that can be caused by sitting in cramped conditions—such as an airplane cabin—for too long. During a flight (especially a long-haul flight), get up, walk around, and stretch your legs every 60 to 90 minutes to keep your blood flowing. Other preventative measures include frequent flexing of the legs while sitting, drinking lots of water, and avoiding alcohol and sleeping pills. If you have a history of deep vein thrombosis, heart disease, or another condition that puts you at high risk, some experts recommend wearing compression stockings or taking anticoagulants when you fly; always ask your physician about the best course for you. Symptoms of deep vein thrombosis include leg pain or swelling, or even shortness of breath.

outbreaks. Otherwise, if you can’t find a doctor who can help you right away, try the local hospital. Many have walk-in-clinics for cases that are not life-threatening. Doctors and hospitals generally do not accept credit cards and require immediate cash payment for health services. If, on the other hand, you end up in the emergency room of a hospital, you’re required to pay HK\$570 (US\$74/£37) for its services, but if you cannot pay immediately you will be billed. See “Fast Facts: Hong Kong & Macau” in the appendix for a list of hospitals and emergency numbers.

STAYING SAFE

Hong Kong is relatively safe for the visitor, especially if you use common sense and stick to such well-traveled nighttime areas as Tsim Sha Tsui, Lan Kwai Fong, Wan Chai or Causeway Bay. On the other

hand, the main thing you must guard against is pickpockets. They often work in groups to pick men’s pockets or slit open a woman’s purse, quickly taking the valuables and then relaying them on to accomplices who disappear in the crowd. Favored places are exactly those places where tourists are likely to be, namely Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, Causeway Bay, and Wan Chai. You should also be on guard on crowded public conveyances such as the MTR and public markets.

It’s best to hike in groups of two or more as isolated cases of hikers being robbed in country parks and Victoria Peak have been known to occur.

To be on the safe side, keep your valuables in your in-room safe or hotel’s safe-deposit box. If you need to carry your passport or large amounts of money, conceal everything in a money belt.

7 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Hong Kong can be a nightmare for travelers with disabilities. City sidewalks—especially in Central and Kowloon—can be so jam-packed that getting around on

crutches or in a wheelchair is exceedingly difficult. Moreover, to cross busy thoroughfares it’s often necessary to climb stairs to a pedestrian bridge. Also, most shops are a step or two up from the street, due to flooding during rainstorms.

As for transportation, taxis are probably the most convenient mode of transportation, especially since they can load and unload passengers with disabilities in restricted zones under certain conditions and do not charge extra for carrying wheelchairs and crutches. Otherwise, the MTR (subway) has wheelchair access (elevators, ramps, or other aids) at major stations, as well as tactile pathways leading to platforms and exits for the visually impaired. Ferries are accessible to wheelchair users on the lower deck, and approximately 41% of buses are wheelchair accessible. More information on transportation accessibility is available from the **Transport Department**, Floor 41, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2804 2660**; www.td.gov.hk), which publishes a booklet called *A Guide to Public Transport for People with Disabilities*, which can also be downloaded online. Another good source is the **Joint Council for the Physically and Mentally Disabled/Hong Kong Council of Social Services**, which published the *Hong Kong Guide for Disabled Visitors* in 1998. Though dated, it provides wheelchair accessibility for hotels, consulates, museums, restaurants, shopping malls, performing venues, and more and is available online at www.hkcass.org.hk/rh/accessguide or at offices of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (see “Visitor Information & Maps” at the beginning of this chapter).

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

A vibrant, if not readily apparent, gay and lesbian community of ex-pats and Chinese lives in Hong Kong. Discrimination is not a serious issue here, though, as in most places, you may encounter some less-than-open-minded people. Hong Kong has only a handful of openly gay establishments, concentrated mostly in the Lan Kwai Fong/SoHo nightlife districts (see chapter 10 for club listings), but several clubs have regular gay or lesbian nights. *DS Magazine* (www.dimsum-hk.com), a

monthly for gays distributed free to clubs, bars, and other venues, has an events calendar. South Bay, a beach on the south end of Hong Kong Island, is popular with gays.

For more gay and lesbian travel resources visit frommers.com.

FAMILY TRAVEL

Hong Kong is a great place for older kids, since many of the attractions are geared toward them and even offer discounts for children, sometimes as much as 50%. Public transportation is half price for children. As for very young children, keep in mind that there are many stairs to climb, particularly in Central with its elevated walkways, and in subway stations, making child backpack carriers easier than strollers. Also, young children may not be welcome at finer restaurants.

As for hotels, many allow children under a certain age (usually 12 but occasionally up to 18) to stay free of charge in their parent's room. Generally, only one child is allowed, or there's a maximum limit of three persons per room, and no extra charge *only* when no extra bed is required. Baby cots are usually available free of charge, and most hotels also offer babysitting.

To locate those accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, refer to the “Kids” icon throughout this guide. For lists of kid-friendly hotels and restaurants, see p. 91 and 142, respectively. “Especially for Kids” on p. 190 describes attractions and activities geared toward children.

For a list of more family-friendly travel resources, turn to the experts at frommers.com.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Seniors receive half-price admission to most museums in Hong Kong. In addition, seniors can ride the cross-harbor ferry free of charge and receive reduced fares for ferries to the outlying islands, the

Tips for the Business Traveler to Hong Kong

- **Bring plenty of business cards.** They are exchanged constantly, and you'll be highly suspect without them (if you run out, hotel business centers can arrange to have new ones printed within 24 hr.). When presenting your card, hold it out with both hands, turned so that the receiver can read it. Chinese names are written with the family name first, followed by the given name and then the middle name.
- **Use formal names for addressing business associates** unless told to do otherwise; you'll find that many Hong Kong Chinese used to dealing with foreigners have adopted a Western first name.
- **Shaking hands is appropriate** for greetings and introductions.
- **Business attire**—a suit and tie for men; blazers/jackets and skirts for women—is worn throughout the year, even in summer (though women can get away without wearing blazers or jackets in the summer).
- **Avoid the Chinese New Year**, as all of Hong Kong shuts down for at least 3 days; based on the lunar calendar, it falls between late January and mid-February.
- **Entertainment** is an integral part of conducting business in Hong Kong, whether it's a meal in which the host orders the food and serves his or her guests, an evening at the racetracks, or a round of golf.
- If an invitation is extended, it is understood that **the host will treat**. Do not insist on paying; this will only embarrass your host. Accept graciously and promise to pick up the tab next time around.

trams (including the Peak Tram), and the subway system. Some discounts are available to seniors 61 and older; others for seniors 66 and older. In any case, seniors should carry identification for proof of age and should keep in mind that there are many stairs to climb in Hong Kong, including overhead pedestrian bridges and in subway stations. Remember that it is *very* hot and humid in summer.

Frommers.com offers more information and resources on travel for seniors.

SINGLE TRAVELERS

You shouldn't have any problems as a single traveler to Hong Kong. Nearly every time I come here, I travel alone. The biggest problem is one of expense, since many hotels charge the same regardless of whether it's

for single or double occupancy. The other problem is Chinese food—it's best when enjoyed with a group. Try fixed-price meals or all-you-can-eat buffets when dining alone, or join one of the organized tours where meals are often included.

Female travelers may also want to check out the website **Journeywoman** (www.journeywoman.com), a "real life" women's travel information network where you can sign up for a free e-mail newsletter and get advice on everything from etiquette and dress to safety. They have a special section called "GirlTalk Hong Kong," which carries tips on accommodations, restaurants, shopping, things to do, what to wear, and details of venues where solo female travelers will feel at home, submitted by women who have traveled to Hong Kong.

STUDENT TRAVEL

Students receive a slight discount to most museums in Hong Kong, but major attractions like Ocean Park do not offer discounts.

Check out the **International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC)** (www.istc.org) website for comprehensive travel services information and details on how to get an **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)**, which qualifies students for substantial savings on rail passes, plane tickets, entrance fees, and more. It also provides students with basic health and life insurance and a 24-hour helpline. The card is valid for a maximum of 18 months. You can apply for the card online or in

person at **STA Travel** (☎ 800/781-4040 in North America; ☎ 132 782 in Australia; ☎ 0871 2 300 040 in the U.K.; www.statravel.com), the biggest student travel agency in the world; check out the website to locate STA Travel offices worldwide. If you're no longer a student but are still under 26, you can get an **International Youth Travel Card (IYTC)** from the same people, which entitles you to some discounts. **Travel CUTS** (☎ 800/592-2887; www.travelcuts.com) offers similar services for both Canadians and U.S. residents. Irish students may prefer to turn to **USIT** (☎ 01/602-1904; www.usit.ie), an Ireland-based specialist in student, youth, and independent travel.

8 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism is conscientious travel. It means being careful with the environments you explore and respecting the communities you visit. Two overlapping components of sustainable travel are **ecotourism** and **ethical tourism**. The **International Ecotourism Society (TIES)** defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. TIES suggests that ecotourists follow these principles:

- Minimize environmental impact.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation and for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Support international human rights and labor agreements.

You can find some eco-friendly travel tips and statistics, as well as touring companies and associations—listed by

destination under “Travel Choice”—at the **TIES** website, www.ecotourism.org. Also check out **Ecotravel.com**, which lets you search for sustainable touring companies in several categories (water-based, land-based, spiritually oriented, and so on).

While much of the focus of ecotourism is about reducing impacts on the natural environment, ethical tourism concentrates on ways to preserve and enhance local economies and communities, regardless of location. You can embrace ethical tourism by staying at a locally owned hotel or shopping at a store that employs local workers and sells locally produced goods.

Otherwise, **Responsible Travel** (www.responsibletravel.com) is a great source of sustainable travel ideas; the site is run by a spokesperson for ethical tourism in the travel industry. **Sustainable Travel International** (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) promotes ethical tourism practices, and manages an extensive directory of sustainable properties and tour operators around the world.

In the U.K., **Tourism Concern** (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) works to reduce



It's Easy Being Green

Hong Kong's air pollution has gotten progressively worse over the years, fueled largely by factories just over the border in mainland China. In fact, pollution is sometimes so bad, that even cloudless days are sometimes no guarantee that views will be good from atop Victoria Peak. The euphemism used in weather reports is "haziness." In any case, here are a few simple things you can do to make sure you're not contributing to the problem:

- Each time you take a flight or drive a car, greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere. You can help neutralize this danger to the planet through "carbon offsetting"—paying someone to invest your money in programs that reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by the same amount you've added. Before buying carbon offset credits, make sure that you're using a reputable company, one with a proven program that invests in renewable energy. Reliable carbon offset companies include **Carbonfund** (www.carbonfund.org), **Terra-Pass** (www.terrapass.org), and **Carbon Neutral** (www.carbonneutral.org).
- Whenever possible, choose nonstop flights; they generally require less fuel than indirect flights that stop and take off again. Try to fly during the day—some scientists estimate that nighttime flights are twice as harmful to the environment. And pack light—each 15 pounds of luggage on a 5,000-mile flight adds up to 50 pounds of carbon dioxide emitted.
- Where you stay during your travels can have a major environmental impact. To determine the green credentials of a property, ask about trash disposal and recycling, water conservation, and energy use; also question if sustainable materials were used in the construction of the property. The website **www.greenhotels.com** recommends green-rated member hotels around the world that fulfill the company's stringent environmental requirements. Also consult **www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com** for more green accommodations ratings. Luckily, Hong Kong hotels are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious. The InterContinental Grand Stanford (p. 90), for example, has been a pioneer in green management practices; in 2007 it became the first hotel in Hong Kong to install a more efficient and environmentally friendly new hybrid fuel system for hot water and steam that is equivalent to taking 70 cars a year off the road and reduces temperatures around the hotel.
- At hotels, request that your sheets and towels not be changed daily. (Many hotels already have programs like this in place.) Turn off the lights and air-conditioner (or heater) when you leave your room.
- Use public transport where possible—Hong Kong's trains, trams, buses, and ferries are more energy-efficient forms of transport than taxis. Even better is to walk; you'll produce zero emissions and stay fit and healthy on your travels.
- Eat at locally owned and operated restaurants that use produce grown in the area. This contributes to the local economy and cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions by supporting restaurants where the food is not flown or trucked in across long distances.

social and environmental problems connected to tourism. The **Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO;** www.aito.co.uk) is a group of specialist operators leading the field in making holidays sustainable.

To participate in ethical tourism at a local level, your best bet in Hong Kong is in the village of **Tai O** on Lantau island (p. 265).

Volunteer travel has become increasingly popular among those who want to venture beyond the standard group-tour experience to learn languages, interact with locals, and make a positive difference while on vacation. Volunteer travel usually doesn't require special skills—just a willingness to work hard—and programs vary in length from a few days to a number of weeks. Some programs provide free housing and food, but many require volunteers to pay for travel expenses, which can add up

quickly. The **Hong Kong Y.W.C.A.,** 1 MacDonnell Rd., Central (☎ 852/3476 1340; www.esmdywc.org.hk), serves as a local clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities under its “Useful Links” button. Although directed toward local residents, some of the volunteer opportunities are short term. The website also offers a variety of courses, including classes for Cantonese, Mandarin, and cooking, open to both Y.W.C.A. members and nonmembers.

For general info on volunteer travel, visit www.volunteerabroad.org and www.idealists.org. Before you commit to a volunteer program, it's important to make sure any money you're giving is truly going back to the local community, and that the work you'll be doing will be a good fit for you. **Volunteer International** (www.volunteerinternational.org) has a helpful list of questions to ask to determine the intentions and the nature of a volunteer program.

9 PACKAGES FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELER

Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as airport transfers and sometimes even city tours and other activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices.

One good source of package deals is the Hong Kong Tourism Board's website at www.discoverhongkong.com, which lists the latest deals from various tour companies. Another good source is the airlines themselves. From the U.S., United Airlines offers the most options with its **United Vacations** (☎ 800/917-9246; www.uv-asia.com), with a variety of escorted and independent package deals to Hong Kong and other Asian destinations. Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz—also do a brisk business in packages.

Of the tour companies offering packages to Asia, three of the largest are **Pacific Delight Tours** (☎ 800/221-7179; www.pacificdelighttours.com); **Pacific Bestour** (☎ 800/688-3288; www.bestour.com); and **Gate 1 Travel** (☎ 800/682-3333; www.gate1travel.com).

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in the national travel magazines such as *Budget Travel Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*.

For more information on package tours and for tips on booking your trip, see frommers.com.



Ask Before You Go

Before you invest in a package deal or an escorted tour:

- Always ask about the cancellation policy. Can you get your money back? Is there a deposit required?
- Ask about the accommodations choices and prices for each. Then look up the hotels' reviews in a Frommer's guide and check their rates online for your specific dates of travel. Also find out what types of rooms are offered.
- Request a complete schedule. (Escorted tours only.)
- Ask about the size and demographics of the group. (Escorted tours only.)
- Discuss what is included in the price (transportation, meals, tips, airport transfers, and the like). Escorted tours only.
- Finally, look for hidden expenses. Ask whether airport departure fees and taxes, for example, are included in the total cost—they rarely are.

10 ESCORTED GENERAL-INTEREST TOURS

Escorted tours are structured group tours, with a group leader. The price usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation.

Despite the fact that escorted tours require big deposits and predetermine hotels, restaurants, and itineraries, many people derive security and peace of mind from the structure they offer. Escorted tours—whether they're navigated by bus, motorcoach, train, or boat—let travelers sit back and enjoy the trip without having to drive or worry about details. They take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle. They're particularly convenient for people with limited mobility and they can be a great way to make new friends.

On the downside, you'll have little opportunity for serendipitous interactions with locals. The tours can be jam-packed with activities, leaving little room for individual sightseeing, whim, or adventure—plus they often focus on the heavily

touristed sites, so you miss out on many a lesser-known gem.

Among the many companies offering group tours are **Pacific Delight Tours** and **Pacific Bestour** (see “Packages for the Independent Traveler,” above), which offer trips primarily to China but include stops in Hong Kong; **General Tours** (☎ 800/221-2216; www.generaltours.com); and **China Focus Travel** (☎ 800/868-7244; www.chinafocustravel.com).

Luxury cruise liners are also a common sight in Hong Kong's harbor, anchored conveniently right next to the SAR's largest shopping mall at Ocean Terminal on the Kowloon side. Cruise lines with ports of call in Hong Kong include **Cunard** (☎ 800/7-CUNARD [800/728-6273]; www.cunard.com), **Holland America** (☎ 877/932-34259; www.hollandamerica.com), and **Princess Cruises** (☎ 800/PRINCESS [800/774-62377]; www.princess.com). Hong Kong-based **Star Cruises** (☎ 852/2317 7711; www.starcrui-ses.com.hk) offers a wide range of

cruises for a mostly Asian market, from very popular 1-night cruises to 3-week cruises that sail to destinations throughout South-east Asia.

More information on escorted general-interest tours, including questions to ask before booking your trip, can be obtained from your travel agent or frommers.com.

11 STAYING CONNECTED

TELEPHONES

To call Hong Kong: The international country code for Hong Kong is 852. Therefore, to **call Hong Kong:**

1. Dial the international access code: 011 from the U.S.; 00 from the U.K., Ireland, or New Zealand; or 0011 from Australia.
2. Dial the country code: 852.
3. Then dial the number (there is no city code for Hong Kong). So the whole number you'd dial would be 011-852-0000-0000.

Domestic calls: In Hong Kong, local calls made from homes, offices, shops, restaurants, and some hotel lobbies are free, so don't feel shy about asking to use the phone. Otherwise, local calls from public phones, which accept HK\$1, HK\$2, HK\$5, and HK\$10 coins, cost HK\$1 (US13¢/7p) for each 5 minutes; from hotel rooms, about HK\$4 to HK\$5 (US50¢–US65¢/25p–32p).

To make international calls: To make international calls from Hong Kong, first dial ☎ **001** (or **0080** or **009**, depending on which competing telephone services you wish to use) and then the country code (U.S. or Canada 1, U.K. 44, Ireland 353, Australia 61, New Zealand 64). Next dial the area code and number.

For directory assistance in English: Dial ☎ **1081** if you're looking for a number inside Hong Kong; ☎ **10013** for numbers to all other countries.

For collect calls: To make a collect call from any public or private phone in Hong Kong, dial ☎ **10010**.

Toll-free numbers: Numbers beginning with **800** within Hong Kong are toll-free. However, calling a toll-free number in a foreign country from Hong Kong is not free but rather costs the same as an overseas call.

Most hotels in Hong Kong offer direct dialing. Otherwise, long-distance calls can be made from specially marked International Dialing Direct (IDD) public phones. The most convenient method of making international calls is to use an Octopus card (see "Getting Around," earlier in this chapter). Alternatively, a PCCW Hello PhoneCard, which comes in denominations ranging from HK\$50 to HK\$500 (US\$6.50–US\$65/£3.25–£32), is available at PCCW shops, 7-Eleven and Circle K convenience stores, machines located beside telephones, and other locations around Hong Kong. To use it, you have to key in an access number and then the PhoneCard number. You can also charge your telephone call to a major credit card by using one of about 100 credit card phones in major shopping locations.

CELLPHONES

The three letters that define much of the world's wireless capabilities are GSM (Global System for Mobiles), a big, seamless network that makes for easy cross-border cellphone use throughout Europe and dozens of other countries worldwide. In the U.S., T-Mobile, AT&T Wireless, and Cingular use this quasi-universal system; in Canada, Microcell and some Rogers customers are GSM, and all Europeans and most Australians use GSM.

Using your own mobile phone in Hong Kong is easy, as most of the telephone systems used around the world (such as GSM 900, PCS 1800, and CDMA) are operational in Hong Kong. If your cell-phone is on a GSM system, and you have a world-capable multiband phone, you can make and receive calls in Hong Kong. Mobile operators in Hong Kong have roaming agreements with most overseas operators, enabling visitors to use their own phones in Hong Kong. Just call your wireless operator and ask for “international roaming” to be activated on your account. Unfortunately, per-minute charges can be high, so be sure to ask about pricing before you leave.

It is more economical to buy a removable computer memory phone chip (called a **SIM card**), which allows you to make calls at local rates. Cheap, pre-paid SIM cards are sold at retailers throughout Hong Kong. **CSL** is a well-known local company that offers a variety of phone services, including a pre-paid SIM card (☎ **852/275 10000**; <http://prepaid.hkcsl.com>) that costs as low as HK\$88 (US\$11/£5.50), with local calls costing HK9¢ (US1¢/5p) a minute and international calls to 30 destinations (including the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, and New Zealand) costing HK16¢ (US2¢/1p) a minute. It's sold at **1010 Centres** throughout Hong Kong, including Century Square, 1–13 D'Aguilar St., Central (☎ **852/2918 1010**), and Hong Kong Centre, 122–126 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2910 1010**), as well as 7-Eleven convenience stores.

Alternatively, if your phone allows, upon arrival in Hong Kong you can also select the CSL network manually from your handset menu, which will be displayed as HKCSL, CSL, or C&W HKT depending on your handset model. From there you can follow instructions for connection.

Renting a mobile phone is also an option. Most upper- and medium-range hotels offer rental phones at their business

centers, though it's an expensive convenience (the more expensive the hotel, the more expensive the rental). A better option is to rent from a local company. **CSL** (☎ **852/2883 3938**; <http://roam.hkcsl.com/eng/rent/rent.htm>) offers phones for HK\$35 (US\$4.55/£2.30) a day, plus a refundable deposit of HK\$200 to HK\$500 (US\$26–US\$65/£13–£32), depending on the model. In addition, you must still buy a SIM card as outlined above.

VOICE-OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP)

If you have access to the Web while traveling, consider a broadband-based telephone service (in technical terms, **Voice-over Internet protocol**, or **VoIP**) such as Skype (www.skype.com) or Vonage (www.vonage.com), which allows you to make free international calls from your laptop or in a cybercafe. Neither service requires the people you're calling to also have that service (though there are fees if they do not). Check the websites for details.

INTERNET & E-MAIL Without Your Own Computer

Most hotels have business centers with computers for Internet access, but they can be expensive (some, however, are available free for hotel guests). Otherwise, cybercafes are growing in number, though they are still few and far between. In addition to the suggestions below, check **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**. The Hong Kong Tourist Board may also have some suggestions for cybercafes.

The **Hong Kong Central Library**, 66 Causeway Rd., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/3150 1234**), offers free Internet access from its computers for a maximum of 2 hours. You'll find them on the ground floor, to the left. To avoid having to wait, you can make a reservation at ☎ **852/2921 0348**.

More convenient, perhaps, is **Cyber Pro Internet Cafe**, located in the Star

House across from the Tsim Sha Tsui ferry terminal, next to McDonald's (no phone). Open daily from 10am to 2am, it requires a HK\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60) deposit, plus a minimum charge of HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) for 1 hour. Four hours cost HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£3.90).

I like **Shadowman**, 21A Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2366 5262), for its relaxed cafe atmosphere. It offers a handful of computers providing free Internet access for 20 minutes with the purchase of a drink or food and charges HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) per 15 minutes beyond that. It also offers wireless access for the same price. It's open Monday through Thursday from 8am to midnight, Friday and Saturday from 8am to 1am, and Sunday from 10am to midnight. In Yau Ma Tei, there's **Main Street Café**, 380 Nathan Rd. (☎ 852/2782 1818), with four computers customers can use for free with purchase of a drink. It's open daily 7am to 11pm.

Pacific Coffee (www.pacificcoffee.com) is Hong Kong's largest chain of coffee shops, most with two or more computers that customers can access for free (you'll probably have to wait in line and use is restricted to 15 min. per visit). Locations include shop 1022 in the International Finance Center (IFC), above Hong Kong Station in Central (☎ 852/2868 5100), open Sunday through Thursday from 7am to 11pm and Friday and Saturday from 7am to midnight.

With Your Own Computer

More and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) "hotspots." In Hong Kong, accessibility begins at its airport, where passengers with laptops have free Wi-Fi access from virtually anywhere in the terminal.

All upper-range and most medium-priced hotels in Hong Kong are equipped with high-speed dataports that allow guests to use laptop computers. Many also offer

wireless access (check individual hotel listings in chapter 5 for dataport information or call your hotel in advance to see what your options are). In some hotels, Internet access is available upon purchase of an Internet access card for about HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50), valid for anywhere from 100 minutes to unlimited use for 5 days, depending on the hotel (in general, the more expensive the hotel, the more expensive its Internet rates). Other hotels charge a flat rate per day, with HK\$120 (US\$16/£8) for 24 hours the prevailing rate. A small percentage of hotels offer it for free.

Although Hong Kong's electricity uses 220 volts and 50 cycles (compared to the U.S. 110 volts and 60 cycles), most laptop computers nowadays are equipped to deal with both. However, you'll need a prong adapter. Upper-end hotels have built-in adapters that accept foreign (including U.S.) prongs; otherwise, housekeeping can probably lend you one for free. For moderate and budget hotels, you might need a **connection kit** of the right power and—for wired connections—a spare phone cord and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

Lots of cafes, bars, and restaurants offer wireless, including Starbucks, Pacific Coffee, Delifrance, KFC, and Häagen-Dazs, with locations throughout Hong Kong, though you may have to pay for the service. Ask your hotel concierge for the nearest location.

For free access, head to Kowloon Park, where the **Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre** (☎ 852/2208 4400) offers free Wi-Fi for laptop users Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm and Sunday and holidays 10am to 7pm. On the Hong Kong side, **ifc mall** in Central offers 45 minutes of free Wi-Fi daily; or, drop by the mall's concierge desk for a one-day pre-paid card for HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30).

Suggested Hong Kong Itineraries

Hong Kong offers enough diversions to occupy a lifetime—just ask anyone who lives here. But there are definite highlights, sights that no one should miss, and because transportation is so efficient, you can see quite a bit in just a day or two. If your time in Hong Kong is limited, my suggested itineraries below will make the

most of it by guiding you to the best the city has to offer, coordinating sightseeing with dining and evening plans. Be sure, however, to slow down every once in a while to soak in the atmosphere of Hong Kong street life. And keep in mind that some attractions are closed 1 day of the week, so plan your days accordingly.

1 GETTING TO KNOW HONG KONG

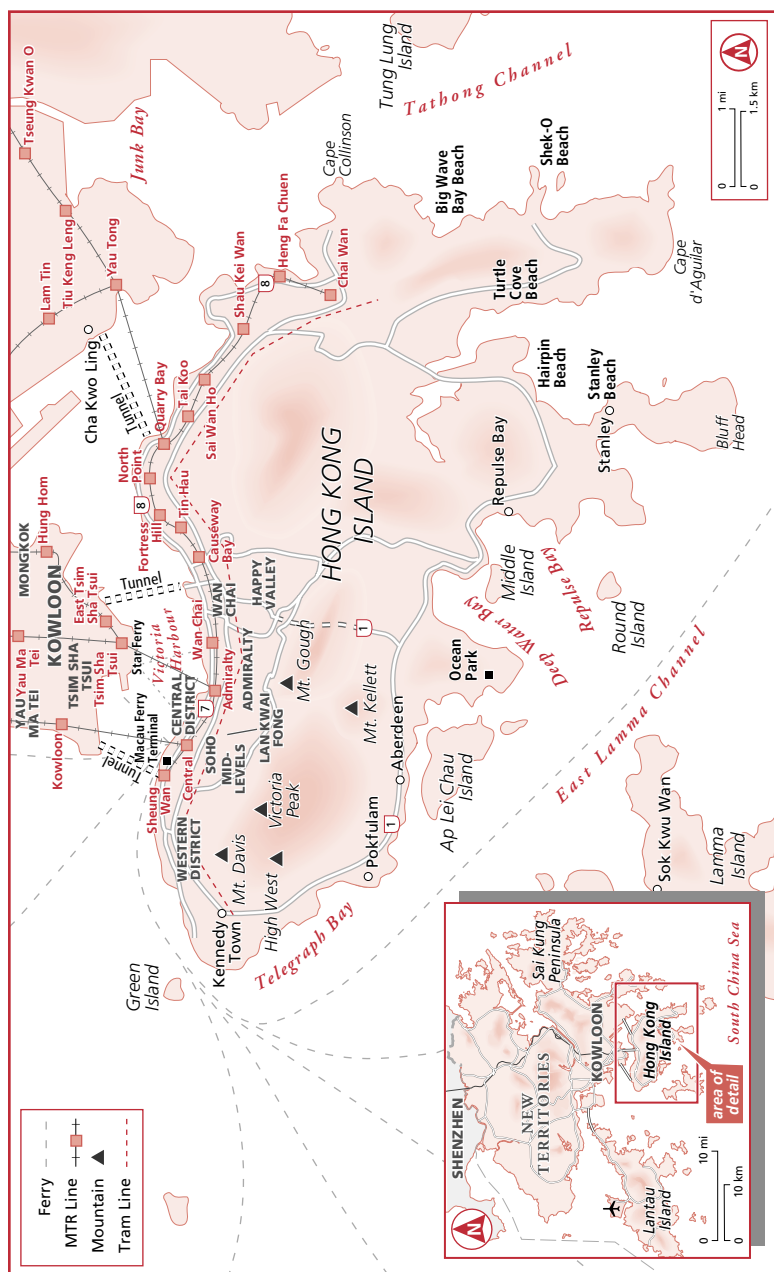
VISITOR INFORMATION

Three **HKTb** counters are located in the arrival halls of the Hong Kong International Airport, all open daily from 7am to 11pm. In town, three HKTb Visitor Information & Services Centres are on both sides of the harbor. On the Kowloon side, a convenient office in Tsim Sha Tsui is right in the Star Ferry concourse, open daily from 8am to 8pm. On Hong Kong Island, an office is in the Causeway Bay MTR station (near exit F), open daily 8am to 8pm. It's rather inconvenient, however, unless you're in Causeway Bay; look for the F exit on Jardine's Crescent. If you're going to Victoria Peak (and who doesn't?), an HKTb kiosk is located in a vintage tram car, between the Peak Tower and the Peak Galleria, open daily 9am to 9pm.

If you have a question about Hong Kong, you can also call the English-speaking **HKTb Visitor Hotline** (☎ 852/2508 1234), available daily from 8am to 6pm. After-hours a telephone-answering device will take your call and a member of HKTb will contact you the next day at your hotel.

In addition to HKTb's free map, HKTb publishes a wealth of free, excellent literature about Hong Kong. *Visitor's Kit* is a booklet that gives a brief rundown of Hong Kong's major tourist attractions and information on shopping and dining, while *Hong Kong Kaleidoscope* outlines HKTb's current free classes and seminars in its excellent "Meet the People" program. *Discover Hong Kong by Rail* is useful for trips to the New Territories, while *Hong Kong Walks* is designed for those who like to explore on foot. Business travelers should pick up *Hong Kong Leisure Guide for Business Travelers* (also available for PDA download at www.discoverhongkong.com), while *Hong Kong Family Fun Guide* highlights children's sights and activities. In addition, invaluable leaflets are available showing the major bus routes throughout Hong Kong, including Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories, and for current ferry schedules to the outlying islands.

Travelers with mobile phones can have their own virtual guide by purchasing a **Mobile Host** PIN card for HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£4.30) at HKTb offices and more than 100 telephone retail shops in Hong Kong. Good for 3 days, the guide provides information on



shopping, dining, and sightseeing venues, including how to reach them. It alerts participants to specific shop sales, gives information on seasonal foods and menus, provides a 3-day calendar of events, tells the weather forecasts, gives 30-second or 3-minute spiels on attractions, and links callers to useful telephone numbers and hot lines. You can access the same information without a PIN card by dialing ☎ *454, but international roaming charges will apply. You can also access the Mobile Host information through a WAP phone, allowing you to read about the chosen subject, at <http://wap.hktb.com>, by paying roaming fees. You can also download any of the Mobile Host commentaries on to your MP3 player for free at www.discoverhongkong.com/mobilehost, minus the last-minute information on sales, events, and other current tips.

And if you're traveling to Hong Kong with your PDA (Palm or Pocket PC), a similar free download is available from www.discoverhongkong.com. The *Hong Kong Leisure Guide for Business Travellers* includes maps (you can even pinpoint your location in Hong Kong if your PDA is equipped with a GPS device), information on sightseeing, shopping, and dining, and voice readings of useful Cantonese phrases.

To find out what's going on during your stay in Hong Kong, pick up HKTb's free weekly leaflet *What's On—Hong Kong*, which tells what's happening in theater, music, and the arts, including concerts and special exhibitions in museums. The *South China Morning Post*, a local newspaper, also carries an events and exhibition section in its Sunday edition. *HK Magazine*, distributed free at restaurants, bars, and other outlets around town (and aimed at a young expat readership), is a weekly that lists what's going on at the city's theaters and other venues, including plays, concerts, exhibitions, the cinema, and events in Hong Kong's alternative scene. *Where Hong Kong*, *CityLife*, and *bc* are other free magazines published monthly with information on Hong Kong. *Where Hong Kong* and *CityLife* are distributed to rooms in major hotels and are also available at HKTb offices. *bc* is distributed to bookstores and restaurants.

STREET MAPS

You can get a free map of the SAR from the HKTb (see above). It should be adequate for locating most hotels, restaurants, sights, shops, and bars mentioned in this book. Free giveaway maps are available at most hotels. If you want to explore Hong Kong in more detail, you can purchase an entire book with maps of the city region and areas in the New Territories called *Hong Kong Guidebook*, available at bookstores, but you probably won't need this. Online, electronic maps are available at www.yppmap.com and www.centamap.com (click "ENG" or "English" for the English-language versions).

MAIN ARTERIES & STREETS

Hong Kong Island's Central District is larger now than it was originally, thanks to massive land reclamation. **Queen's Road**, now several blocks inland, used to mark the waterfront, as did **Des Voeux Road** and **Connaught Road** in subsequent years. Today they serve as busy thoroughfares through Central, since the steep incline up Victoria Peak follows close on their heels. From the Central District, **Hennessy**, **Lockhart**, **Jaffe**, and **Gloucester** roads lead east through Wan Chai to Causeway Bay.

It wasn't until 1972 that the first **cross-harbor tunnel** was built, connecting Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island with Tsim Sha Tsui East in Kowloon. In 1989 a second tunnel was completed under Victoria Harbour; a third tunnel was completed in conjunction with the Hong Kong International Airport.

On the Kowloon side, the most important artery is **Nathan Road**, which stretches from the harbor north up the spine of Kowloon Peninsula and is lined with hotels and

shops. **Salisbury Road** runs east and west at the tip of Tsim Sha Tsui from the Star Ferry through Tsim Sha Tsui East along the waterfront. Also on the waterfront is the **Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade** affording great views of Hong Kong Island.

FINDING AN ADDRESS

With a good map, you should have no problem finding an address. Streets are labeled in English (though signs are sometimes lacking in more congested areas like the Western District and Yau Ma Tei) and building numbers progress consecutively. For the most part, streets that run east to west (such as Des Voeux Rd. Central, Hennessy Rd., Lockhart Rd., and Salisbury Rd.) all have the even-numbered buildings on the north side of the street and the odd-numbered ones on the south. From Central, roads running through Wan Chai all the way west to Causeway Bay start with the lowest numbers near Central, with the highest-numbered buildings ending at Causeway Bay. On Nathan Road, Kowloon's most important thoroughfare, the lowest-numbered buildings are at the southern tip near the harbor; the numbers increase consecutively, with the evens on the east and the odds to the west.

Remember that the floors inside buildings follow the British system of numbering. What Americans call the first floor, therefore, is called the ground floor in Hong Kong; the American second floor is numbered the first floor. In addition, if you're trying to find a specific office or factory outlet in a big building, it's useful to know that number 714 means it's on the seventh floor in Room 14, while 2312 means Room 12 on the 23rd floor.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF

HONG KONG ISLAND

CENTRAL DISTRICT This is where the story of Hong Kong all began. A small port and community were established here, on the north end of the island, by the British in the 1840s. Named "Victoria" in honor of the British queen, the community quickly grew into one of Asia's most important financial and business districts, with godowns (waterfront warehouses) lining the harbor. Today the area known as the Central District but usually referred to simply as "Central" remains Hong Kong's nerve center for banking, business, and administration. If there is a heart of Hong Kong, it surely lies here, but a few traces still remain of its colonial past.

The Central District glass and steel high-rises represent some of Hong Kong's most innovative architecture, some of the city's most posh hotels, expensive shopping centers filled with designer shops, and office buildings. Restaurants and bars here cater to Hong Kong's white-collar

workers, primarily in the nightlife districts known as Lan Kwai Fong and SoHo. Although hotel choices in Central are limited to the upper-range, staying here makes you feel like a resident yourself, as you rub elbows with the well-dressed professional crowds. Yet Central is also packed with traditional Chinese restaurants, outdoor markets, and the neon signs of family-run businesses. Trams—certainly one of Hong Kong's most endearing sights—chug their way straight through Central. The neighborhood even has oases of greenery at Chater Garden, popular with office workers for a lunchtime break, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, and Hong Kong Park with its museum of teaware, housed in Hong Kong's oldest colonial-age building.

LAN KWAI FONG Named after an L-shaped street in Central, this is Hong Kong's premier nightlife and entertainment district, occupying not only Lan Kwai Fong but also neighboring streets

like D'Aguilar, Wyndham, and other hillside streets. Filled with restaurants and bars in all price categories, it's a melting pot for people mostly in their 20s and 30s, from expat bankers and chuppies (Chinese yuppies) to Chinese nouveau riche and backpackers. The action—whether it's in a bar with live music and standing room only or in the streets packed with revelers—continues till dawn.

VICTORIA PEAK Hong Kong's most famous mountaintop, Victoria Peak has long been Hong Kong's most exclusive address, ringed by gated villas. Cooler than the steamy streets of Central below, Victoria Peak, often called simply the Peak, was the exclusive domain of the British and other Europeans—even nannies had to have the governor's permission to go there, and the only way up was by sedan carried by coolies or by hiking. Today, Victoria Peak is much more easily accessible thanks to the Peak Tram and affords Hong Kong's best views of Central, Victoria Harbour, and Kowloon. In fact, "the best view" is perhaps an understatement: The view is nothing short of stunning. Also on the Peak are shops, restaurants, and multimillion-dollar mansions, glimpses of which can be had on a circular 1-hour walk around the Peak.

MID-LEVELS Located above Central on the slope of Victoria Peak, the Mid-Levels has long been a popular residential area for Hong Kong's yuppies and expatriate community. Though not as posh as the villas on the Peak, its swank apartment buildings, grand sweeping views, lush vegetation, and slightly cooler temperatures make it a much-sought-after address. To serve the army of white-collar workers who commute down to Central every day, the world's longest escalator links the Mid-Levels with Central, an ambitious project with 20-some escalators and moving sidewalks (all free) stretching a half-mile (you can board and exit as you wish).

SOHO This dining and nightlife district, flanking the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator, is popular with area residents and those seeking a quieter, saner alternative to the crowds of Lan Kwai Fong. Dubbed SoHo for the region "south of Hollywood Road," it's an ever-growing neighborhood of cafe-bars and intimate restaurants specializing in ethnic and innovative cuisine, making SoHo one of the most exciting destinations in Hong Kong's culinary and nightlife map. Most establishments center on Elgin, Shelley, and Staunton streets. North of Hollywood Road, referred to as **NoHo**, also boasts a growing number of bars and restaurants.

WESTERN DISTRICT Located west of Central, the Western District is a fascinating neighborhood of Chinese shops and enterprises and is one of the oldest, most traditional areas on Hong Kong Island. I've spent days wandering its narrow streets and inspecting shops selling traditional herbs, ginseng, medicines, dried fish, antiques, and other Chinese products. The Western District is also famous for Hollywood Road and its many antiques and curio shops, and for Man Mo Temple, one of Hong Kong's oldest temples. Unfortunately, modernization has taken its toll, and more of the old Western District seems to vanish every year, replaced by new high-rises and other developments.

ADMIRALTY Actually part of the Central District, Admiralty is located just below Hong Kong Park, centered around an MTR subway station of the same name. It consists primarily of tall office buildings and Pacific Place, a classy shopping complex flanked by three deluxe hotels.

WAN CHAI Located east of Central, few places in Hong Kong have changed as dramatically or noticeably as Wan Chai in recent decades. Notorious after World War II for its sleazy bars, easy women, tattoo parlors, and sailors on shore leave looking

for a good time, it also served as a popular destination for American servicemen on R & R during the Vietnam War. Richard Mason's 1957 novel *The World of Suzie Wong* takes place in this bygone era of Wan Chai. Although a somewhat raunchy nightlife remains along Lockhart, Jaffe, and Luard roads, most of Wan Chai has slowly become respectable (and almost unrecognizable) the past few decades with the addition of mostly business-style hotels, more high-rises, the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the Academy for Performing Arts, and the huge Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, a familiar sight on the waterfront with its curved roof and glass facade. Near the convention center is Star Ferry service to Tsim Sha Tsui.

CAUSEWAY BAY Just east of Wan Chai, Causeway Bay is a popular shopping destination for locals. The whole area was once a bay until land reclamation turned the water into soil several decades ago. Now it's a busy area of department stores; clothing, shoe, and accessory boutiques; street markets; the Times Square shopping complex; and restaurants. On its eastern perimeter is the large Victoria Park.

HAPPY VALLEY Once a swampland, Happy Valley's main claim to fame is its racetrack, built in 1846—the oldest racetrack in Asia outside of China.

ABERDEEN On the south side of Hong Kong Island, Aberdeen was once a fishing village but is now studded with high-rises and housing projects. However, it is still known for its hundreds of sampans, junks, boat people, and huge floating restaurant. Just to the east, in Deep Water Bay, is Ocean Park, with its impressive aquarium and amusement rides.

STANLEY Once a fishing village, Stanley is now a lively center for discount markets selling everything from silk suits to name-brand shoes, casual wear, and souvenirs. It's located on the quiet south

side of Hong Kong Island with a popular public beach, a Chinese and expat neighborhood, a maritime museum, and trendy restaurants strung along a waterfront promenade.

KOWLOON PENINSULA

KOWLOON North of Hong Kong Island, across Victoria Harbour, is the Kowloon Peninsula. Kowloon gets its name from *Gau Lung*, which means "nine dragons." Legend has it that about 800 years ago, a boy emperor named Ping counted eight hills here and remarked that there must be eight resident dragons, since dragons were known to inhabit hills. (The ninth "dragon" was the emperor himself.)

Today the hills of Kowloon provide a dramatic backdrop for one of the world's most stunning cityscapes. Kowloon Peninsula is generally considered the area south of these hills, which means it also encompasses a very small part of the New Territories. However, "Kowloon" is most often used to describe its southernmost tip, the 12 sq. km (4²/₃ sq. miles) that were ceded to Britain "in perpetuity" in 1860. Its northern border is Boundary Street, which separates it from the New Territories; included in this area are the districts Tsim Sha Tsui, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Yau Ma Tei, and Mong Kok. Once open countryside, Kowloon has practically disappeared under the dense spread of hotels, shops, restaurants, housing and industrial projects, and land reclamation.

TSIM SHA TSUI At the southern tip of Kowloon Peninsula is Tsim Sha Tsui (also spelled "Tsimshatsui"), which, after Central, rates as Hong Kong's most important area for tourists. This is where most visitors stay and spend their money, since it has the greatest concentration of hotels, restaurants, and shops in Hong Kong. In fact, you might hear some Hongkongers remark that they avoid Tsim Sha Tsui like the plague, calling it the "tourist ghetto." On the other hand, Tsim Sha Tsui does

boast a cultural center for the performing arts, a great art museum, Kowloon Park, one of the world's largest shopping malls, a nice selection of international restaurants, a jumping nightlife, and Nathan Road, appropriately nicknamed the "golden mile of shopping." Although you'd be foolish to spend all your time in Tsim Sha Tsui, you'd also be foolish to miss it.

TSIM SHA TSUI EAST Not surprisingly, this neighborhood is east of Tsim Sha Tsui. Built entirely on reclaimed land, the area has become increasingly important, home to a rash of expensive hotels, shopping and restaurant complexes, science and history museums, and East Tsim Sha Tsui Station, providing direct train service to mainland China and connected to the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station via underground pedestrian passageway.

YAU MA TEI If you get on the subway in Tsim Sha Tsui and ride two stations to the north (or walk for about 25 min. straight up Nathan Rd.), you'll reach the Yau Ma Tei district (also spelled "Yau-matei"), located on Kowloon Peninsula just north of Tsim Sha Tsui. Like the Western District, Yau Ma Tei is very Chinese, with an interesting produce market, jade market, and the fascinating Temple Street Night Market. Several modestly priced hotels are located here, making this a good alternative to tourist-oriented Tsim Sha Tsui.

MONG KOK On Kowloon Peninsula north of Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok is a residential and industrial area, home of the Bird Market, the Ladies' Market on Tung Choi Street, and countless shops catering to Chinese. Its northern border, Boundary Street, marks the beginning of the New Territories.

2 THE BEST OF HONG KONG IN 1 DAY

If you only have 1 day to spend in Hong Kong, I feel for you. Seeing the top sights of Hong Kong in 1 day requires an early start, discipline, and a bit of stamina. **Start:** MTR to Tsim Sha Tsui.

1 Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade

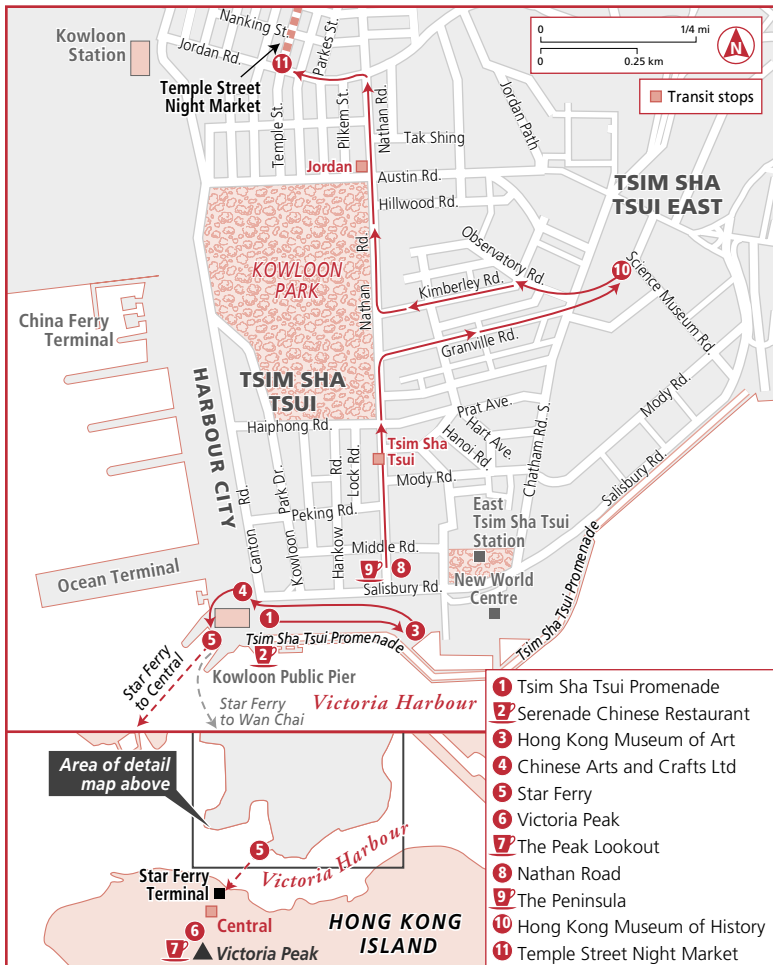
Start the day with an early morning stroll along the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade, from which you have a great view of the harbor with its boat traffic and Hong Kong Island. If it's Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, you might even want to join a free 1-hour lesson in tai chi, conducted at 8am in the Hong Kong Museum of Art's Sculpture Court near the promenade. See p. 211.

2 TAKE A BREAK

Located in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, next to the Star Ferry, **Serenade Chinese Restaurant** ★ is my top choice for dim sum with a view of Victoria Harbour. It opens daily at 8am. On Salisbury Road (☎ 852/2722 0932). See p. 166.

3 Hong Kong Museum of Art ★★★

Beside the Cultural Centre is this impressive museum housing Hong Kong's best collection of Chinese antiquities and fine



art, including bronzes, paintings, and ceramics, shown on a rotating basis. Its relatively small size makes it easy to see in an hour or less; I also like the Victoria Harbour views from its windows. Closed Tuesday, open the rest of the week at 10am. See p. 176.

4 Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd.

For one-stop shopping, this two-story Chinese emporium in the Star House, across from the Star Ferry, is Hong Kong's best upscale chain for high-quality jade, jewelry, Chinese clothing, embroidered tablecloths, antiques, rosewood furniture,

70 and more. If you're looking for a gift—or something special for yourself—this is a good place to look. See p. 227.

5 Star Ferry

No visit to Hong Kong would be complete without at least one trip across Victoria Harbour aboard one of the famous Star Ferries, which have been plying the waters between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon since 1898. The 5-minute trip (have your camera ready!) will deposit you at the Central Ferry Piers, where other ferries depart for the outlying islands. See p. 43.

Take the open-top shuttle bus no. 15C from the Star Ferry to the Peak Tram Station.

6 Victoria Peak

Board the Peak Tram, which began operations in 1888, for its 8-minute climb up Victoria Peak, where you'll be rewarded with fantastic views from Hong Kong Island's tallest hill if the weather is clear. Peak Tower has an observation platform with 360-degree panoramic views. If you have the time and energy, walk the 1-hour circular stroll around the Peak. See p. 172.

7 TAKE A BREAK

The Peak Lookout ★★, a former tram station across from Peak Tower, is a delightful setting for American, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Southeast Asian fare, especially if the weather is nice and you can sit on its outdoor terrace surrounded by lush greenery. Other good choices abound in Peak Tower and Peak Galleria across the street. Located at 121 Peak Rd. ☎ **852/2849 1000**. See p. 162.

Take the Peak Tram back to Central and walk 10 minutes to the Central MTR station, where you should board the subway for Tsim Sha Tsui Station.

8 Nathan Road

Nicknamed the “Golden Mile of Shopping” for its endless string of shops selling electronics, jewelry, clothing, and a million other goods, this is Kowloon's most famous street. See p. 220.

9 TAKE A BREAK

Hong Kong's most famous spot for afternoon tea—and people-watching—is the ornate lobby of the venerable **Peninsula** hotel ★★★, built in 1928. A classical string quartet serenades as you feast on scones, finger sandwiches, pastries, and fine teas, served daily from 2 to 7pm. Located on the corner of Nathan and Salisbury roads. ☎ **852/2920 2888**. See p. 85.

10 Hong Kong Museum of History

For a quick course in Hong Kong's history, from its days as a small fishing village through its years as a British colony, this museum is a must-see. Closed Tuesday; open to 6pm (7pm Sun and holidays). See p. 176.

11 Temple Street Night Market

Hong Kong's most famous night market exudes a festive atmosphere with its outdoor stalls selling everything from Chinese souvenirs to clothing and accessories, fortune-tellers, and street opera singers. Open daily from 4pm, but the real action doesn't get underway until 7pm.

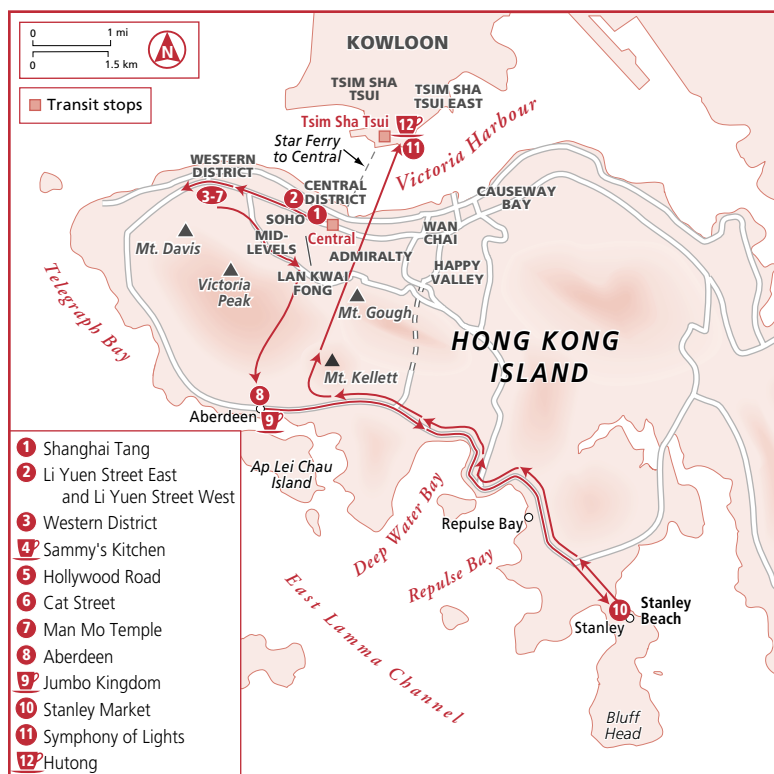
3 THE BEST OF HONG KONG IN 2 DAYS

After a full day following the “The Best of Hong Kong in 1 Day,” above, you'll find yourself packing in the activities for Day 2 as well. **Start:** MTR or Star Ferry to Central.

1 Shanghai Tang

This classy shop revolutionized traditional Chinese clothing with mod cheongsams,

Chinese jackets, and other fashionable wear in eye-popping colors. It also sells



home accessories, purses, and funky goods. See p. 227.

2 Li Yuen Street East & Li Yuen Street West

These two parallel pedestrian lanes between Queen's Road Central and Des Voeux Road Central are packed with stalls selling clothing and accessories, both Western and Chinese. See p. 233.

3 Western District

West of Central, this colorful neighborhood features traditional Chinese shops selling ginseng, herbal medicine, preserved foods, and funeral goods, concentrated on

Wing Lok Street, Des Voeux Road, and Queen's Road West. For a more thorough tour of this area, see the walking tour starting on p. 66.

4 TAKE A BREAK

It's nothing fancy, but **Sammy's Kitchen**, a family-owned restaurant and one of the few serving Western food in the Western District, has been dishing out inexpensive Western and Chinese fare since 1970. A throwback to older days in decor and atmosphere, it's also good for breakfast, lunch, or simply a refreshing drink. Located at 204–206 Queen's Rd. W. ☎ 852/2548 8400. See p. 165.

5 Hollywood Road

This long street stretching through the Western District to Central is lined with shops selling high-end Chinese antiques and furniture, as well as curio stores selling snuff bottles, old postcards, and bric-a-brac. See p. 223.

6 Cat Street

A pedestrian lane parallel to Hollywood Road, it's lined with street vendors and shops selling antiques, junk, and reproductions. See p. 223 and 224.

7 Man Mo Temple

Located on Hollywood Road and dating back to the 1840s, Hong Kong Island's oldest temple makes for a picturesque and peaceful stop. See p. 183.

Take a taxi to Aberdeen's waterfront promenade, on the south side of Hong Kong Island.

8 Aberdeen

Although now surrounded by high-rises, Aberdeen is still known for its fishing fleet of modern boats and traditional junks, many inhabited by boat people who have lived on the sea for generations. If you wish, you can take a sampan tour for an up-close view. See p. 180.

9 TAKE A BREAK

Take the free shuttle boat from Aberdeen's waterfront promenade to **Jumbo Kingdom** ★ (☎ 852/2553 9111), a colorful floating restaurant where you can feast on dim sum and Cantonese fare. Alternatively, on the top deck is the **Top Deck, at the Jumbo** (☎ 852/2553 3331), which features alfresco dining and an international menu of seafood. See p. 164.

Catch bus no. 73 or take a taxi to:

10 Stanley Market

This market is great for both Western and Chinese clothing for the whole family, as well as traditional Chinese souvenirs, making it a fun, laid-back destination. See p. 234.

Take bus no. 973 to Kowloon.

11 Symphony of Lights

Guinness World Records rates this the world's largest permanent light-and-sound show, where every evening at 8pm more than 40 buildings on both sides of the harbor put on a light-and-laser show. The best vantage point is on the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade. See p. 252.

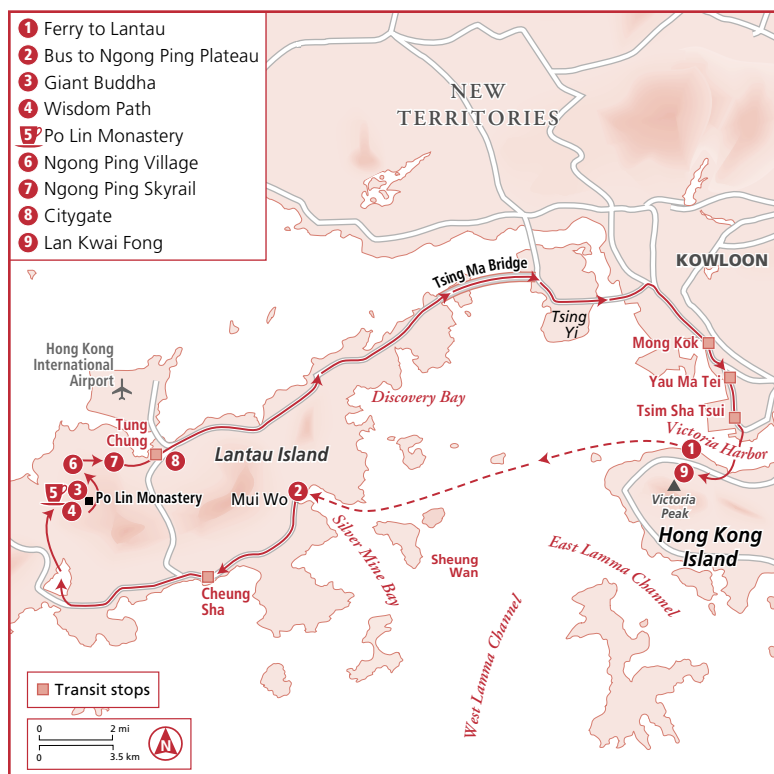
12 WINDING DOWN

Breathtaking views, a dramatic setting, and innovative northern Chinese cuisine make

Hutong ★★★ one of Hong Kong's most talked-about restaurants. In other words, make reservations as early as possible. Located on the 28th floor at 1 Peking Rd. ☎ 852/3428 8342. See p. 134.

4 THE BEST OF HONG KONG IN 3 DAYS

While you could spend a third day—and even a fourth and a fifth—visiting more attractions and soaking up Hong Kong's lively street life (see the suggested walking tours in chapter 8), visitors with limited time in Hong Kong should consider an excursion to



Lantau, home of a giant outdoor Buddha and adjoining monastery offering vegetarian lunches. **Start:** Central Ferry Piers.

1 Ferry to Lantau

Though you can now reach Lantau via MTR followed by cable car, I recommend the old-fashioned method of transportation—the ferry—on your outbound journey, where from the outdoor deck in deluxe class you're treated to great views along the way. Aim for the 8:30am ferry departure (9am on Sun). See p. 264.

2 Bus to Ngong Ping Plateau

Bus no. 2 from Silvermine Bay (*Mui Wo* in Chinese) hurtles around hair-raising curves

and up and down lush countryside on its 45-minute trip to Ngong Ping. See p. 264.

3 Giant Buddha

Built in 1993, this is the world's largest seated outdoor bronze Buddha. Climb 260-some steps to the viewing platform for sweeping views from Ngong Ping Plateau, 738m (2,420 ft.) above sea level. See p. 264.

4 Wisdom Path

Large wooden pillars, placed in the form of a figure eight to symbolize infinity,

74 display the Heart Sutra, a centuries-old prayer revered by Confucians, Buddhists, and Taoists alike. See p. 265.

TAKE A BREAK

Dining at **Po Lin Monastery** ★★ was a draw long before the Giant Buddha and other attractions came on the scene. Choose from two fixed-price vegetarian meals, served daily 11:30am to 4:30pm. Be sure to see the monastery's ornate temple, which houses three bronze statues of Buddha representing the past, present, and future. ☎ **852/2985 5248**. See p. 266.

6 Ngong Ping Village

Ngong Ping's newest attraction features "Walking with Buddha," a multimedia experience relating Siddhartha's path to enlightenment; "Monkey's Tale Theatre," which presents the parable of a selfish monkey who learns a powerful lesson about sharing and kindness; Ngong Ping Tea House, offering fine teas and cakes

and demonstrations of traditional Chinese tea ceremonies; the Oriental Massage Center offering foot reflexology; and restaurants and shops. See p. 265.

7 Ngong Ping Skyrail

This cable car travels 5.7km (3½ miles) in about 25 minutes, providing panoramic views of Lantau, the South China Sea, and even the airport along the way. See p. 264.

8 Citygate

The cable car deposits you at Tung Chung, where you'll find Hong Kong's only outlet mall offering discounts on international name brands. See p. 232.

Take the MTR to Central's Hong Kong Station.

9 Lan Kwai Fong

It's a party scene every night in Lan Kwai Fong, Hong Kong's most famous nightlife district. Bars and restaurants beckon with open facades, and the action invariably spills out onto the streets. See chapters 6 and 10 for recommendations on where to eat and drink.

Where to Stay

After years of declining tourism—due to events like the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)—Hong Kong is once again a hotelier's dream. While long-distance tourism in Hong Kong is affected by rising gas and airline prices in the global economy, regional tourism accounts for most of the surge in growth—thanks to a huge influx of mainland Chinese who, because of relaxed visa regulations, are filling Hong Kong's hotels in ever-increasing numbers. A never-ending parade of conventions, trade fairs, and other events also contributes to Hong Kong's healthy tourism industry.

Hotel occupancy in Hong Kong now stands at 86%, with increased demand causing room rates to rise. Hotels are not cheap in the SAR, especially when compared with those in many other Asian cities. Rather, prices are similar to what you'd pay in major U.S. and European cities, and while US\$200 might get you the best room in town in Topeka, Kansas, in Hong Kong it will get you a small, undistinguished box not unlike a highway motel room. In other words, except for the cost of getting to Hong Kong, your biggest expenditure is going to be for a place to stay.

Still, bargains can be found, especially online. Upper-end hotels may offer special packages, including weekend getaways, off-season incentives, and upgrades, while lower-end hotels may offer special promotional rates in the off season.

You should always book rooms well in advance, especially if you have a particular hotel, location, or price category in mind. The SAR's biggest hotel crunches traditionally occur twice a year, during Hong Kong's most clement weather: in March

through May and again in October and November. In addition, major trade fairs at Hong Kong's convention center can wreak havoc on travelers who arrive without reservations—all of Hong Kong's hotels will be fully booked. Unsurprisingly, prices are highest during peak season and major trade fairs. While bargains are abundant during the off seasons, many hotels use their published rack rates during peak season and major trade fairs.

As for trends in the hotel industry, Hong Kong's biggest markets nowadays are business travelers and tourists from mainland China. This translates into crowded elevators and lobbies in the moderately priced hotels that Chinese frequent. Hotels catering to executive-level business travelers, meanwhile, have beefed up business services, from state-of-the-art business centers and in-room Wi-Fi to executive-level rooms offering an even wider range of privileges. In addition, boutique hotels have made their grand entrance into the Hong Kong hotel scene, offering a more intimate atmosphere and unique decor that's a distinct departure from cookie-cutter hotels.

Hotels have also improved services and in-room amenities, so that even moderately priced rooms nowadays have hair dryers, room safes, minibars or refrigerators you can stock yourself, hot-water kettles with free tea and coffee, and usually cable and/or satellite TVs with in-house pay movies. Nonsmoking floors are common in virtually all hotels except for some of the inexpensive ones. Most hotels also have tour desks or can book tours for you through the concierge or front desk.

Unless otherwise stated, all hotels in this book have air-conditioning (a must in Hong Kong), private bathroom (most

with tub/shower combinations, though many of the newer moderately priced hotels are going strictly with showers), and telephones with international direct dialing. Room service (either 24 hr. or until the wee hours of the morning), babysitting, and same-day laundry service are standard features of very expensive to moderate hotels, as are Western and Asian restaurants and business centers. Many also offer health clubs with fitness rooms and swimming pools free for guests (though a few charge extra for their use). A growing number of upper-range hotels have also added full-range spas.

Some hotels differentiate among their guests, charging health-club fees, for example, for those who book through a travel agent or through the hotel's website

but not for those who pay rack rates (the maximum quoted rates). Guests booking through travel agents may also receive fewer amenities. Note that while many hotels allow children under a specific age (usually 11 and under) to room free with parents, restrictions apply. Some allow only one child, while others allow a maximum of three people in a room. Almost all charge extra if an extra bed is required.

It's nearly impossible to predict what might happen over the next few decades, let alone the next few years. In 1985, Hong Kong had a sparse 18,180 hotel rooms. Today that number has swelled to more than 56,500, with more on the way. Only one thing is certain: If the tourists continue to pour into Hong Kong, hotels will happily continue to raise their rates.

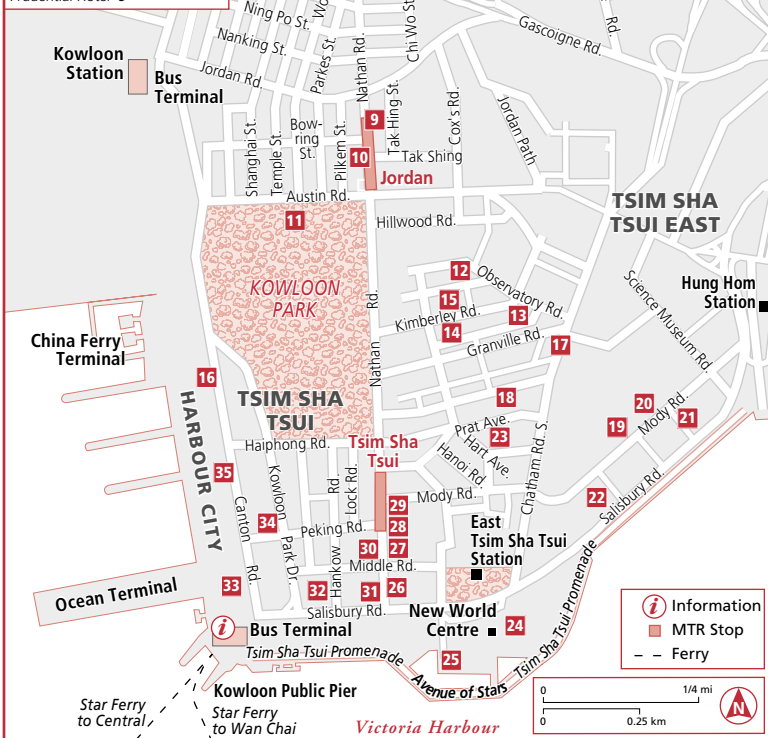
1 BEST HOTEL BETS

Choosing a favorite hotel in Hong Kong can be a bit overwhelming, if not impossible, because the choices are so vast and competition is steep. Few cities offer such a large number of first-rate hotels, and few places can compete with the service that has made the Hong Kong hotel industry legendary. With apologies to the rest, here are my personal favorites. For my picks on the best splurge and moderately priced hotels, see chapter 1.

- **Best Historic Hotel:** This category has no competition: **The Peninsula**, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 866/382-8388), Hong Kong's oldest hotel, has long been the grand old hotel of Hong Kong. Built in 1928 and boasting the most ornate lobby in Hong Kong, it retains the atmosphere of a colonial past, even down to its restaurants, Gaddi's and the Verandah, both of which have changed little over the decades. Even its tower addition, with high-tech rooms and a trendy rooftop restaurant, only adds to the general aura. See p. 85.
- **Best for Business Travelers:** If work brings you to Central, there's no better location than that of the **Mandarin Oriental**, 5 Connaught Rd., Central (☎ 800/526-6567), Central's landmark hotel. It offers all the services road warriors have come to expect, from Wi-Fi and good work stations in its spacious rooms (some with the extra bonus of harbor views) to facilities that run the gamut from a health club and spa to restaurants good for clinching that business deal. The MTR, Star Ferry, and express train to the airport are just minutes from the hotel's front door, and for busy executives looking for a convenient place to chill, Chater Garden is just across Statue Square. See p. 88.
- **Best Trendy Hotel:** Design guru Philippe Starck is the mastermind behind **Jia**, 1–5 Irving St., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/3196 9000), a 57-room boutique hotel featuring whimsical furniture in its lobby but minimalist, high-tech decor and gadgets in its rooms. A slew of freebies (continental breakfast and evening cocktails), rooms divided into distinct living, dining, and working areas, and access to a couple of Hong Kong's

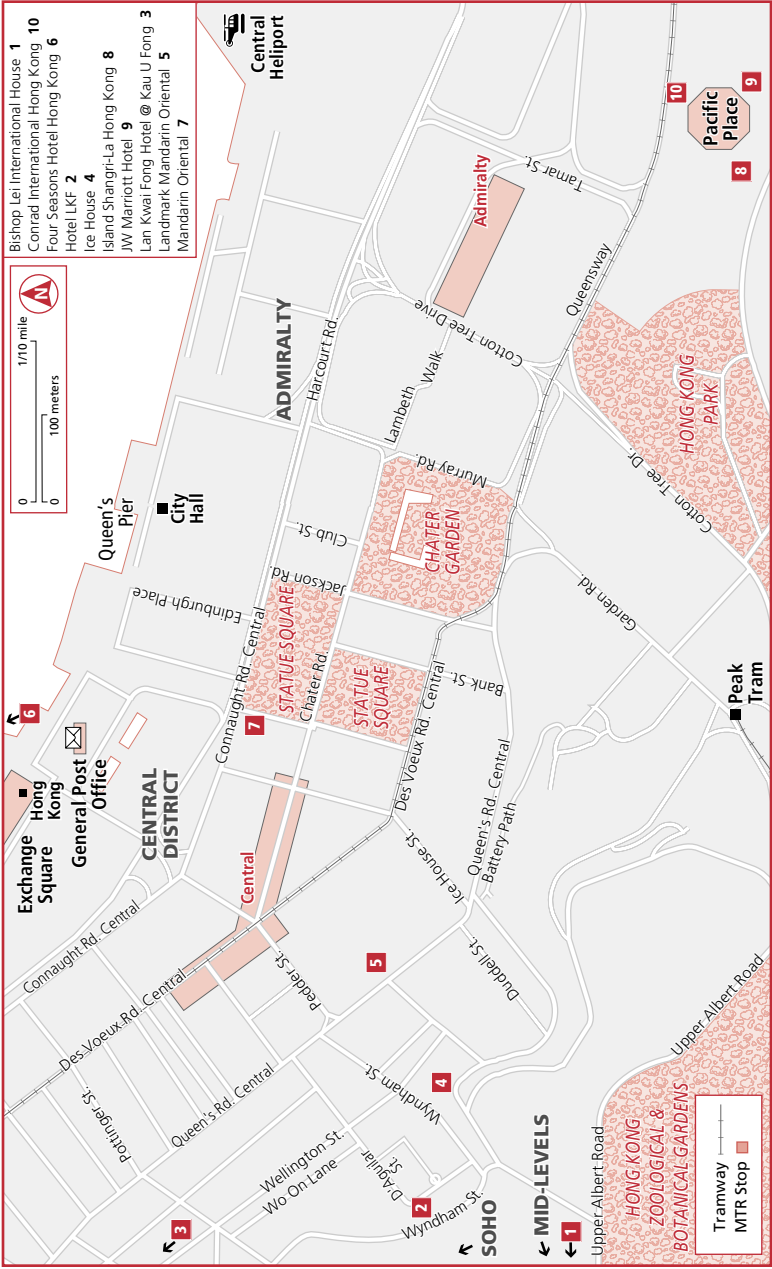
- Booth Lodge 4
- BP International House 11
- Caritas Bianchi Lodge 3
- Chungking House 28
- Dorsett Seaview Hotel 6
- Eaton Hotel 7
- Empire Hotel Kowloon 13
- Guangdong Hotel 18
- Holiday Inn Golden Mile 29
- Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong 25
- Hotel Panorama 23
- Imperial Hotel 27
- InterContinental Grand Stanford 21
- Kimberley Hotel 14
- Kowloon Hotel 30
- Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong 22
- Langham Hotel 34
- The Luxe Manor 15
- Marco Polo Gateway 35
- Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel 33
- Marco Polo Prince 16
- Nathan Hotel 8
- New Kings Hotel 5
- The Peninsula 31
- Prudential Hotel 9

- Ramada Hotel Kowloon 17
- Regal Kowloon Hotel 20
- Renaissance Kowloon Hotel 24
- Royal Garden 19
- The Salisbury YMCA 32
- Shamrock Hotel 10
- Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers 26
- Stanford Hillview Hotel 12
- Tatami Hampton Hotel 1
- YMCA International House 2



hottest clubs make this a shoo-in for fashion-conscious travelers ready to burrow in. See p. 101.

- **Best Budget Hotel:** The overwhelming number-one choice has long been the **Salisbury YMCA**, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2268 7000), with a fantastic location right next to the prestigious (and very expensive) Peninsula and just a short walk from the Star Ferry. Rooms are simple but offer virtually everything (from satellite TVs to Wi-Fi and coffeemakers); some even have stunning harbor views. Throw in two inexpensive restaurants, a health club, and laundry facilities, and you have more than enough to satisfy budget-minded vacationers who don't want to sacrifice location or convenience. See p. 106.
- **Best for Long Stays:** Travelers who can score accommodations at **Ice House**, 38 Ice House St., Central (☎ 852/2836 7333), might find themselves wishing they could stay even longer due to its convenient location in Central near Lan Kwai Fong, smart-looking rooms with kitchenettes, and competitive prices. See p. 108.
- **Best Health Club:** Most of Hong Kong's deluxe hotels boast state-of-the-art health clubs. But what I like most about the health club at the **Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong**, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 800/327-0200), is that it's open 24 hours a day, so you can work out when it fits your schedule. You can also relax in the outdoor, filled-to-the-brim horizonless Jacuzzi that gives the illusion of flowing into the harbor, and a state-of-the-art spa that observes architectural rules for feng shui and specializes in jet-lag relief and Oriental treatments. And to top it off, this hotel even offers free tai chi and yoga classes for its guests. See p. 85.
- **Best Hotel Pool:** The **Grand Hyatt**, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 800/233-1234), and **Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong**, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 800/228-9290), share one of Hong Kong's largest outdoor pools, surrounded by a lush, landscaped garden and with views of the harbor. In addition, the Grand Hyatt's spa also has a 50m lap pool. See p. 89 and 94.
- **Best Spa:** Spas are big business in Hong Kong, with many of the city's top hotels now offering a myriad of spa treatments. The Spa at **Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong**, 8 Finance St., Central (☎ 852/3196 8333), exceeds the rest with treatments that begin with hydrotherapy—including a Finnish sauna, an amethyst crystal steam room with mother-of-pearl covered seating, a fountain that rains crushed ice flakes, and hot tubs—and continue in one of 18 treatment rooms. For the ultimate splurge, spring for one of the VIP suites, where after your massage you'll retire to your own jet bath overlooking the harbor. As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't get any better than this. See p. 86.
- **Best Views:** Most of Hong Kong's deluxe hotels boast harbor views, making this category the toughest. However, in my opinion, the best harbor views are from the Kowloon side, where you can feast your eyes not only on the boats plying the water but also on Hong Kong Island with its stunning architecture, Victoria Peak, and, at night, the shimmering of neon lights and laser-light extravaganza of Hong Kong's nightly Symphony of Lights. And no Tsim Sha Tsui hotel is as close to the water as the **Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong** (see address and telephone above), built right over the harbor; as many as 70% of its rooms command sweeping views of the water and boast floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall windows, making the most of one of the world's most breathtaking city views. See p. 85.
- **Best for Art Lovers:** The **Island Shangri-La Hong Kong**, Pacific Place, Central (☎ 800/565-5050), is a gorgeous hotel with more than 700 Viennese chandeliers, lush Tai Ping carpets, flower arrangements, and more than 500 paintings and artworks.



A Romantic Getaway

If you're planning a romantic getaway, go to Macau, where the **Westin Resort Macau**, Estrada de Hac Sa on Colôane Island (☎ **800/WESTIN-1** [800/937-8461]), has the perfect and most idyllic setting with large rooms (each with private terrace) overlooking the sea, landscaped grounds, indoor and outdoor pools, an 18-hole golf course, spa, rental bikes, and a nearby beach for moonlit walks. See p. 294.

But the clincher is the 16-story-high Chinese painting in the hotel atrium, drawn by 40 artists from Beijing and believed to be the largest landscape painting in the world. See p. 87.

- **Best for Expat Wannabes:** Mid-Levels has long been a favorite residential area for expats living and working in Hong Kong. **Bishop Lei International House**, 4 Robinson Rd., Mid-Levels (☎ **852/2868 0828**), is located about halfway up Victoria Peak, with great views from its smallish rooms. Nearby ethnic restaurants and neighborhood bars abound, but for a real taste of Mid-Levels living, travel the escalator that local residents use to get to and from their jobs in Central. See p. 99.

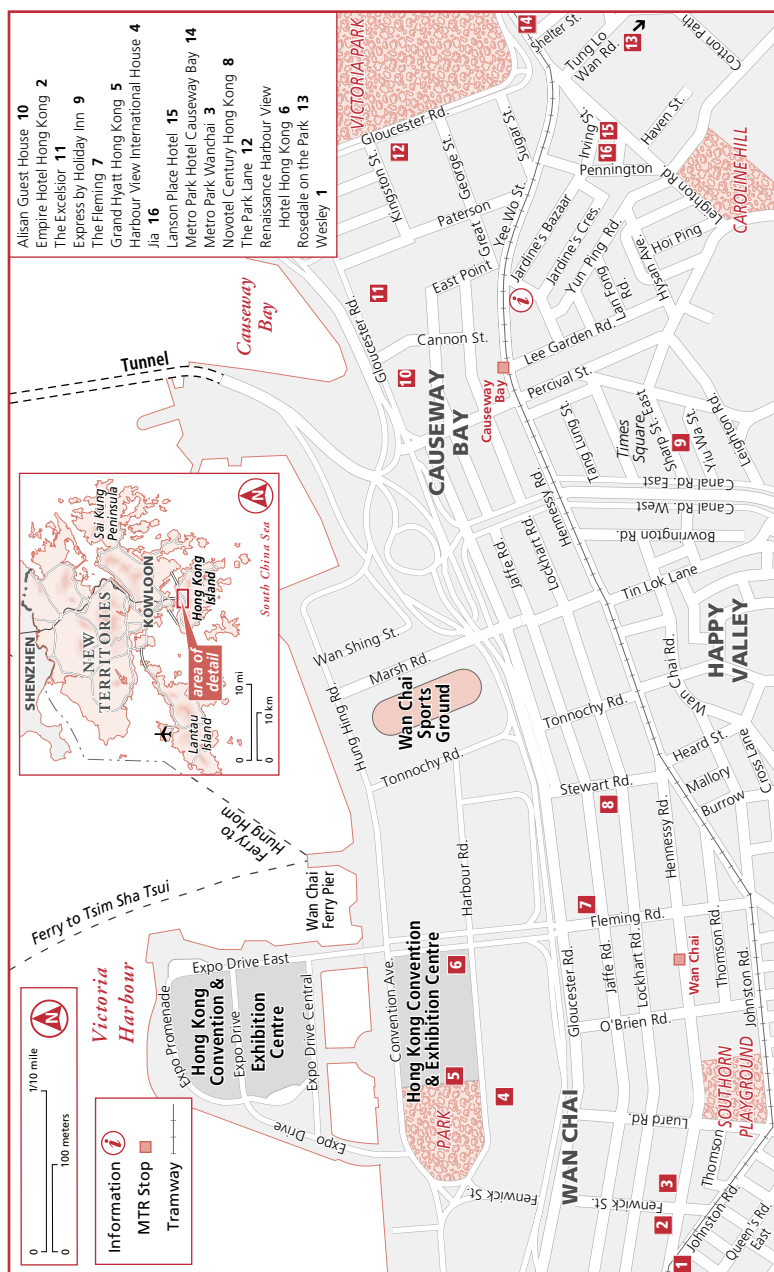
2 SELECTING ACCOMMODATIONS

No one area in this compact city is really a more convenient location than any other. Public transportation is efficient and easy to use, and the attractions are spread throughout the city. However, most visitors do stay in **Tsim Sha Tsui**, on the Kowloon side, simply because that's where you'll find the greatest concentration of hotels, as well as shops and restaurants. Business travelers often prefer the **Central District**, while those who want to avoid the tourist crowds may like the hotels strung along the waterfront of **Wan Chai** and **Causeway Bay**. **Yau Ma Tei** and **Mong Kok**, situated on the Kowloon Peninsula north of Tsim Sha Tsui, are great places to stay if you want to be surrounded by Chinese stores and locals, with hardly a souvenir shop in sight. See "The Neighborhoods in Brief," beginning on p. 65, for more information on these neighborhoods.

The hotel prices listed in this book are the rack rates, which you might end up paying if you come during peak season (Chinese New Year, Mar–May, Oct–Nov). Otherwise, you can probably get a room for much, much less. It's *imperative*, therefore, to shop around and ask about special packages, upgrades, or promotional fares when making reservations, particularly in the off season. Although I've included toll-free numbers for the United States and Canada for many of the listings below, I also recommend contacting the hotels directly to inquire about rates and special deals, and checking websites for deals that might be offered only through the Internet. A check of the Luxe Manor's website, for example, revealed special summer prices that were half its rack rates.

Generally speaking, the price of a room in Hong Kong depends upon its view and height rather than upon its size. Not surprisingly, the best and most expensive rooms are those with a sweeping view of Victoria Harbour, as well as those on the higher floors. Is a harbor view worth it? Emphatically, yes. Hong Kong's harbor, with watercraft activity ranging from cruise ships and barges to fishing boats and the Star Ferry, is one of the

Where to Stay in Causeway Bay & Wan Chai 81





Ways to Save on Your Hotel Room

The **rack rate** is the maximum rate that a hotel charges for a room. Although a few deluxe hotels stick to their published rack rates year-round and most hotels charge rack rates during peak travel times in spring and autumn and during major fairs and conventions, you can probably strike a better bargain.

- **Ask about special rates or other discounts.** Always ask whether a room less expensive than the first one quoted is available. Hong Kong hotels usually have a variety of rates based on room amenities, views, and other factors. If the hotel won't budge on price, ask whether special privileges or amenities can be thrown in, such as free breakfast.
- **Dial direct.** When booking a room, compare the rates offered by the hotel's local line with that of the toll-free number. A hotel makes nothing on a room that stays empty, so the local hotel reservation desk may be willing to offer a special rate unavailable elsewhere.
- **Book online.** Many hotels offer Internet-only discounts. Cheaper rates are also available through room suppliers on the Internet. In addition to the well-known online travel booking sites Travelocity, Expedia, and Orbitz, another good site is www.asiahotels.com, a Hong Kong-based website providing hotel reservations, often at discount prices. Other good shopping grounds for hotels are www.travel.priceline.com.hk and <http://info.wotif.com>. In any case, make sure you get a confirmation number and make a printout of any online booking transaction.
- **Remember the law of supply and demand.** Avoid high-season stays whenever you can: Planning your vacation just a week before or after official peak season (generally spring and autumn) can mean big savings. Many hotels offer promotional fares throughout the summer. Business hotels may offer discounts over the weekend.

most fascinating in the world; the city's high-rises and mountains are icing on the cake. Waking in the morning and opening your curtains to this famous scene is a thrill. Hotels know it, which is why they charge an arm and a leg for the privilege. A few moderately and inexpensively priced accommodations offer harbor views, though these, too, represent their most expensive rooms.

In any case, don't be shy about asking what price categories are available and what the differences are among them. Keep in mind that the difference in price between a room facing inland and a room facing the harbor can be staggering, with various price categories in between. For example "partial" or "side" harbor views means you can glimpse the harbor looking sideways from your window or between tall buildings. Double rooms that range from HK\$2,000 to HK\$3,000 (US\$260–US\$390/£130–£195), for example, may include five different categories, beginning with a "standard" room on a lower floor facing inland and then increasing in cost to those on upper floors facing inland, those with side harbor views, those on lower floors facing the harbor, and, most expensive, "deluxe" rooms on higher floors with full harbor views. To save money, consider requesting the

- **Look into group or long-stay discounts.** If you come as part of a large group, you should be able to negotiate a bargain rate, since the hotel can then guarantee occupancy in a number of rooms. Likewise, if you're planning a long stay (at least a week), you might qualify for a discount.
- **Avoid excess charges.** Find out whether your hotel imposes a surcharge on local and long-distance calls. A pay phone, however inconvenient, may save you money. And don't be tempted by the room's minibar offerings: Most hotels charge through the nose for beer, soda, and snacks. Although many offer one or two complimentary bottles of water, they may charge for extra bottles consumed or for more expensive sparkling brands, so be sure to check before opening the bottle.
- **Consider an executive-level room.** Check the hotel's website for privileges offered for executive-level rooms. These can include everything from free Internet connections at the business center or in your room to free breakfasts and evening cocktails complete with an appetizer buffet.
- **Consider a suite.** If you are traveling with your family or another couple, you can pack more people into a suite (which usually comes with a sofa bed), and thereby reduce your per-person rate. Remember that some places charge for extra guests.
- **If traveling with children, try to find a hotel that allows children to stay free** in their parent's room. There's an age limit (usually 11 and under in Hong Kong), there's sometimes a maximum of three people to a room, and children are usually free only if no extra bed is required.
- **Book an efficiency.** A room with a kitchenette allows you to shop for groceries and cook your own meals. This is a big money saver, especially for families on long stays.

highest room available in the category you choose. If "standard" rooms, for example, run up to the eighth floor and deluxe rooms are on floors 9 to 20, you'll save money by asking for a standard room on floor 8. If you decide to spring for a full harbor view, be sure to ask for it when making your reservation, and request the highest floor available.

For moderately priced or inexpensive lodgings, few of which offer any kind of view at all, rates are usually based on height, decor, and sometimes size, and it's prudent to inquire whether there's a difference in price between twin and double rooms; some hotels charge more for two beds in a room (more sheets to wash, I guess).

You might also be able to save money by spending more—that is, selecting a room on the executive floor. While the "hotel-within-a-hotel" concept usually costs more than a regular room (though note that deluxe harbor-view rooms may cost more than an executive room facing inland), it may more than make up for the price difference with a wide range of privileges and services, which might include express check-in and checkout; use of a private executive lounge serving complimentary breakfasts, snacks, and evening cocktails complete with an appetizer buffet (thereby saving on dinner); complimentary

pressing service and/or discounted laundry service; free use of the business center or free in-room Internet connections; and an executive-floor concierge attendant who can take care of such details as restaurant reservations or transportation arrangements. Some hotels have dedicated executive-level floors, while others offer executive-level privileges from any room by paying a surcharge. Even some moderately priced hotels now offer executive-level rooms, though it goes without saying that service levels (or the quality of their free buffets) don't compare with those offered by deluxe hotels.

The wide range of prices listed below for double/twin rooms in each of the listings reflects the various categories available. In moderately priced and inexpensive lodgings, single rates are also usually available, but more expensive hotels often charge the same for double or single occupancy.

All of Hong Kong's expensive hotels, most of the moderately priced hotels, and a few of the inexpensive hotels are members of the **Hong Kong Hotels Association** (HKHA; ☎ 852/2383 8380; www.hkha.com.hk), though not every hotel named in this chapter is. The advantage of staying at a member hotel is that if you have a complaint, you can lodge it directly with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB). Furthermore, the HKHA maintains a counter at Hong Kong International Airport where you can reserve a room at one of its member hotels at no extra charge. The hotels in this chapter are arranged first by price and then by geographical location. The categories are based on rates for a double room (excluding tax and service) as follows: **Very Expensive**, HK\$4,000 (US\$519/£260) and up; **Expensive**, HK\$2,600 to HK\$4,000 (US\$338–US\$519/£169–£260); **Moderate**, HK\$1,300 to HK\$2,600 (US\$169–US\$325/£84–£162); and **Inexpensive**, less than HK\$1,300 (US\$169/£84).

Keep in mind that prices given in this book are for room rates only—a 10% service charge and 3% government tax will be added to your final bill. Since a 13% increase can really add up, be sure to take it into account when choosing your hotel.

3 VERY EXPENSIVE

Hong Kong's top hotels are among the best in the world, with unparalleled service, state-of-the-art business, health-club, and often spa facilities, guest rooms equipped with just about everything you can imagine, some of the city's best restaurants, and usually views of famous Victoria Harbour. They also offer the convenience of a concierge or guest-relations staff, on hand to help with everything from theater tickets to restaurant and tour reservations. Among other extras are turndown service, 24-hour room service, welcoming tea brought to your room shortly after your arrival, free bottled water, free fruit basket, free newspaper delivered to your room, and many in-room conveniences and amenities, including voice mail, wired and/or Wi-Fi Internet access, and bedside controls that regulate everything from do-not-disturb lights to the opening of the curtains (it's great to wake up in the morning and have the city appear before you with a mere push of a button). Large bathrooms are standard, all with separate shower and tub facilities (useful for couples trying to get ready at the same time), magnifying mirrors, and bathroom scales so you can monitor your weight gain as you eat your way through Hong Kong. Most also offer executive lounges, accessible by staying on designated executive-level floors or, at some hotels, by paying a surcharge (guests staying at any room in the InterContinental, for example, can use the private executive lounge and have special privileges by paying extra).

KOWLOON

Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong ★★ Whereas The Peninsula, across the street, is the grand old dame of Hong Kong's hotels, the InterContinental is like its youthful, contemporary cousin. It exudes a relaxed, informal atmosphere despite its stylish digs, with almost half its guests hailing from North America. It also boasts what may well be the best views of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island from Tsim Sha Tsui. In fact, you can't get much closer to the water than this: Built in 1980 of polished rose granite and rising 17 stories, the hotel is located right on the water's edge. Its unfussy lobby, with a soaring glass facade and unobstructed views of harbor activity, is one of Hong Kong's best venues for afternoon tea or evening cocktails. Great views are also trademarks of its guest rooms, 70% of which command sweeping vistas of the harbor with floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall windows (the remaining—and less expensive but larger—rooms face the outdoor swimming pool and landscaped sun terrace). In-room standouts include an air purification system and huge walk-in closets adjoining the bathrooms (you can shower and get dressed without disturbing another guest in the room). Other notable hotel features are its high-rated restaurants; a health-conscious menu available from room service or at Harbourside (p. 131); a state-of-the-art spa renowned for its outdoor cabanas and jet-lag, anti-cellulite, and Oriental healing treatments; harbor views from outdoor whirlpools and the pool's sun terrace; free tai chi and yoga classes for hotel guests; and Wi-Fi that enables guests to access the Internet even from poolside.

18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. © 800/327-0200 in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2721 1211. Fax 852/2739 4546. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. 495 units. HK\$4,500–HK\$6,000 (US\$584–US\$779/£292–£390) single or double; HK\$900 (US\$117/£58) extra per room per night for Club lounge privileges; from HK\$7,500 (US\$974/£487) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, including Spoon by Alain Ducasse, Yan Toh Heen, Nobu, and STEAK HOUSE winebar + grill (p. 129, 132, 128, and 129); lounge (p. 169 and 170); bar; outdoor pool w/underwater music; Jacuzzis overlooking Victoria Harbour; fitness room (24 hr.); spa; concierge; business center; upscale shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi, iPod docking station.

The Peninsula ★★ This is Hong Kong's most famous hotel, *the* place to stay if you are an incurable romantic and have a penchant for the historical. Built in 1928, it exudes elegance, from its white-gloved doormen and one of the world's largest limousine fleets of Rolls-Royces to its ornate lobby, reminiscent of a Parisian palace and Hong Kong's foremost spot for afternoon tea and people-watching (p. 169). After The Peninsula lost its fabled view of the harbor following construction of the unsightly Space Museum across the street, it remedied the problem in 1993 with a 32-story tower providing fantastic harbor views from guest rooms and its top-floor restaurant Felix, designed by Philippe Starck. Spacious rooms (with a minimum of 41 sq. m/441 sq. ft.)—so wonderfully equipped that even jaded travelers are likely to be impressed—include head-phones for both radio and TV; tightly focused bedside reading lights designed to keep sleeping partners happy; telephones and control panels on both sides of gigantic beds; a display panel showing outdoor temperature and humidity; mood lighting; and a box in the closet where attendants can place your morning newspaper or take your dirty shoes for complimentary cleaning. Each huge bathroom is equipped with its own TV, hands-free phone (which automatically mutes the TV or radio and digitally filters the sound of running water), and two sinks, both with a magnifying mirror. It's worth the extra money to spring for a stunning harbor view in the tower if you can afford it, since views facing the back are a disappointment and those in the older part of the hotel are marred by the

Space Museum. For the culture-minded, The Peninsula offers classes on everything from tai chi and feng shui to cooking; for the travel-weary, its spa focuses on the journey to rejuvenation with views of the harbor from its sauna. I absolutely love this place.

Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **866/382-8388** in the U.S., or 852/2920 2888. Fax 852/2722 4170. www.peninsula.com. 300 units. HK\$4,000–HK\$5,600 (US\$519–US\$727/£260–£364) single or double; from HK\$6,600 (US\$857/£429) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 6 restaurants, including Gaddi's, Felix, and Spring Moon (p. 128, 126, and 167); 2 bars; lounge; gorgeous indoor pool w/sun terrace overlooking the harbor; health club; spa; concierge; business center; designer-brand shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; in-house nurse; practice music room w/grand piano. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/free in-house movies, fax (silent, w/personal fax number), minibar, hair dryer, safe, free Wi-Fi and high-speed Internet access.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Conrad International Hong Kong ★★ ★ The 61-story Conrad is one of a trio of exclusive hotels perched on a hillside above Pacific Place, an upscale shopping center located about halfway between the Central District and Wan Chai. Pacific Place abounds in very good restaurants, greatly expanding dining options without having to venture far. Hong Kong Park is just steps away, and the MTR can be reached without venturing outside. Although the architecture is contemporary, the hotel's classic furnishings and Asian touches throughout soften the modern effect, giving it a cozy atmosphere. Large rooms (from 42 sq. m/452 sq. ft.), which start from the 40th floor, have Chinese vases and Chinese armoires concealing TVs, as well as windows that extend the width of the room, offering views of either the Peak or the harbor (harbor-view rooms, of course, are better and cost more, though some so-called "city view" rooms offer a partial harbor view through buildings). On a playful note, bathrooms feature a floating duck or other bath toy for a bit of fun, while a stuffed bear is placed on beds at turndown. In short, this is a great choice for business or leisure.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/CONRADS** (800/266-7237) in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2521 3838. Fax 852/2521 3888. www.conradhotels.com. 513 units. HK\$4,200–HK\$4,900 (US\$545–US\$636/£273–£318) single or double; HK\$5,300–HK\$5,700 (US\$688–US\$740/£344–£370) executive floor; from HK\$7,000 (US\$909/£454) suite. Children 17 and under stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; bar; lounge; heated outdoor pool; state-of-the-art health club; Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong ★★ ★ Just a stone's throw from the Central Ferry Piers and providing easy access to ifc mall, Hong Kong Station (with a direct line to the airport), and the MTR subway without having to step outside, this cool urban oasis has rooms to die for, a luxurious spa, and one of the hottest restaurants in town (if you want to snag a table in the French restaurant Caprice, book early). Although its light-infused lobby is too low to provide views, its outdoor lap and infinity pools and whirlpool have great harbor views, and an executive lounge on the top floor, which any guest can use by paying a daily supplement, boasts fantastic views and even an outside deck. With 18 treatment rooms, its spa is among the largest of any hotel in Hong Kong, as well as one of the coolest: Who wouldn't love lounging, après massage, in a private jet bath with harbor views? Rooms, measuring 45 sq. m (484 sq. ft.) and featuring floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking either the city or harbor (harbor rooms, of course, cost more), are either contemporary Western or a modern take on traditional Chinese design, the latter with gold-lacquered ceiling, red furniture, and mother-of-pearl inlay on the bathroom floor. All feature 42-inch plasma TVs, focused bedside reading lights, and spacious bathrooms with two sinks,

shower stalls and deep soaking tubs, from which you can operate a small, mounted LCD TV via remote. In short, with its seamless service and top-grade facilities, there's no mistaking that this is a Four Seasons, and until a new glam hotel comes along (and this being Hong Kong, one most assuredly will), it's at the top of the pack.

8 Finance St., Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/819-5053** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/3196 8888. Fax 852/3196 8899. www.fourseasons.com/hongkong. 399 units. HK\$4,200–HK\$5,300 (US\$545–US\$688/£273–£344) single or double; extra HK\$800 (US\$104/£52) single or HK\$1,000 (US\$130/£65) double for executive lounge; from HK\$8,000 (US\$1,039/£519) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants, including Caprice (p. 141); bar; lounge; 2 outdoor heated pools w/whirlpool, year-round; health club (24 hr.); spa; concierge; business center (24 hr); connected to shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Island Shangri-La Hong Kong ★★ ★ *Finds* Hong Kong Island's tallest hotel (measured from sea level) offers the ultimate in extravagance and luxury, rivaling the grand hotels in Paris or London: It's one of my favorite hotels in the world. More than 700 Viennese chandeliers, lush Tai Ping carpets, artistic flower arrangements, and more than 500 paintings and artworks adorn the hotel. A 17-story atrium, which stretches from the 39th to the 56th floors, features a marvelous 16-story-high Chinese painting, drawn by 40 artists from Beijing and believed to be the largest landscape painting in the world. Also in the atrium are a private lounge open only to hotel guests and a two-story old-world-style library. The hotel itself is enhanced by the connecting Pacific Place with its many options in dining; across the street is Hong Kong Park. Rooms, all of which ring the atrium and measure 41 sq. m (441 sq. ft.) or more, face either the Peak or spectacular Victoria Harbour. Oversize bathrooms are equipped with two sinks and separate tub and shower areas (harbor-view rooms only), bidet, LCD TVs, and even jewelry boxes. Fresh flowers are another nice touch. Guests paying rack rates receive such additional services as free transportation from and to the airport, free laundry service and dry cleaning throughout their stay, complimentary American or continental breakfast, free local telephone calls and Internet access, and 6pm late checkout.

Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **866/565-5050** in the U.S., or 852/2877 3838. Fax 852/2521 8742. www.shangri-la.com. 565 units. HK\$4,500–HK\$5,300 (US\$584–US\$688/£292–£344) single; HK\$4,800–HK\$5,800 (US\$623–US\$753/£312–£377) double; HK\$5,300–HK\$6,100 (US\$688–US\$792/£344–£396) executive floor double; from HK\$9,600 (US\$1,247/£623) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 6 restaurants, including Petrus and café TOO (p. 144 and 147); lounge; outdoor heated pool big enough for swimming laps; health club (24 hr.); spa; concierge; business center; adjoining shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; medical clinic; free shuttle to Queen's Pier in Central and Convention Centre. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD w/pay movies on demand, fax/printer/scanner, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, Wi-Fi.

JW Marriott Hotel ★★ ★ The 27-story Marriott, which opened in 1989 as the first of three hotels at Pacific Place, is overshadowed by the more luxuriously appointed Conrad and Island Shangri-La (see above). Its lobby, while not as grandiose as others in this category, is nonetheless the only one of Pacific Place's hotels to offer views of the harbor from its lounge (though recent construction has robbed the lounge of its once-grandiose panorama). Rooms, too, are smaller than others in its price range but are all designed with right-angled "saw-toothed" windows to maximize views of the harbor or Peak. On the downside, rooms facing the harbor are subject to the slight din of traffic; since rates are the same, request a room on a high floor. What you're really paying for here are location and a full range of facilities.

Fun Facts If Money's No Object

Hong Kong's largest and most luxurious suite is the 5-bedroom, 650-sq.m (7,000-sq. ft.) Presidential Suite in the InterContinental. A two-story living room, wrap-around terrace, and rooftop infinity pool with Jacuzzi, all with expansive views of Victoria Harbour, are complemented by a dining room, kitchenette, a study, and a private gym with indoor Jacuzzi, steam room, and sauna. A night here will set you back HK\$87,000 (US\$11,299/£565), plus tax and service charge, in case you're considering it.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/228-7014** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2810 8366. Fax 852/2845 0737. www.marriott.com/HKGDT. 602 units. HK\$4,100–HK\$4,700 (US\$532–US\$610/£266–£305) single or double; HK\$5,500 (US\$714/£357) executive floor; from HK\$8,800 (US\$1,143/£571) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; wine bar; lounge; outdoor heated pool (year-round); health club (24 hr.); Jacuzzi; sauna; steam room; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Landmark Mandarin Oriental ★★ This small hotel eschews the boutique label because it doesn't scrimp on size, with rooms that flaunt both space and strikingly contemporary decor. Located atop the Landmark shopping complex and popular with designers who have shops there, it exudes a laid-back, refined atmosphere, with lobby seating grouped in a library setting and a stylish bar attracting a well-heeled crowd. Other diversions are limited to a spa with a Zen-like atmosphere and workout rooms for yoga and Pilates, as well as a chic restaurant serving innovative European cuisine. Though the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district is within staggering distance, it's hard to imagine guests who can afford to stay here taking advantage of it. Rather, the big focus is on state-of-the-art guest rooms, which measure 42 or 56 sq. m (452 or 603 sq. ft.) and are priced accordingly. Both feature high-tech phones that include hands-free speakerphones and display text messages, walk-in closets, yoga mats, and fresh flowers providing splashes of color. But it's the stunning, glass-walled bathrooms, which take up about a third of the room's space, that take the cake. Big enough to live in, they have two separate vanities and dual sinks, shower stall, another TV, and a huge, round tub (in the larger rooms, the tub measures 2m/6.5 ft. across). Unfortunately, surrounding buildings can make guests feel like they're living in a fish bowl. One unwitting guest closed the sheers immediately upon check-in but forgot to close the block-out drapes later when taking her nighttime bath, discovering her faux pas only the next morning. Needless to say, there are no views from this hotel, though the same may not be said, perhaps, for office workers across the street.

15 Queen's Rd. Central, The Landmark, Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/526-6567** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2132 0188. Fax 852/2132 0199. www.mandarinoriental.com. 113 units. HK\$4,500–HK\$6,900 (US\$584–US\$896/£292–£448) single or double; from HK\$8,800 (US\$1,142/£571) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; indoor pool; health club; spa; concierge; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable HDTV/DVD w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi, iPod/MP3 docking station.

Mandarin Oriental ★★ Opened in 1963, this 25-story landmark recently underwent complete renovation, making it a new yet familiar property in the middle of Central (newer properties can only drool over its fabled location). Although updates include a spa with a 1930s Shanghai atmosphere, new dining ventures, and remodeled

rooms, many features are back by popular demand, including its retro-gilded lobby, the Captain's Bar (p. 247), the Chinnery, and Mandarin Grill. Gone from the rooms are the small balconies (I doubt many people spent much time on them anyway), replaced by comfortable sitting areas perfect for that first morning coffee while you peruse the newspaper and gaze out the window. Rooms face either the harbor or inland (those facing the harbor even come with binoculars) and feature such standouts as mood lighting, a cupboard beside the front door for receiving newspapers, laundry or messages so you don't have to open the door, and lighted anti-fog mirrors in the shower. In short, the Mandarin Oriental is again in the running as one of Hong Kong's top hotels. And whatever you do, don't miss a stroll past the cake shop; its fantastic chocolate creations are displayed in glass cases like crown jewels.

5 Connaught Rd., Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/526-6567** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2522 0111. Fax 852/2810 6190. www.mandarinoriental.com. 502 units (some with showers only). HK\$4,300–HK\$5,400 (US\$558–US\$701/£279–£351) single or double; from HK\$6,000 (US\$779/£390) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 3 bars; lounge; indoor pool w/flume jet for a real workout; health club; spa; concierge; 24-hr. room service; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, iPod docking station, Wi-Fi.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong ★★ ★ (Kids) Walking into the lobby of this hotel is like walking into the Bavarian castle of a modern-day King Ludwig, a lobby so palatial that the word “understatement” has certainly never been uttered within its walls. Decorated to resemble the salon of a 1930s Art Deco luxury ocean liner, it literally flaunts space, with huge black granite columns, massive flower arrangements, palm trees, bubbling fountains, and statuettes. It's not the kind of place you want to be seen on a bad hair day. Located on the waterfront adjacent to the Convention Centre and a 5-minute walk from the Wan Chai Star Ferry pier that delivers passengers to Tsim Sha Tsui, it offers smart-looking, contemporary rooms, some 75% with a full harbor view (the rest have a view of Hong Kong's largest outdoor hotel pool and garden, with partial glimpses of the harbor). Pluses are the slide-out clothes rack in the closet and coffee-table books, which impart a homey atmosphere. For extra pampering, travelers can choose to stay at Plateau, a residential spa with 14 guest rooms (and nine treatment rooms), where guests can enjoy a massage, manicure, and a soak in an infinity bathtub without leaving the privacy of their room (doubles here start at HK\$7,000/US\$909/£454, including breakfast). They should, however, venture at least as far as the spa's sauna, which boasts a view of the harbor. I also like the hotel's restaurants, including the Grill, a poolside, landscaped restaurant offering sumptuous buffet spreads and grilled specialties year-round (weather permitting).

1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/233-1234** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2588 1234. Fax 852/2802 0677. www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com. 549 units. HK\$5,000–HK\$7,500 (US\$649–US\$974/£325–£487) single; HK\$5,200–HK\$7,700 (US\$675–US\$1,000/£338–£500) double; from HK\$6,800 (US\$883/£442) club executive-floor double; from HK\$9,500 (US\$1,234/£617) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, including Grissini and One Harbour Road (p. 155 and 156); lounge; champagne bar; club w/live music; 50m outdoor heated pool (shared w/adjacent Renaissance Harbour View Hotel and open year-round); children's splash pool and playground; golf-driving range; 2 outdoor lit tennis courts; 2 squash courts; health club; spa; jogging track; concierge; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; free shuttle to Central, Causeway Bay, and Admiralty. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

4 EXPENSIVE

A few hotels in this category, including some of my favorites, offer almost as much as Hong Kong's very expensive hotels and some even have great views of Victoria Harbour. In this category you can expect a guest-relations/concierge desk, 24-hour room service, swimming pools and/or health clubs or exercise rooms, business centers, same-day laundry service, and comfortable rooms with hair dryers, satellite TVs with in-room movies, voice mail, Internet access, coffee/tea-making facilities, bathroom scales, and usually free bottled water and a welcome basket of fruit. Many also have executive floors for business travelers.

KOWLOON

Holiday Inn Golden Mile  Named after the "golden mile of shopping" on Nathan Road, this Holiday Inn has a great location right in the heart of bustling Tsim Sha Tsui, about a 6-minute walk from the Star Ferry and with an MTR subway station right across the street. Maybe that's why it's popular with tour groups, mainly from North America and China, which can make the lobby rather crowded, noisy, and bothersome. However, it's a good bet also for families because of the heated pool and the fact that children 19 and under can eat free in hotel restaurants. Rooms, decorated in Ming blue or Oriental red with Chinese-influenced accents on everything from the drapes to the TV cabinets, impart a warm, cozy feeling and are fairly large for Tsim Sha Tsui, featuring either a king-size bed or two double beds. Although rooms boast floor-to-ceiling windows, views are blocked by adjacent buildings; those facing the unsightly Chungking Mansion are glazed (believe me, it's better this way). Those facing Mody Road are brighter but noisier; try to get a room on a high floor. All in all, this is a functional hotel in a convenient location.

50 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/465-4329** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2369 3111. Fax 852/2369 8016. www.holiday-inn.com/hongkong-gldn. 594 units. HK\$2,100–HK\$2,850 (US\$273–US\$370/£136–£185) single; HK\$2,750–HK\$2,950 (US\$357–US\$383/£179–£192) double; HK\$3,150 (US\$409/£205) executive club double; from HK\$5,800 (US\$753/£377) suite. Up to 2 children 19 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; heated rooftop pool (year-round); health club; sauna; concierge; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffee maker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, Wi-Fi.

InterContinental Grand Stanford ★★ This is one of Tsim Sha Tsui East's top hotels; in 2007, it also became the first hotel in Hong Kong to install a hybrid hot-water fuel system that drastically cuts carbon dioxide output. It's located right on the waterfront and boasts a lively, high-ceilinged lobby with a cafe perfect for watching the never-ending stream of international guests. I also like the rooftop swimming pool, heated, open year-round, and affording great city views. Rooms are more homey than most, with trim work bordering the ceiling, good bedside lights, plants, lit magnifying mirrors that reveal flaws you never knew you had, and good harbor views through floor-to-ceiling windows in half of the rooms (because of a highway that runs alongside the harbor, be sure to request a room on a high floor). If you can't afford a full harbor view, "side harbor views" are almost as good, due to the hotel's undulating V-shaped facade; unfortunately, the windows of the least expensive rooms open rather unceremoniously onto a windowless wall. Probably the biggest drawback is the 10-minute walk to Tsim Sha Tsui, but it does offer a free shuttle service.



Family-Friendly Hotels

BP International House (p. 104) This inexpensive hotel offers “Family Rooms” with bunk beds that sleep four for HK\$1,450 (US\$188/£94), as well as the convenience of a laundry room. But best of all is the adjacent Kowloon Park, with its indoor and outdoor public swimming pools, children’s playground, lake with flamingos and other birds, and plenty of romping space for active bodies.

Grand Hyatt/Renaissance Harbour View (p. 89 and 94) These two hotels share one of Hong Kong’s largest outdoor swimming pools, as well as a splash pool for smaller children and a playground. Both hotels also offer babysitting.

Holiday Inn Golden Mile (p. 90) This functional hotel with a great location in Tsim Sha Tsui lets two children 19 and under stay free in parent’s room and even eat for free in hotel restaurants. A heated rooftop pool, open year-round, and babysitting service clinch the deal for traveling families.

The Salisbury YMCA (p. 106) The overwhelming choice for families in terms of price, facilities, and location (just a short walk to both the Star Ferry and the MTR), this Salisbury Road establishment offers large suites suitable for families, an inexpensive cafeteria serving buffet meals, two indoor swimming pools (including a children’s pool), an indoor climbing wall, and a bookstore with a children’s corner where tots can try out games and books before parents fork over the cash. Babysitting is also available.

70 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui E., Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/327-0200** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2721 5161. Fax 852/2732 2233. www.hongkong.intercontinental.com. 578 units. HK\$3,000–HK\$4,100 (US\$390–US\$532/£195–£266) single or double; HK\$3,600–HK\$4,400 (US\$468–US\$571/£234–£286) club privileges; from HK\$5,200 (US\$675/£338) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent’s room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; lounge; outdoor heated pool; exercise room (24 hr.); spa; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; doctor and dentist on call; free shuttle service to several locations in Tsim Sha Tsui every 30–45 min. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD/CD w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, Wi-Fi.

Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong ★★★★★ **Value** The Kowloon Shangri-La, on the Tsim Sha Tsui East waterfront near train service to the New Territories and China and a 5-minute walk to Tsim Sha Tsui (there’s also free shuttle service every 45 min. to the Star Ferry), is a popular choice for business travelers, the majority of whom are American. The well-trained staff (half have worked at the hotel more than 10 years) provides sterling service, which is probably one reason why repeat guests make up more than 55% of hotel occupancy; there’s even a technology butler on hand 24 hours to iron out laptop snafus. The two-story lobby is one of the most spacious in Hong Kong, with an expansive white Carrara marble floor, massive Viennese crystal chandeliers, a fountain, and Chinese landscape murals. Rooms, offering either harbor views or rather mundane “garden views” (a popular euphemism for windows that face inland), are spacious (starting at 42 sq. m/452 sq. ft.), and luxuriously appointed, with ceiling-to-floor bay windows. If you the pay rack rates below, additional benefits include free airport transfer,

92 free laundry service and dry cleaning, free buffet breakfast, free local telephone calls and Internet access, and a late 6pm checkout. Otherwise, lower rates without frills are usually available, beginning at HK\$2,850 (US\$370/£185) for a double.

64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **866/565-5050** in the U.S., or 852/2721 2111. Fax 852/2723 8686. www.shangri-la.com. 700 units. HK\$3,600–HK\$4,050 (US\$468–US\$526/£234–£263) single; HK\$3,900–HK\$4,350 (US\$506–US\$565/£253–£282) double; HK\$750 (US\$97/£49) Horizon Club executive-floor supplement; from HK\$5,300 (US\$688/£344) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants, including Shang Palace for Cantonese (p. 166); tapas bar; lounge; small indoor pool; exercise room (24 hr.); Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; business center (24 hr.); 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; house doctor; free shuttle service to Tsim Sha Tsui. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD w/pay movies and free DVD library, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, iPod docking station, Wi-Fi.

Langham Hotel ★★ This affiliate of London's historic Langham Hotel and Hong Kong's only member of the Leading Hotels of the World is conveniently located a couple of blocks inland from the harbor, just a few minutes' walk from the Star Ferry and huge Harbour City shopping complex. Its lobby exudes a classic Italian atmosphere, with chandeliers, marble floor, a hand-painted dome ceiling, and lots of artwork and statues that give it the atmosphere of an art gallery, including glass art by American artist Dale Chihuly and paintings from mainland China. Photos of old Hong Kong adorn corridor walls and rooms. Its restaurants, which include a renowned Cantonese venue, an American deli, and a fun seafood restaurant, are well respected among locals. Contemporary rooms are small but comfortable, with bedside control panels that allow guests to adjust air-conditioning, select a TV or radio program, call up messages or the hotel bill on the television screen, and switch on a "Do Not Disturb" light that automatically disconnects the door chime. Touch-screen phones allow guests to even browse the Internet. Unfortunately, none of its rooms have harbor views. Take solace instead in the deep soaking tubs in newly renovated Grand Rooms, where you can watch television while you soak.

8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-6800** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2375 1133. Fax 852/2375 6611. <http://hongkong.langhamhotels.com>. 495 units. HK\$3,000–HK\$4,000 (US\$390–US\$519/£195–£260) single or double; HK\$3,800–HK\$4,800 (US\$494–US\$623/£247–£312) club executive-floor; from HK\$6,000 (US\$779/£390) suite. Children 12 and under stay free in parent's room (children not allowed in Grand Rooms). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants, including T'ang Court (p. 167) and Main Street Deli (p. 140); bar; lounge; rooftop outdoor pool and Jacuzzi year-round; health club (24 hr.); concierge; business center (24 hr.); shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, Wi-Fi.

Royal Garden ★★ **Finds** The Royal Garden has always been one of my favorites because of its architectural surprises that invite exploration. It features a cool, sleek lobby and a 15-story inner atrium, a concept adapted from the traditional Chinese inner garden (and employed here long before it became standard of some U.S. chains). Plants hang from the balconies ringing the soaring space, glass-enclosed elevators glide up the wall, a piano sits on an island in the middle of a pool, and the sound of rushing water adds freshness and coolness to the atmosphere. A wonderful 25m-long (82-ft.) rooftop swimming pool is heated in winter. Off the lobby is a very interesting martini bar, and its Italian restaurant, Sabatini, is one of Hong Kong's best. The rooms, the most expensive of which have partial harbor views between two buildings and the cheapest of which face the Regal Kowloon Hotel, are smartly decorated with a mix of colonial-style and modern furniture and offer chilled, purified tap water in the bathroom. Although a slight

hike to the action of Tsim Sha Tsui, it's close to the railway station with service to the New Territories and China.

69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2721 5215. Fax 852/2369 9976. www.rghk.com.hk. 422 units. HK\$2,900–HK\$3,900 (US\$377–US\$506/£188–£253) single; HK\$3,100–HK\$4,100 (US\$403–US\$532/£201–£266) double; HK\$4,300–HK\$4,600 (US\$558–US\$597/£279–£299) Crown Club executive-floor double; from HK\$5,000 (US\$649/£325) suite. 1 child 11 and under can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 6 restaurants, including Sabatini (p. 129) and the Greenery (p. 134); martini bar; lounge; heated rooftop outdoor pool and Jacuzzi; lighted outdoor tennis court; putting green; exercise room; sauna; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers ★★ The Sheraton has one of the most envied locations in Hong Kong—near the waterfront on the corner of Nathan Road and Salisbury Road—and is an easy walk to the subway and Star Ferry. Its lobby, tucked away on the second floor to discourage foot traffic, has a sleek, contemporary look graced by Asian motifs and subdued lighting, but the front desk is annoyingly high (I have to stand on tippytoes). A plus is the outdoor rooftop swimming pool, heated in winter, offering a spectacular view and more privacy than pools lower to the ground. Guest rooms are decorated in neutral brown and range from those facing an inner courtyard (the cheapest) to those facing the harbor with great views even from bathrooms. In between are those that overlook surrounding Tsim Sha Tsui, some of which face Nathan Road and even provide sideways glimpses of the harbor. Still, located between The Peninsula and InterContinental, it plays second fiddle to both in terms of reputation, class—and, luckily, price. Americans account for one-third of the guests here.

20 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/325-3535** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2369 1111. Fax 852/2739 8707. www.sheraton.com/hongkong. 762 units. HK\$2,800–HK\$3,200 (US\$364–US\$467/£182–£234) single, HK\$3,000–HK\$3,800 (US\$390–US\$494/£195–£247) double; HK\$4,200–HK\$5,000 (US\$545–US\$649/£273–£325) Tower executive-floor double; from HK\$5,400 (US\$701/£351) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants, including Japanese restaurant Unkai (p. 130); bar; 2 lounges (including a Cuban cigar lounge); outdoor heated rooftop swimming pool and Jacuzzi; health club; spa; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet access and pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Hotel LKF ★★ **Finds** If the only thing you want separating you from Hong Kong's biggest nightlife scene is an elevator, this is the place for you (luckily, keyed elevator access keeps inebriated nonguests from wandering the halls). Located at the top of upward-sloping Lan Kwai Fong (often abbreviated to LKF), this hushed and refined oasis is most noted for its enormous rooms (starting at 500 sq. m/5,380 sq. ft.), bigger than most Hong Kong apartments and the kind of place you wouldn't mind being holed up in to nurse a hangover or watch movies on the 62-inch LCD TV. Rooms are also high enough to provide good city views, though only the highest floors have a glimpse of the harbor between buildings. In-room espresso machines and free breakfast help jump-start the day, while complimentary evening cocktails can serve as a launch to another night of pub crawls. Or, if you wish to dine in, a top-floor restaurant and bar provide mesmerizing views. In any case, its Central location and reasonable price make it convenient for business and leisure travelers alike, though business travelers might find it tiresome to

wade through the nightly LKF crowds. In any case, don't confuse this hotel with the Hotel Lan Kwai Fong (p. 99), which isn't in Lan Kwai Fong at all.

33 Wyndham St., Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3518 9333**. Fax 852/3518 9338. www.hotel-lkf.com.hk. 95 units. HK\$3,000–HK\$4,500 (US\$390–US\$584/£195–£292) single or double; from HK\$5,500 (US\$714/£357) suite. Rates include continental breakfast buffet. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** Restaurant (Azure, p. 146); bar; access to nearby fitness center; yoga and spa center; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, espresso machine, high-speed Internet access, MP3 docking station.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong ★ **Kids** This large, 43-story hotel (and Marriott affiliate) sits beside the Convention and Exhibition Centre on the Wan Chai waterfront, separated from the Grand Hyatt (p. 89) by Hong Kong's largest outdoor hotel swimming pool and a garden with a playground and jogging trail, shared by the two hotels. Just a couple of minutes' walk from the Wan Chai Star Ferry that delivers passengers to Tsim Sha Tsui (but a longer hike to the nearest tram or MTR station), it provides some of the same facilities and advantages as the Hyatt but at a lower price; obviously, it caters largely to those attending functions at the convention center, which can make it quite busy, as well as business travelers. More than 65% of the rooms boast outstanding views of the harbor through floor-to-ceiling windows. The rest of the rooms face the pool and garden, which for Hong Kong isn't bad at all.

1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/228-9290** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2802 8888. Fax 852/2802 8833. www.renaissancehotels.com/HKGVH. 860 units. HK\$3,200–HK\$3,900 (US\$416–US\$506/£208–£253) single or double; HK\$3,900–HK\$4,400 (US\$506–US\$571/£253–£286) Renaissance Club executive floor; from HK\$5,000 (US\$649/£325) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; lounge; dance club; huge outdoor pool; children's splash pool and playground; golf-driving range; 2 lighted outdoor tennis courts; exercise room; Jacuzzi; jogging trail; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, fax, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

5 MODERATE

Tour groups have long been a mainstay of tourism in Hong Kong, and you're most likely to encounter them at the moderately priced hotels, which account for the majority of hotels in Hong Kong (as well as at large, higher-quality inexpensive hotels). With increased tourism from mainland China filling rooms in this category, it's imperative to book early. As for rooms, they tend to be rather small compared to American hotel rooms, with generally unexciting views, but usually have such amenities as hair dryers, minibars or empty refrigerators you can stock yourself, and instant coffee and sometimes free bottled water, as well as room service, bellhops, nonsmoking floors, tour desks, and sometimes a swimming pool and/or fitness room. Since harbor views are usually not available except for some hotels on the Hong Kong Island side, rates are generally based on height/floor number and decor and sometimes on size.

KOWLOON

Eaton Hotel ★★★ **Finds** This hotel has more class and more facilities than most hotels in its price range, making it one of my top picks. A handsome brick 21-story hotel located above a shopping complex not far from the Temple Street Night Market, it features one of the longest hotel escalators I've seen, taking guests straight up to the fourth-floor

lobby where a cheerful and efficient staff awaits your arrival. The lobby lounge is bright and cheerful, with a four-story glass-enclosed atrium that overlooks a garden terrace with a water cascade, where you can sit outside with drinks in nice weather. Other pluses are the small but nicely done rooftop pool with sunning terrace, free daily guided tours of the night market, free Internet service in its Main Street Café with the purchase of a drink, a Japanese-style pub, and a Cantonese restaurant serving great dim sum. Guest rooms are small but welcoming, with all the basic creature comforts and then some, including focused bedside reading lights and comfy desk chairs. This is a good choice for those who want to scrimp on room rates but not on amenities, though those seeking even more extras can opt for an E Club executive room.

380 Nathan Rd., Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2782 1818. Fax 852/2782 5563. <http://hongkong.eatonhotels.com>. 465 units. HK\$2,150–HK\$2,350 (US\$279–US\$305/£140–£153) single or double; HK\$2,650–HK\$2,850 (US\$344–US\$370/£172–£185) executive room double; from HK\$3,050 (US\$396/£198) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants, including Yagura (p. 138); bar; lounge (24 hr.); small outdoor heated pool; exercise room (24 hr.); concierge; business center (24 hr.); shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Internet access, iPod docking station.

Empire Hotel Kowloon This is a functional hotel in a colorful location close to Knutsford Terrace with its open-air restaurants and the Hong Kong Museum of History. Small rooms, occupying the eighth through 26th floors of a round, hollow, glass-sheathed tower, boast wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling windows, though only the highest-priced rooms above the 17th floor have distant harbor views. Glass-topped desks and bowl-shaped basins rise above ordinary hotel furnishings in more deluxe rooms, but the dim, bedside-reading lamps will ruin your eyes. Unlike older Hong Kong hotels, showers here greatly outnumber tubs. The pool is at the bottom of the pit-like tower, rendering it grossly uninviting. Still, this hotel, popular with Japanese guests, compares favorably with Kowloon's other medium-priced accommodations.

62 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/830-6144** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2685 3000. Fax 852/2685 3685. www.empirehotel.com.hk. 315 units (most bathrooms have showers only). HK\$1,600–HK\$2,400 (US\$208–US\$312/£104–£156) single or double; from HK\$3,000 (US\$389/£195) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; exercise room; sauna; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Hotel Panorama ★★ **Value** True to its name, this hotel, opened in 2008, actually does have panoramic views, despite being located a few blocks inland. That's because elevators whisk guests from the sleek lobby on the ground floor to rooms on the seventh to 37th floors. While the least expensive rooms, on lower floors, don't offer much to gaze upon (of these, try to get a room on the highest—17th—floor facing the harbor, where views are actually quite good), those from the 18th floor and above offer great vistas over surrounding buildings of either the harbor or the city (naturally, the most expensive rooms are at the top; some even have windows in the bathroom). The restaurant is on the 38th floor, while on the roof is the so-called Sky Garden, an expanse of green along with a putting green and exercise room. In short, you'll have a lot to like about this hotel, including its location, tucked away on a side street between Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East yet very convenient to both subway lines and trains to the New Territories and beyond.

8A Hart Ave., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/448-8355** in the U.S. or Canada, or 852/3550 0388. Fax 852/3550 0288. www.hotelpanorama.com.hk. 325 units (some bathrooms with showers only).

HK\$2,400–HK\$3,100 (US\$312–US\$403/£156–£201) single or double; HK\$3,800–HK\$4,100 (US\$494–US\$532/£247–£266) Platinum executive-floor double; from HK\$5,800 (US\$753/£377) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; exercise room; putting green; business center; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Internet access, iPod docking station.

Kimberley Hotel The Kimberley Hotel, near Knutsford Terrace with its alfresco dining options and about a 15-minute walk from the Star Ferry, opened in 1991 and shows its age, a bit worn around the edges and with outdated decor. It's clearly time for a face-lift, yet it still does a thriving business attracting both the tourist and business trade, including many Japanese and tour groups. A touch screen in the lobby allows guests to check flight information. Rooms, constructed with V-shaped windows that let in more sunlight and allow for more panoramic—though not scenic—views, are very small and plain but come with all the basics. The most expensive rooms are on higher floors and are larger, but even these are rather small. The suites represent an especially good deal since they occupy the top two floors and are equipped with kitchenettes and a lounging/dining area, making them ideal for long-term guests and families.

28 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/876-5278** in the U.S., or 852/2723 3888. Fax 852/2723 1318. www.kimberleyhotel.com.hk. 546 units. HK\$1,500–HK\$2,350 (US\$195–US\$305/£97–£153) single or double; from HK\$2,800 (US\$364/£182) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; lounge; golf cages; fitness room; spa; business center; shopping arcade; room service 6am–11pm; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, high-speed Internet access.

Kowloon Hotel The Kowloon is a modern glass-walled structure right behind The Peninsula, giving it a great location just a few minutes' walk from the Star Ferry and MTR. Though it has no recreational facilities of its own, guests can use the pool and health club at the YMCA cater-cornered to the hotel or at its sister Harbour Plaza Metropolis hotel (free shuttle available) at reduced fees. The downside of the hotel: Rooms are minuscule and plagued by traffic noise. Although they have V-shaped bay windows, allowing unobstructed views up and down the street, The Peninsula's tower has robbed harbor views from all but the most expensive rooms. Recommended only if you don't plan on spending any quality time in your room.

19–21 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S., or 852/2929 2888. Fax 852/2739 9811. www.harbour-plaza.com/klmh. 736 units. HK\$2,000–HK\$2,700 (US\$260–US\$350/£130–£175) single; HK\$2,100–HK\$2,800 (US\$273–US\$364/£136–£182) double; HK\$2,900–HK\$3,600 (US\$377–US\$468/£188–£234) Harbour Club floor double; from HK\$4,000 (US\$519/£260) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; access to nearby YMCA or sister hotel pool and health club (fee charged); business center; shopping arcade; room service 6am–2am; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, fax, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

The Luxe Manor ★★★ **Finds** The entrance to this boutique hotel is so discrete, you could walk right by the proverbial looking glass and never know it leads to one of the most whimsical hotels I've seen, with rooms looking like something Salvador Dalí might have dreamed up if asked to design the set for *Alice in Wonderland*. In other words, things are not as they seem: wall-mounted LCD TVs framed like gilded mirrors above faux fireplaces, picture frames framing nothing, and fun furniture such as desks with four totally different leg shapes. The six suites, each one different, are even more exaggerated flights of fantasy: The Safari room gives the illusion of being inside a tent, for example, while the Mirage is like being in a carnival fun house with dysfunctional furniture (like a lampshade disappearing into the coffee table). In short, hoteliers from all over the world

guilty of selling boring rooms should take lessons here, but visitors will have to decide for themselves if this is the Hong Kong they've come to see. My only quibble is that rooms have only showers instead of tubs, robbing me of a relaxing bath after a long flight. Still, you could do far worse than this unique hotel, especially if you can snag one of its discounted Internet rates.

39 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3763 8888**. Fax 852/3763 8899. www.the-luxemanoor.com. 159 units (bathrooms have shower only). HK\$2,200–HK\$2,800 (US\$286–US\$364/£143–£182) single or double; from HK\$5,800 (US\$753/£377) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Amenities: Restaurant; bar; exercise room; business center; room service 11am–11pm. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, free Wi-Fi.

Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel The best (and most expensive) of three Marco Polo properties lining this street, this hotel is as close as you can get to the Star Ferry and is connected to the largest shopping complex in Asia, Harbour City. In fact, its lobby opens right into the Lane Crawford department store, making for an “only in Hong Kong” surreal experience. Guest rooms, decorated in bold color schemes, are far from luxurious but are quite large and are mostly so-called “Hollywood” twins (two twin beds pushed together) with a sitting area, large working desks, and walk-in closet. The lowest-price rooms face the small courtyard swimming pool and other guest rooms and can be quite dark, while the most expensive rooms boast unparalleled views of harbor activity, including the ocean liners that dock right next door. Avoid rooms facing Canton Road, as these can be somewhat noisy. Down the street are the **Marco Polo Gateway** (☎ **852/2113 0888**) and the **Marco Polo Prince** (☎ **852/2113 1888**), which are cheaper but also have fewer facilities. For my money, however, I'd rather stay at several of the other recommended hotels in this price category than the merely functional Marco Polo brands.

Harbour City, 3 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/448-8355** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2113 0088. Fax 852/2113 0011. www.marcopolohotels.com. 664 units. HK\$2,450–HK\$3,750 (US\$318–US\$487/£159–£243) single; HK\$2,550–HK\$3,850 (US\$331–US\$500/£166–£250) double; HK\$3,400–HK\$4,520 (US\$442–US\$587/£221–£293) Continental Club executive-floor double; from HK\$5,000 (US\$649/£325) suite. 1 child 13 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; lounge; small heated outdoor pool (year-round); access to nearby health club (fee charged); business center (24 hr.); shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Prudential Hotel ★ This hotel at the northern end of Tsim Sha Tsui towers 17 stories above a six-level shopping complex and the MTR Jordan station, providing easy and direct access to the rest of Hong Kong. About a 20-minute walk from the Star Ferry and only minutes from the Temple Street Night Market, Jade Market, and a Tin Hau (Goddess of the Sea) temple, it offers smartly decorated rooms with sleek furniture, artwork, and Japanese moving panels framing the windows. The rates are based on height, with the cheapest rooms on lower floors. If possible, avoid those facing the back and nondescript buildings. Deluxe rooms feature floor-to-ceiling bay windows and receive more sunshine. Although the hotel itself has only a coffee shop and a bar, several other restaurants are within the shopping complex. Another plus is the 18m-long (59-ft.) rooftop pool.

222 Nathan Rd. (entrance on Tak Shing St.), Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2311 8222**. Fax 852/2311 4760. <http://prudential-hotel-hongkong.h-rez.com>. 432 units. HK\$2,000–HK\$2,400 (US\$260–US\$312/£130–£156) single or double; HK\$2,800 (US\$364/£182) executive club floor; from HK\$3,600 (US\$468/£234) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; exercise room; business center (24 hr.); shopping arcade; room service

6:30am–midnight; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Ramada Hotel Kowloon Popular with Asian business travelers, this no-nonsense, Chinese-owned hotel offers simple, clean rooms and not much else in terms of facilities or services. Even its so-called business center has only one computer. Its location on Chatham Road, across the street from the science and history museums, is not as convenient as other business hotels in this category, though it is within walking distance of the MTR (about 6 min.), Star Ferry (about 15 min.), and train station (5 min.). The cheapest rooms, devoid of character, are small and have glazed windows, while the highest-priced rooms face Chatham Road and have the best views but can be noisy. In short, there's nothing exciting about this hotel, but it will suffice if more desirable and convenient properties are full. Another no-frills hotel, the **Ramada Hong Kong Hotel**, is across the harbor with similar prices, at 308 Des Voeux Rd. W., Western District (☎ 852/3410 3333; MTR: Sheung Wan), near the Macau Ferry Pier.

73–75 Chatham Rd. S., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ 800/272 3262 in the U.S., or 852/2311 1100. Fax 852/2311 6000. www.ramadahongkong.com. 205 units. HK\$1,500–HK\$2,300 (US\$195–US\$299/£97–£149) single or double; from HK\$2,800 (US\$364/£182) suite. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** Coffee shop; Thai massage room; tiny business center; room service 7am–9pm; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Regal Kowloon Hotel ★  **Value** The Regal Kowloon is the most moderately priced of several hotels in Tsim Sha Tsui East, offering good value. Its lobby suffers from an identity crisis with an odd mix of contemporary and antique furnishings and artwork, while guest rooms are rather middle-of-the-road but perfectly adequate with the exception of good bedside reading lights. The cheapest rooms face another building, provide no view whatsoever, and tend to be dark. The more expensive rooms face a garden; some even have a glimpse of the harbor between buildings. Best, of course, are the Regal Club executive rooms, with contemporary furnishings and added services and amenities. In any case, this is a solid choice for guests who would rather sightsee than laze around a pool (and pay for it with higher room rates).

71 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ 800/457-4000 in the U.S., or 852/2722 1818. Fax 852/2369 6950. www.regalhotel.com. 600 units. HK\$2,000–HK\$3,200 (US\$260–US\$416/£130–£208) single or double; HK\$3,600–HK\$4,000 (US\$468–US\$519/£234–£260) Regal Club; from HK\$6,000 (US\$779/£390) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; lounge; exercise room; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Renaissance Kowloon Hotel This hotel is tucked inside the New World Centre shopping complex, which contains more than 50 shops and boutiques. Modern in both decor and technology, the Marriott affiliate nevertheless suggests an Asian atmosphere with its large flower arrangements and sleek black furniture, but I find the windowless lobby slightly claustrophobic. Furthermore, despite its prime location right on the waterfront near the InterContinental (p. 85), oddly enough, only one restaurant provides harbor views, and none of its rooms face the water. Rather, all rooms face Salisbury Road or the pool (which is quieter). Otherwise, the small rooms are comfortable enough, with modern Asian decor and all the usual amenities, but those on the club level are like a different hotel altogether, with larger windows, smart-looking decor, and more amenities, including DVD players and ironing boards.

22 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **888/236-2427** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2369 4111. Fax 852/2369 9387. www.renaissancehotels.com/hkgnw. 545 units. HK\$2,300–HK\$2,900 (US\$299–US\$377/£149–£188) single or double; HK\$3,200 (US\$416/£208) Renaissance Club executive floor; from HK\$3,300 (US\$429/£214) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; lounge; outdoor heated pool; exercise room (24 hr.); business center (24 hr.); shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, fax, minibar, coffemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Lan Kwai Fong Hotel @ Kau U Fong ★★★ **Finds** I don't know why this hotel uses Lan Kwai Fong in its name, since it's actually in the Western District. But this boutique hotel is probably my top pick in its price range, for many reasons. I love its colorful location, surrounded by narrow streets with ma-and-pa shops and only minutes from the Graham Street wet market, Hollywood Road with its antique shops, and SoHo with its many ethnic eateries and hole-in-the-wall bars. The hotel's interior is fun, too, with a hip twist on traditional Chinese decor. Rooms, some with distant harbor views, are decorated in red and gold, with Asian artwork, quirky touches such as Internet cables tucked inside decorative stone turtles, and Chinese-style doors leading to, unfortunately, very tiny bathrooms. Standard rooms, too, are small (starting at 19 sq. m/200 sq. ft.), but deluxe rooms are larger corner rooms with more windows. Finally, because it's a boutique hotel, groups seldom stay here. I guess my only real gripe about this 33-story hotel is that it's a player in the gentrification of the Western District, which is slowly losing its once-distinct Chinese atmosphere. If you can overlook that, this is a great place to stay.

3 Kau U Fong, Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3650 0000**. Fax 852/3650 0088. www.lankwaifonghotel.com. hk. 165 units (some bathrooms have showers only). HK\$2,400–HK\$3,800 (US\$312–US\$493/£156–£247) single or double; from HK\$5,800 (US\$753/£377) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Sheung Wan. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; exercise room; room service 7am–11pm; babysitting; free shuttle bus to Hong Kong Station every 30 min. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffemaker (but no coffee), hair dryer, safe, Internet access.

MID-LEVELS

Bishop Lei International House ★★ **Finds** If you want to pretend that you live in Hong Kong, in a residential area popular with expats and abounding in charming neighborhood restaurants and bars, this is the place for you. Located on the slope of Victoria Peak in the Mid-Levels, at the top of the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator that delivers residents to jobs in Central in the morning and then reverses to bring them back home again later in the day, it is not as convenient as other hotels, but it has its certain charm. In addition, the hotel makes up for its out-of-the-way location with free shuttle service; a half-dozen city buses also stop outside its door. Managed by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, it offers tiny standard single and double rooms (with even tinier bathrooms) that have large windows letting in lots of sunshine. Unfortunately, these face inland. If you can, spring for a more expensive room facing the harbor (all twins or suites). Since they're so high up, views are fantastic. Other bonuses include a reading room for relaxation, a coffee shop with an outdoor terrace, and surprising for a hotel this size, a small pool and exercise room. If the frenetic pace of Hong Kong sets you on edge, you'll find this a nice retreat.

4 Robinson Rd., Mid-Levels, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2868 0828**. Fax 852/2868 1551. www.bishopleihtl.com. hk. 219 units (most bathrooms have showers only). HK\$1,280 (US\$166/£83) single; HK\$1,480–HK\$2,080 (US\$192–US\$270/£96–£135) twin; from HK\$2,480 (US\$322/£161) suite. Long-term packages available. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 3B, 12, 12M, 23, 23A, or 40 to Robinson Rd. **Amenities:** Coffee shop; small outdoor pool; small exercise room; business center; 24-hr. room service;

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Empire Hotel Hong Kong ★ **Value** Nicely situated in the heart of Wan Chai and popular with Mid-Level business travelers for its convenience to Central and the convention center, this business hotel offers good value, with many of the same amenities, services, and facilities found at higher-priced hotels, including a rooftop outdoor swimming pool large enough for swimming laps. Narrow hallways, however, may prove a challenge to the claustrophobic, and rooms are so small that couples will fight over the lone luggage rack. None of the rooms provide a view of the harbor from their bay windows. Still, they're comfortable and pleasant enough, with duvet-covered beds and wall-mounted LCD TVs (leaving mercifully more desk space).

33 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/830-6144** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2866 9111. Fax 852/2861 3121. www.empirehotel.com.hk. 360 units. HK\$1,480–HK\$1,880 (US\$192–US\$244/£96–£122) single; HK\$1,580–HK\$1,980 (US\$205–US\$257/£103–£129) double; HK\$2,380 (US\$309/£154) executive-floor double; from HK\$2,980 (US\$387/£129) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; lounge; outdoor pool; exercise room; sauna; concierge; business center; room service 7am–midnight; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, safe, high-speed Internet access.

The Excelsior ★ Located on the Causeway Bay waterfront near a lively shopping area, Hong Kong Island's largest hotel stands on the very first plot of land sold at auction when this outpost became a British colony. Although it belongs to the Mandarin Oriental group of hotels, it is more plebian than its sister properties in Central, with correspondingly lower prices. It also enjoys a solid reputation and a high occupancy rate, including many tour groups, which translates into an overcrowded lobby buzzing with activity, sometimes making it difficult to get front-desk service or find an empty seat. Elevators are also crowded. On the plus side are nearby 20-hectare (50-acre) Victoria Park, Hong Kong's largest city park and good for joggers; the top-floor ToTT's with its spectacular harbor views; and the hotel's free guided tours to the historic Noon Day Gun across the street, which fires every day at . . . well . . . noon. Most rooms are the same small size with the same decor and tend to be crowded. Those that command panoramas of the harbor, with window-side sofas, are the most expensive and largest; slightly cheaper are those with side harbor views or views of the park, while the cheapest face inland toward the city.

281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/526-6566** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2894 8888. Fax 852/2895 6459. <http://mandarinoriental.com/excelsior>. 885 units. HK\$2,400–HK\$3,200 (US\$312–US\$415/£156–£208) single or double; HK\$3,200–HK\$3,400 (US\$415–US\$441/£208–£221) executive floor; from HK\$6,000 (US\$779/£390) suite. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, including ToTT's (p. 156); bar; lounge; 2 indoor tennis courts; health club; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

The Fleming ★★ **Value** A great choice for business travelers on a budget, this hotel—which bills itself as an “urban lifestyle hotel”—is the first I've come across in Hong Kong that caters also to female travelers with a dedicated women's floor, offering rooms that add fresh flowers, jewelry boxes, furry rugs and pillows (I'm stymied by this choice), leg massage machines, facial steamers, healthier food in the minibar like herbal teas, female-oriented toiletries, and yoga mats. Otherwise, rooms are fairly standard

except for good working space with ergonomic chairs and office supplies like paper clips and rubber bands. Executive rooms, most with partial harbor views, are a good choice for long-staying guests because of kitchenettes, as are some deluxe rooms also with kitchenettes. With its minimalist lobby sporting an oh-so-cool lime-green reception desk, this business boutique hotel fills a unique niche in Wan Chai, offering Jia wannabes (p. 101) a more economical yet stylish alternative close to the convention center.

41 Fleming Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3607 2288**. Fax 852/3607 2299. www.thefleming.com. 66 units (most bathrooms have shower only). HK\$1,880–HK\$2,680 (US\$244–US\$348/£122–£174) single or double; HK\$2980 (US\$387/£193) executive room. Extended stay rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** Restaurant; free access to nearby health club; business center; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable TV/DVD, minibar, coffeemaker, safe, iron/ironing board, free DVD library, Wi-Fi.

Harbour View International House ★ **Value** This YMCA occupies a prime spot on the Wan Chai waterfront, right next to the Hong Kong Arts Centre and not far from the convention center. Rooms, all twin or double beds, are rather modish for a YMCA, attracting guests (including many groups) mostly from mainland China and North America. Best of all, more than half the rooms face the harbor with V-shaped windows, making this the cheapest place on Hong Kong Island with great views. Rooms that face inland are even cheaper. The best rooms are renovated Premier rooms on top floors, which add hair dryers, coffee, and safes. Personally, I prefer the Salisbury YMCA (p. 106) for its facilities and its location, but if you can't get a room there, this is a good alternative.

4 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2802 0111**. Fax 852/2802 9063. www.harbour.ymca.org.hk. 320 units. HK\$1,400–HK\$2,000 (US\$182–US\$260/£91–£130) single or double. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** Restaurant; teahouse; room service 7:15am–11:30pm; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar, coffeemaker (but no coffee except in Premier rooms), Wi-Fi.

Jia ★★★ Travelers who are allergic to ugly hotel rooms will want to head straight to Hong Kong's first—and still hippest—boutique hotel, opened in 2004 by a Singaporean 20-something entrepreneur and designed by Philippe Starck. From the moment guests step into the low-key lobby with its teak wood floors, white sheer curtains, and whimsical furniture and are greeted by staff in chic Shanghai Tang–designed uniforms, they know this is no ordinary abode. Stylish rooms (35 sq. m/380 sq. ft.), bathed in white and divided into living, dining, and working areas, feature kitchens and home theater units with surround sound. One- and two-bedroom suites are also available. Guests enjoy free local telephone calls, free Internet access, complimentary continental breakfast and cocktail hour, free access to a local gym, and access to both Kee, a private members' club, and the VIP area of Dragon-i (p. 248). I wouldn't be surprised if some people check in and never move out, especially with this incentive: Long-staying guests get a free massage.

1–5 Irving St., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3196 9000**. Fax 852/3196 9001. www.jiahongkong.com. 54 units. HK\$2,500 (US\$325/£162) single or double; from HK\$3,500 (US\$455/£227) suite. Monthly rates available. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free access to nearby health club; sun deck; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/ DVD/CD player, kitchen, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Lanson Place Hotel ★★★ **Finds** Following close on Jia's heels (and just down the street), this laid-back boutique hotel caters to long-staying guests with upbeat, contemporary rooms, decorated in natural woods, chrome, and glass. Ranging in size from 35 to 55 sq. m (380–590 sq. ft.), with one- and two-bedroom residences also available, they come with fully stocked kitchenettes complete with a small basket of groceries (coffee, popcorn, soup, bottled water, and so on), home theater systems (you can check out

102 DVDs for free at the reception desk), and mobile phones you can carry to breakfast or the gym. The best views are over Victoria Park, while the cheapest rooms face other buildings. Continental breakfast, Wi-Fi, and use of computers in the small business center are all free, and Friday and Saturday evenings feature jazz performances in the bar. While in-house facilities are limited, this is a perfect home-away-from-home for weary road warriors, and the staff, who run operations from sit-down desks rather than the usual front desk, couldn't be nicer.

133 Leighton Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3477 6888**. Fax 852/3477 6999. www.lansonplace.com. 194 units. HK\$2,300–HK\$3,600 (US\$299–US\$468/£149–£234) single or double; from HK\$4,500 (US\$584/£292) suite. Weekly/monthly rates available. Rates include continental breakfast. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** Bar; small gym; business center; babysitting; coin-operated laundry. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/DVD/CD player, kitchenette, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, DVD library, free Wi-Fi.

Metro Park Hotel Causeway Bay ★★ Value Although not as centrally located as my other picks in Causeway Bay, this hotel has some compelling advantages that put it near the top of the list (and in any case, the MTR and tram lines are just outside the door, and the hotel provides a free shuttle bus to nearby shopping districts). For one thing, it's cheerier and more colorful than most hotels, with a contemporary and fun design that extends through the lobby and into the rooms, the most expensive of which have great views over Victoria Park to the harbor (ask for a room on the 18th floor) and the cheapest of which face another building. In addition, it has all the facilities most travelers need, including a rooftop pool complete with great views and a China Travel Service office for those needing mainland visas. Unfortunately, bathrooms are small with limited counter space. In short, this is a welcome addition to Causeway Bay, despite its unlikely location.

More convenient is sister hotel **Metro Park Wanchai**, 41–49 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2861 1166**; MTR: Wan Chai), which offers smaller but slightly cheaper rooms but no other facilities.

148 Tung Lo Wan Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2600 1000. Fax 852/2600 1111. www.metroparkhotel.com. 266 units (most bathrooms have only showers; executive rooms have tub/showers). HK\$900 (US\$117/£58) single; HK\$1,700–HK\$2,000 (US\$221–US\$260/£110–£130) double; HK\$3,000 (US\$390/£195) executive double or suite. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tin Hau. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; business center; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms; free shuttle to Wan Chai and Causeway Bay. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, free high-speed Internet access.

Novotel Century Hong Kong This older hotel, opened in 1992, is a 7-minute walk via covered walkway from the convention center and the Wan Chai Star Ferry terminus with service to Tsim Sha Tsui and Hung Hom. Its airy, two-story lobby has floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a busy intersection and is plagued by the constant hum of traffic, but since there are very few seats available, you probably won't spend much time here anyway. Narrow corridors lead to minuscule rooms, which are mercifully equipped with double-paned windows as well as touch pads on phones for controlling lights and other functions. A few of the most expensive doubles offer a partial harbor view between buildings, as do some of the rooms on the Royal Club executive floor, but standard rooms face other buildings. Probably the best thing about this hotel is its facilities, including a wading pool. Unless you can get a room cheaper than its published rack rate, however, I'd choose one of the less expensive Wan Chai hotels over this one.

238 Jaffe Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/221-4542** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2598 8888. Fax 852/2598 8866. www.accorhotels.com/asia. 511 units. HK\$2,550–HK\$3,230 (US\$292–US\$419/£146–£210)

single or double; from \$3,800 (US\$494/£247) Royal Club executive-floor; from HK\$5,610 (US\$729/£364) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 lounges; outdoor pool; wading pool; exercise room; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

The Park Lane ★ Although it's inland, I've always liked the location of this hotel—across from huge Victoria Park and close to many area restaurants, shops, and department stores. Open since 1974 and attracting primarily business travelers, it offers rooms that are all the same adequate size but vary in price according to floor level, decor, and view—the best are those facing Victoria Park (where you can watch people practicing tai chi in the morning), with the harbor beyond. Standard rooms, on the other hand, have uninspiring views and are rather ordinary, while the best are deluxe rooms with fun, contemporary furnishings like glass-topped desks and coffee tables and bowl-shaped glass sinks. On the downside, the lobby gets a lot of street traffic from area shoppers, making it difficult to attract individual attention from the overworked staff. Be sure to book at least one meal at the top-floor Riva, with sweeping views of Victoria Park and the harbor. The hotel coffee shop runs 24 hours on weekends, a rarity in Hong Kong.

310 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2293 8888. Fax 852/2576 7853. www.parklane.com.hk. 810 units. HK\$2,500–HK\$3,400 (US\$325–US\$442/£162–£221) single or double; HK\$3,600–HK\$4,100 (US\$468–US\$532/£234–£266) Premier Club executive rooms; from HK\$5,500 (US\$714/£357) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants, including Riva serving Continental cuisine (p. 156); bar; lounge; health club; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; executive-level rooms; medical clinic. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Rosedale on the Park ★ **Value** Opened in 2001 and already overtaken by savvy, newer hotels in the Causeway Bay, this is still a solid choice for its targeted corporate accounts, for which it sweetens the deal with complimentary broadband Internet service in each room, cordless phones, in-house mobile phones that allow you to receive calls if you're out of your room (but inside the hotel), free bottled water, and a lounge with computers and Internet access. Only 13 rooms on each floor give it a more intimate atmosphere than the city's many huge hotels. Rooms are minuscule but have everything you need, though note that the least expensive "superior" rooms are on lower floors and face another building. Some rooms on the 31st-floor executive level have side views of the harbor (you have to be standing at the window to see it), but the best deal is the junior suites with microwaves and kitchen utensils, making them a good bet for long-staying guests.

8 Shelter St., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2127 8888**. Fax 852/2127 3333. www.rosedale.com.hk. 274 units. HK\$1,580–HK\$1,880 (US\$205–US\$244/£103–£122) single or double; HK\$2,080 (US\$270/£135) executive room; from HK\$2,380 (US\$309/£154) suite. Weekly and monthly rates available. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; small fitness room (24 hr.); business center; room service 7am–11pm; babysitting; executive-level rooms; free shuttle bus to convention center during major trade fairs. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, free Wi-Fi and high-speed Internet access.

6 INEXPENSIVE

Unfortunately, Hong Kong has more expensive hotels than it does budget accommodations. Hotels in this category generally offer small, functional rooms with a bathroom

104 and air-conditioning but usually have few services or facilities. Always inquire whether there's a difference in price between rooms with twin beds and those with double beds. If possible, try to *see* a room before committing yourself, since some may be better than others in terms of traffic noise, view, condition, and size. For the most part, however, you shouldn't have any problems with the inexpensive hotels recommended here, though larger ones are often filled with tour groups.

KOWLOON

Booth Lodge ★★ **Finds** About a 30-minute walk to the Star Ferry, but close to the Jade Market, Temple Street Night Market, Ladies' Market, and MTR station, Booth Lodge is located just off Nathan Road on the seventh floor of the Salvation Army building. It has a comfortable lobby and an adjacent coffee shop offering very reasonably priced lunch and dinner buffets with Chinese, Japanese, and Western selections, but best is the restaurant's outdoor brick terrace overlooking a wooded hillside, where buffet barbecues are held in peak season. Rooms, all twins or doubles and either standard rooms or larger deluxe rooms, are all nonsmoking and spotlessly clean with a small window. Some face the madness of Nathan Road, but those facing the hillside are quieter. If you're looking for inexpensive yet reliable lodging in a convenient location, this is a good bet. A bonus: Local telephone calls are free.

11 Wing Sing Lane, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2771 9266**. Fax 852/2385 1140. <http://boothlodge.salvation.org.hk>. 53 units. HK\$620–HK\$1,500 (US\$81–US\$195/£40–£97) single or double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** Coffee shop. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

BP International House ★ **Kids** The word "House" in the name is misleading, since it is actually a 25-story hotel, with a spacious but utilitarian lobby catering mainly to tour groups, school excursions, and budget-conscious business travelers, which gives it a dormitory-like atmosphere. Located at the north end of Kowloon Park, it's just a stone's throw from the park's indoor and outdoor public swimming pools and a short walk to a playground, making it good for families. The park's many paths also make it popular with joggers. Guest rooms, located on the 14th to 25th floors, are tiny but spotless, pleasant, and modern, with showers rather than tubs and fold-down vanity mirrors to create more space. Despite the hotel's inland location, some corporate rooms on the top floors offer great views over Kowloon Park of the harbor, the Peak, and the Symphony of Lights nightly laser show, as well as such extras like combination tubs/showers, minibars, and hot-water kettles. The very simple "Family Rooms" are equipped with bunk beds that sleep four for HK\$1,450 (US\$188/£94).

8 Austin Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2376 1111. Fax 852/2376 1333. www.bpih.com.hk. 529 units (most bathrooms have showers only). HK\$1,250–HK\$1,900 (US\$162–US\$247/£81–£123) single or double; HK\$1,750–HK\$2,600 (US\$227–US\$338/£114–£169) corporate room; from HK\$3,800 (US\$493/£247) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; babysitting; coin-op laundry; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, fridge, safe, Wi-Fi.

Caritas Bianchi Lodge **Value** Just down the street from Booth Lodge (see above) and also convenient to the jade and night markets and Yau Ma Tei MTR station, this hotel is not as homey as Booth Lodge and has as much personality as a college dormitory. However, most of the year it charges less than the rack rates listed below, making it a bargain that can't be beat. Most of its very simple rooms, with large desks and closets, face toward the back of the hotel, offering a view of a wooded cliff and a small park,

certainly a nicer vista than most hotels can boast. Try to get a room on a higher floor. This establishment, under management of the Roman Catholic Church's social welfare bureau and popular with long-staying guests for its monthly rates, is a good choice for single travelers, including women.

4 Cliff Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2388 1111**. Fax 852/2770 6669. cbbresv@bianchi-lodge.com. 90 units. HK\$920 (US\$119/£60) single; HK\$1,020–HK\$1,200 (US\$132–US\$156/£66–£78) double. Rates include buffet breakfast. Monthly rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service 7am–9pm. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, minibar, coffeemaker (but no coffee), safe.

Dorsett Seaview Hotel This 19-story hotel looks slightly out of place amid the hustle and bustle of this Chinese neighborhood, just a stone's throw from a famous Tin Hau (Goddess of the Sea) Temple and Temple Street's famous Night Market. Catering mainly to visitors from the mainland and Southeast Asia, it has a tiny lobby (often packed) and a cocktail lounge on the top floor with a nightly happy hour and views of a harbor (not the famous Victoria Harbour, but a working harbor nonetheless). Narrow corridors lead to the smallest rooms I've seen in Hong Kong, so miniature that TVs in most rooms are mounted to the wall to save space. It reminds me of a Japanese business hotel, functional and clean but so small you can almost reach out and touch all four walls. At any rate, since rooms lack the convenience of a desk or large closet space, there's virtually no place to unpack or put your luggage. It's basically just a place to rest your weary bones; as for those Night Market bargains you just purchased, you'll have to either stow them under your bed or sleep with them. Nevertheless, this hotel gets recommended for its superb, colorful location.

268 Shanghai St., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2782 0882**. Fax 852/2781 8800. www.dorsettseaview.com.hk. 268 units. HK\$880–HK\$1,280 (US\$114–US\$166/£57–£84) single; HK\$1,280–HK\$1,580 (US\$166–US\$205/£84–£103) double; from HK\$2,400 (US\$312/£156) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** Restaurant/lounge; small business center; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, high-speed Internet access.

Guangdong Hotel ★ The Guangdong, part of a mainland Chinese hotel chain and once plagued by Asian tour groups, has upgraded its look, its image, and its prices, with tour groups now accounting for only 5% of its business. It's located in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui, about a 10-minute walk from the Star Ferry and only minutes from the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station. Its lobby is spare but upbeat, with an illuminated glass wall behind the reception desk and Picasso-esque masks adorning one wall. Its rooms are very small but clean and pleasant enough, with room rates based primarily on floor level. None of the rooms here offer views; most face other buildings. If you want to be away from the din of traffic, splurge for a larger deluxe room on a higher floor. Better yet are executive-floor rooms, which reflect either Japanese or European influences in their design and decor.

18 Prat Ave., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3410 8888**. Fax 852/2721 1137. www.gdh-hotels.com. 245 units. HK\$1,280–HK\$1,780 (US\$166–US\$231/£83–£116) single or double; HK\$1,880–HK\$1,980 (US\$244–US\$257/£122–£129) executive floor; from HK\$2,380 (US\$309/£154) suite. 2 children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; small fitness room; business center; room service 7:30am–10pm; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Imperial Hotel Location, location, location—that's the best thing this hotel has going for it. It's located right on Nathan Road between the Sheraton and Holiday Inn and near the MTR station. Otherwise, it doesn't offer much in terms of service, though a slow renovation of rooms is bringing them up to par, adding double-paned windows to

106 cut down on noisy street traffic, duvet-covered beds, LCD TVs, and remodeled bathrooms with showers instead of tubs. Its cheaper rooms face the back of Chungking Mansion, notorious for its cheap and often uninviting rooms, laundry strung everywhere, and garbage piled up below, apparently tossed unconcernedly from the windows above. You won't know this, however, as glazed windows now hide the formerly enlightening view. It's an improvement with a price: Rooms tend to be gloomy and claustrophobic and the cheapest are quite small. If you can, spring for a deluxe room that faces Nathan Road, which tends to be noisier but is brighter and has a city view. Because of its cheap prices, this hotel attracts a mixed international clientele, many of whom look like they wish they were elsewhere. It is a rather grim place, but the location is ideal.

30–34 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **800/44-UTELL** (800/448-8355) in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2366 2201. Fax 852/2311 2360. www.imperialhotel.com.hk. 225 units (some bathrooms with showers only). HK\$950–HK\$1,700 (US\$123–US\$221/£62–£110) single; HK\$1,100–HK\$1,850 (US\$143–US\$240/£71–£120) double. 1 child 11 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** Restaurant; Irish pub; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker (but no coffee), hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Nathan Hotel More than 40 years old, this hotel underwent such a massive overhaul a few years back, it's no longer the same place. Gone are the drab lobby and dark rooms, replaced by contemporary furniture, artwork by a local artist, an inviting rooftop bar with outdoor seating, and a Starbucks. Remaining, luckily, is one of the property's best features—large rooms and bathrooms, dating from an era when land was less expensive. Choose from three levels of service: standard rooms, executive rooms for business travelers, and chic Nathan club rooms from the ninth to 14th floors offering 42-inch LCD TVs, DVD players, free Internet, and a private lounge. The hotel attracts business travelers from mainland China and other Asian countries, though its location near the Temple Street Night Market and Jordan MTR station make it a good choice for leisure travelers as well. It's located north of Tsim Sha Tsui, about a 20-minute walk from the Star Ferry.

378 Nathan Rd. (main entrance on Pak Hoi St.), Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2388 5141**. Fax 852/2770 4262. www.nathanhotel.com. 191 units. HK\$1,080–HK\$1,680 (US\$140–US\$218/£70–£109) single or double; from HK\$2,280 (US\$296/£148) Nathan club floor. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Restaurant; rooftop bar; Starbucks; exercise room (24 hr.); business center (24 hr.); room service 7:30am–10:30pm; babysitting; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar, coffeemaker, safe, high-speed Internet access.

New Kings Hotel  This 35-year-old property could do with some updating. Still, its low rates (it usually offers discounts on its rack rates, so be sure to ask when making a reservation) and interesting location near the jade and night markets and a Tin Hau (Goddess of the Sea) temple make it recommendable. Otherwise, it doesn't have any facilities, its tiny rooms are rather plain and dark, and the tiled bathrooms lack counter space. There are only six rooms on each floor, a good thing since corridors are barely wide enough for one person. Expect to wait for the hotel's one elevator. This is a good choice only for budget travelers on the go, since you probably wouldn't want to spend much time here anyway.

473 Nathan Rd. (entrance on Wing Sing Lane), Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2780 1281**. Fax 852/2782 1833. kln@kingshotelhk.com. 72 units. HK\$550–HK\$600 (US\$71–US\$78/£36–£39) single; HK\$650–HK\$750 (US\$85–US\$98/£42–£49) twin. AE, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, coffeemaker (but no coffee), safe, high-speed Internet access (some w/Wi-Fi).

The Salisbury YMCA ★★ ★  The overwhelming number-one choice among low-cost accommodations has long been the YMCA on Salisbury Road, which has the

good fortune of being right next to The Peninsula hotel just a 2-minute walk from the Star Ferry and MTR subway station. Although expensive for a YMCA, the location and facilities are worth the price, especially since it offers Tsim Sha Tsui's cheapest rooms with harbor views. Great for families are its inexpensive restaurants and sports facility boasting two indoor swimming pools (a lap pool and a children's pool, both free for hotel guests except those in dormitory), plus gym, squash courts, and indoor climbing wall (fees charged). The rooms vary from 17 singles (none with harbor view) and more than 250 doubles and twins (the most expensive provide great harbor views), to suites with and without harbor views that are great for families. Although simple in decor, these carpeted rooms are on a par with those at more expensively priced hotels in terms of in-room amenities. For budget travelers, there are dormitory-style rooms, each with two bunk beds, individual reading lights, private bathroom, and lockers, available only to visitors who have been in Hong Kong fewer than 7 days. Needless to say, the Salisbury is so popular that you should make reservations in advance, especially in peak times.

Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2268 7000** (852/2268 7888 for reservations). Fax 852/2739 9315. www.ymcahk.org.hk. 368 units. HK\$1,060 (US\$138/£69) single; HK\$1,180–HK\$1,430 (US\$153–US\$186/£77–£93) double; from HK\$1,900 (US\$247/£123) suite. Dormitory bed HK\$230 (US\$30/£15). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants, including the Salisbury (review, p. 140), 2 indoor pools; exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; 2 squash courts; badminton; climbing wall; room service 7am–11pm; babysitting; coin-op laundry; bookstore (w/ children's corner where kids can try out books and games for free). *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Shamrock Hotel A pioneer member of HKHA and catering mainly to visitors from China, the Shamrock was built in the early 1950s and, despite lobby renovations that added marble floors and artwork from Beijing, I don't think it's changed much since then, including the half dozen or so small chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The guest rooms are unexciting, clean, simple, and small, though high ceilings (with the ubiquitous small chandeliers) give the rooms something of a spacious feeling. Avoid the cheapest room without windows—Dracula might feel at home, but you might want to spring for some sunshine, though deluxe rooms facing Nathan Road are also noisier. It's about a 20-minute walk from the Star Ferry, just north of Kowloon Park and not far from the Temple Street Night Market.

223 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2735 2271**. Fax 852/2736 7354. www.shamrockhotel.com.hk. 158 units. HK\$1,050–HK\$2,000 (US\$136–US\$260/£68–£130) single; HK\$1,250–HK\$2,200 (US\$97–US\$162/£54–£81) double; from HK\$3,000 (US\$390/£195) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Restaurant; business center; room service 7am–10pm; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker (but no coffee), hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Stanford Hillview Hotel ★ **Finds** This small, intimate hotel is near the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui and yet it's a world away, located on top of a hill in the shade of huge banyan trees, next to the Royal Observatory with its colonial building and greenery. Knutsford Terrace, an alley with trendy bars and restaurants, is just around the corner. Its lobby is quiet and subdued (quite a contrast to most Hong Kong hotels) and its staff is friendly and accommodating. Rooms are mostly twins, fairly basic and small. Best are deluxe accommodations on higher floors (ask for one that faces the observatory), while the cheapest are very tiny economy rooms with a double bed (these are usually used by lone travelers but are available to two people if you insist). A kitchen is available for long-staying guests only. All told, this is a very civilized place, but be prepared for the uphill hike to the hotel.

108 13–17 Observatory Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2722 7822**. Fax 852/2723 3718. www.stanfordhillview.com. 163 units. HK\$1,000–HK\$1,680 (US\$130–US\$218/£65–£109) single or double; from HK\$2,480 (US\$322/£161) suite. Long-term rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; outdoor golf-driving nets; small exercise room; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; free shuttle to Hung Hom Station and China Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Tatami Hampton Hotel **Value** No tatami mats in sight at this no-frills hotel, located in colorful Mong Kok not far from the Ladies' Market. Tiled rooms, on the other hand, are as small as they are in Japanese business hotels, except in so-called Super Deluxe rooms that are corner rooms, plagued with traffic noise and blinds that do little to keep out morning sunshine (no sleeping in here). You could, however, sleep forever in the single rooms, because they have no windows. A quirk of the small tiled bathrooms is that they have no dedicated shower stall, but rather a showerhead that rains onto the floor, getting everything wet; first, however, you have to push a button for the water heater, which takes about 15 minutes to warm up. The strangest thing about this hotel is that after checking in, you exit the lobby and then take an elevator from an adjacent entryway off the street. Though management assures me that there are security TVs on every floor, and after midnight guests access their rooms from a stairway in the lobby, lone female travelers may wish to stay elsewhere. For backpackers used to Asia's seamier accommodations, however, this hotel will be just fine.

11 Changsha St., Mong Kok, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/3188 9680**. www.tatamihamptonhotel.com. 108 units. HK\$460 (US\$60/£30) single; HK\$500–HK\$720 (US\$65–US\$93/£32–£47) double. AE, MC, V. MTR: Mong Kok. *In room:* A/C, phone for local calls only.

YMCA International House Located just off Nathan Road, only a minute's walk from the Yau Ma Tei MTR station, this YMCA renovated its old building and added a 25-story tower many years back, transforming itself into a smart-looking establishment that can rival many of the more expensively priced hotels in terms of facilities. However, located halfway up Kowloon Peninsula, far from the action of Tsim Sha Tsui, it plays second fiddle to the Salisbury YMCA in terms of convenience and views. Otherwise, contemporary-styled rooms are similar to hotel rooms anywhere in the city. Ask for a room on a top floor, where it's brighter and you can look out over the city. Dormitory rooms are available for men only.

23 Waterloo Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2771 9111**. Fax 852/2388 5926; reservation fax 852/2771 5238. www.intlhouse.ymca.org.hk. 413 units. HK\$1,280–HK\$1,980 (US\$166–US\$257/£83–£129) single or twin; dormitory bed HK\$300 (US\$39/£19). Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; indoor pool; tennis and squash courts; fitness room (fee charged); sauna; business center; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, fridge, coffeemaker (but no coffee), hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Ice House ★★★ **Finds** This is a great place to stay if you can get in, and that's a big if due to its small size, excellent location near Lan Kwai Fong, serviced rooms/apartments with kitchenettes, reasonable prices, and high demand for monthly rates that keep it at high occupancy. Smart-looking rooms, measuring 23 sq. m (250 sq. ft.) for single occupancy and starting at 32 sq. m (344 sq. ft.) for two, are great homes-away-from home, with queen-size beds, maid service (except Sun and holidays; bed linen is changed once a week), 24-hour security, a dedicated phone line with your own personal number and

free local calls, and generous desk space. If you're coming to Hong Kong to work, don't need the services and facilities of a hotel, and don't want to spend a fortune, this is a top pick, but book early.

38 Ice House St., Central, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2836 7333**. Fax 852/2801 0355. www.icehouse.com.hk. 64 units. HK\$1,000 (US\$130/£65) single; HK\$1,200–HK\$1,800 (US\$156–US\$234/£78–£117) double. Monthly rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** Restaurant; coin-op laundry. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, kitchenette, hair dryer, high-speed Internet access.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Express by Holiday Inn ★ **Value** Targeting budget business travelers in town for only a night or two, this is a bare-bones, do-it-yourself kind of place, with luggage carts instead of bellboys and even a designated ironing room. That said, it does offer a few perks, including free breakfast, free use of computers and Internet access, and free shuttle service to the convention center. It also houses a China Travel Service office, which can arrange visas, transportation, and package tours to China. Its rooms, all measuring 24 sq. m (258 sq. ft.) and priced the same (the range below reflects low to peak seasons), feature contemporary furnishings (including sofa beds), good reading lamps, showers instead of tubs, and bowl-shaped sinks. Since prices are the same, try to get one of the 15 rooms on the highest floors that have partial harbor views between buildings. It's located across from Times Square, but its entrance is not well marked. For travelers looking for convenience and affordability, this is a good choice.

33 Sharp St. E., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ☎ **888/465-4329** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/3558 6688. Fax 852/3558 6633. www.ichotelsgroup.com. 282 units (bathrooms have showers only). HK\$1,000–HK\$1,500 (US\$130–US\$195/£65–£97) single or double. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; access to nearby fitness club (fee charged); free high-speed Internet access. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, fridge, coffeemaker, safe, hair dryer, free high-speed Internet access.

Wesley This simple business hotel opened in 1992 on the former site of the famous Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, a Hong Kong landmark for more than a century. I like this hotel for its location: on the tramline and only a few minutes' walk from the Pacific Place shopping center. Otherwise, its lobby, devoid of furniture, looks like someone tried to make it hip, with an odd mixture of oversized fake flowers and other objects hanging on the wall. Facilities and services are also limited, and all rooms are minuscule, with V-shaped bay windows and modern decor. Rates are based on bed configurations, floor level, and, to a small degree, room size: The cheaper rooms are on lower floors and are furnished with twin beds; the most expensive are slightly larger, with king-size beds, a small sitting area, and microwaves. Rooms facing the front of the hotel are noisier. The bathrooms are only large enough for one person, and the closets aren't tall enough to hang dresses. Even its "business center" is the size of a closet. It reminds me of business hotels in Japan.

22 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2866 6688**. Fax 852/2866 6633. www.hanglung.com. 251 units. HK\$1,150–HK\$2,000 (US\$149–US\$260/£75–£130) single or double. Monthly rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty or Wan Chai. **Amenities:** Restaurant; business center; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, high-speed Internet access.

GUESTHOUSES

Hong Kong's cheapest accommodations aren't hotels and aren't recommended for visitors who expect cleanliness and comfort. Rather, these accommodations, usually called "guesthouses," attract a young backpacking crowd, many of whom are traveling through Asia and are interested only in a bed at the lowest price. They also attract laborers, mostly men from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. At any rate, some guesthouses offer rooms with a private bathroom; others are nothing more than rooms filled with bunk beds. Of Hong Kong's rock-bottom establishments, none is more notorious than **Chungking Mansion**, an inspiration for the Wong Kar-Wai film *Chungking Express*. Although it occupies a prime spot at 40 Nathan Rd., between the Holiday Inn Golden Mile and the Sheraton in Tsim Sha Tsui, Chungking Mansion is easy to overlook; there's no big sign heralding its existence. In fact, its ground floor is one huge maze of inexpensive shops. But above all those shops are five towering concrete blocks, each served by its own tiny elevator and known collectively as Chungking Mansion. Inside are hundreds of little businesses, apartments, guesthouses, eateries, and sweatshops. Some of the guesthouses are passable; many are not. Although the infamous Kowloon Walled City was torn down and replaced with a park (p. 186), Chungking Mansion is today's watered down version. Some Chinese living here have lived here their whole lives. It's a fascinating microcosm in the heart of the city.

I stayed at Chungking Mansion on my first trip to Hong Kong in 1983, living in a neon-colored cell furnished with two sagging beds, a night table, and closet. In the shared bathroom down the hall lived the biggest spider I have ever seen, a hairy thing that nevertheless behaved itself whenever I was there—it never moved an inch the whole time I took a shower, and when I returned each evening, it was always motionless in another part of the room. I figured that it survived only by being unobtrusive, and I wouldn't be surprised if its progeny is still there. I shared my room with another woman and we paid US\$5 each.

Chungking Mansion has changed a lot since then. Whereas most guesthouses were once borderline squalor, today many have cleaned up their act in a bid for the tourists' dollars. Still, Chungking is not the kind of place you'd want to recommend to anyone uninitiated in the seamier side of travel. The views from many room windows are more insightful than some guests might like—the backside of the building and mountains of trash down below. Even worse are the ancient-looking elevators filled to capacity with human cargo; you might want to stick to the stairs. In any case, sometimes the elevators don't work at all, making it a long hike up the dozen flights of stairs to the top floors. But the most compelling argument for avoiding Chungking Mansion is one of safety: It could be a towering inferno waiting to happen. However, for some budget travelers, it's a viable alternative to Hong Kong's high-priced hotels. And you certainly can't beat it for location.

If you insist on staying here, see my review below. Chungking Mansion contains approximately 100 guesthouses, divided into five separate tower blocks, from A Block to E Block. For the less daring, A Block is the best, since its elevator is closest to the front entrance of the building. The other elevators are farther back in the shopping arcade,

which can be a little disconcerting at night when the shops are all closed and the corridors are deserted. I recommend that you begin your search in Block A. I also recommend that you stay on lower floors. But no matter what the block, never leave any valuables in your room.

Chungking House This is the best-known guesthouse in Chungking Mansion, due primarily to its location in A Block, with front desks and lobbies on both the fourth and fifth floors. Rooms are dreary, dark, and depressing, with wood paneling, worn carpets, and ancient tiled bathrooms (ask for a “deluxe” room facing Nathan Road; though noisier, they are brighter and thus a tad more cheerful). The staff tends to be unconcerned and gruff. Still, you might want to try this place first before tackling the elevator or stairs to check out the guesthouses on the upper floors.

A Block, 4th and 5th floors, Chungking Mansion, 40 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2366 5362**. Fax 852/2721 3570. 75 units. HK\$250 (US\$32/£16) single; HK\$280–HK\$350 (US\$36–US\$45/£18–£23) double/twin. No credit cards. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Non-Chungking Mansion Guesthouse

Alisan Guest House If Chungking Mansion is your idea of a horror house, this guesthouse, on the other side of the harbor, just around the corner from the Excelsior hotel (p. 100) and World Trade Centre, is a good alternative and has been in business since 1987. Located in a typical residential building (where the front door is locked and there’s an entryway attendant and security cameras), it’s owned by English-speaking Tommy Hou, who spends about 15 minutes with each of his mostly Western guests to give advice on sightseeing in Hong Kong. Rooms, scattered on several floors (and also with security cameras in corridors), are small but clean. The best rooms are the triples located on the third floor. However, though these rooms face the harbor, they also look out onto a busy highway, making them slightly noisy due to traffic. Mr. Hou offers free tea, a communal microwave and fridge, and use of his office computer for those who wish to check their e-mail.

Flat A, 5th floor, Hoi To Court, 275 Gloucester Rd. (entrance on Cannon St.), Causeway, Hong Kong. ☎ **852/2838 0762** or 852/2574 8066. Fax 852/2838 4351. <http://home.hkstar.com/~alisangh>. 21 units. HK\$280–HK\$350 (US\$36–US\$45/£18–£23) single; HK\$350–HK\$450 (US\$45–US\$58/£23–£29) double/twin; HK\$450–HK\$550 (US\$58–US\$71/£29–£36) triple. Rates 20% higher in peak season. MC, V (cash preferred; 7% higher if paying by credit cards). MTR: Causeway Bay. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

YOUTH HOSTELS & DORMITORY BEDS

If you don’t mind giving up your privacy, the best rock-bottom accommodations in town are the dormitory beds available at the **Salisbury YMCA** (p. 106) for HK\$230 (US\$30/£15), followed by those in the **YMCA International House** (p. 108) for HK\$300 (US\$39/£19). Otherwise, Hong Kong’s cheapest accommodations are at hostels. Hong Kong and its islands and territories have seven youth hostels and they offer the cheapest rates around. However, most are not conveniently located—indeed, some require a ferry ride and/or a 45-minute hike from the nearest bus stop, as they are located in country parks.

If you don’t have a youth hostel card, you can still stay at a youth hostel by paying an extra HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95) per night. After 6 nights, nonmembers are eligible for member status and subsequently pay overnight charges at members’ rates. It’s cheaper for the long haul, however, to purchase Youth Hostels Association (YHA) membership for HK\$110 (US\$14/£7.15), available at any youth hostel. Note that children 4 and under are not allowed at Hong Kong’s youth hostels. For more information, contact the **Hong**

112 Kong Youth Hostels Association (☎ 852/2788 1638; www.yha.org.hk). Bookings can be made through the Internet, and credit cards are accepted.

The most conveniently located youth hostel is the 169-bed **Jockey Club Mt. Davis Youth Hostel**, on top of Mt. Davis on Hong Kong Island (☎ 852/2817 5715), with great panoramic views. It charges HK\$80 (US\$10/£5.20) per night for a dormitory bed for those aged 18 and over. There are also a few private rooms, with a double costing HK\$260 (US\$34/£17). Facilities include a communal kitchen (bring food with you, as no meals are served) and coin-op laundry room. To reach it, take the free hostel shuttle bus, which departs from the Macau Ferry Terminal (MTR: Sheung Wan) seven times daily in the morning and early evening (check the website for specific times). A taxi from Central costs approximately HK\$70 (US\$9.10/£4.55). The hostel itself is open daily from 7am to 11pm.

Six other youth hostels are on some of the outlying islands and in the New Territories; most charge HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) for dormitory beds for those 18 and older. Check-in is from 4pm. There are kitchens and washing facilities, as well as campsites. Since these hostels are not easily accessible, they are recommended only for the adventurous traveler. Of these, the **Hong Kong Bank Foundation S.G. Davis Hostel**, on Lantau island about a 10-minute walk from the Po Lin Monastery with its giant Buddha (☎ 852/2985 5610), is the easiest to reach from the airport.

Where to Dine

Shopping is big in Hong Kong, but I'd rate dining right up there with it. I love topping off a shopping expedition to Stanley Market with a meal and drink atop the Jumbo floating restaurant in Aberdeen; ending a hike across Lamma island with an alfresco seafood meal; or splurging on a first-rate dinner at a top-floor restaurant with dreamy views of Hong Kong's stunning skyline. What better way to start the day than sharing a table for dim sum at a noisy Cantonese restaurant, unless it's Sunday brunch at the Verandah in Repulse Bay?

And you don't have to spend a lot of money to dine well. Hong Kong is literally riddled with hole-in-the-wall noodle shops, reasonably priced buffet restaurants, and even upscale restaurants offering very good lunch specials. Of course, if you want to spring for a dream meal, you can do that in Hong Kong, too.

The restaurants in this chapter are grouped first according to location and then according to price. In Kowloon, restaurants are concentrated in hotels, in shopping malls, and along Nathan Road and its side streets, such as Knutsford Terrace with its many alfresco eateries. Central District caters to area office workers with a wide range of restaurants in ifc mall and Pacific Place and to night revelers in the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district and SoHo (South of Hollywood Road), with many more restaurants sprinkled in between. Wan Chai, home to both a convention center and the city's raunchiest nightlife (think strip shows), offers a wide range of restaurants catering to diverse crowds, while the nearby Causeway Bay's dining scene centers in and around Times Square shopping center. The most

striking views are from restaurants atop Victoria Peak, while Stanley, with its market and laid-back beachfront restaurants, seems like a different part of the world altogether.

As for pricing, you can expect restaurants in the **Very Expensive** category (\$\$\$) to cost more than HK\$800 (US\$104/£52) per person for dinner without drinks (some restaurants average HK\$1,200/US\$156/£78 or more), while in the **Expensive** category (\$\$\$), meals average HK\$500 to HK\$800 (US\$65–US\$104/£32–£52).

Moderate restaurants (\$\$) serve diners ranging mostly from HK\$250 to HK\$500 (US\$32–US\$65/£16–£32), while **Inexpensive** restaurants (\$) offer meals for less than HK\$250 (US\$32/£16). Keep in mind, however, that these guidelines are approximations only. Some dishes (such as steaks or seafood like lobster) can easily make your meal more expensive than the calculations above.

I should add that many Chinese restaurants often have very long menus, sometimes listing more than 100 dishes. The most expensive dishes will invariably be such delicacies as bird's nest (bird's nest is a real nest, created by glutinous secretions of small swifts or swallows to build their nests), shark's fin, or abalone, for which the sky's the limit. In specifying price ranges for "main courses" under each Chinese establishment below, therefore, I excluded these delicacies, as well as inexpensive rice and noodle dishes which are considered side dishes (except, of course, in specialized noodle shops). In most cases, therefore, "main courses" refers to meat and vegetable combinations. Remember, since the price range is large, you can eat cheaply even at moderately priced restaurants by choosing



Ways to Save on Your Hong Kong Meals

Wherever you decide to eat, remember that a 10% service charge will be added to your food-and-beverage bill (see p. 326 in the appendix for more information on tipping in Hong Kong). There is no tax, however. You can save a few Hong Kong dollars when eating out by keeping the following tips in mind:

- **Eat your big meal at lunch.** Most Asian (excluding Chinese) and Western restaurants offer special fixed-price lunches that are much cheaper than evening meals; their menus often include an appetizer, main course, and a side dish. Don't neglect expensive restaurants just because you assume they're out of your price range. If you feel like splurging, lunch is the way to go. For example, you can eat lunch at Gaddi's (one of Hong Kong's most famous restaurants) for HK\$408 (US\$53/£26) per person, including a glass of wine (dinner would be at least double that). Note, however, that set lunches may not be available on Sundays or holidays or may cost more on weekends.
- **Jump on the buffet bandwagon.** Buffet spreads are another great Hong Kong tradition and bargain. I find the quality is generally much, much better than what you typically find in the West. Even the priciest hotels offer buffets (witness the Island Shangri-La's café TOO, p. 147), and a big part of their popularity is the variety, from sushi to roast beef to noodles to fresh seafood. Almost all hotels offer buffets for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; independent restaurants are more likely to feature buffets at lunch (some allow you to choose your main dish from a menu, complemented with buffets for appetizers and desserts). Some include a variety of both Asian and Continental dishes, a real bonus for lone diners who want to

wisely. Remember, too, that in Chinese restaurants it's customary to order one main dish for each diner, plus one extra to share.

The usual lunch hour in the SAR is from 1 to 2pm, when thousands of office workers pour into the city's more popular restaurants. Try to eat before or after the lunch rush hour, especially in Central, unless you plan on an expensive restaurant or have a reservation.

Unless stated otherwise, the open hours given below are exactly that—the hours a restaurant remains physically open but not necessarily the hours it serves food. The last orders are almost always taken at least

a half-hour before closing. Restaurants that are open for lunch from noon to 3pm, for example, will probably stop taking orders at 2:30pm. To avoid disappointment, call beforehand to make a reservation or arrive well ahead of closing time.

As for dress codes, unless otherwise stated, many upper-end restaurants have long done away with the jacket-and-tie requirement (those that do have a jacket requirement often have one on hand). Rather, "smart casual" or business casual is nowadays appropriate for most of the fancier places, meaning that men should wear long-sleeved shirts and that

sample a variety of cuisines at a reasonable cost. There are reduced prices for children.

- **Eat an early or late dinner to take advantage of special fixed-price meals.** A few restaurants offer early bird or late-night specials. If you dine before 7pm at trendy Felix, for example, a three-course meal costs only HK\$448 (US\$58/£29) as opposed to the HK\$1,000 (US\$130/£65) or more usually spent for dinner a la carte. At Harbourside in the InterContinental, the popular seafood buffet is cheaper if you dine after 9pm Friday and Saturday.
- **If you want to imbibe, stick with tea.** Hong Kong abolished import duties on wine and beer in 2008, making drinks with a meal even more enjoyable (in early 2007, the duty on wine was an astonishing 80%). That, coupled with a growing appreciative audience among young Hong Kong Chinese, has led to a much larger selection than ever before. Still, to keep prices down, stick to tea or try one of the two most popular and less expensive brands of beer: **San Miguel** (Filipino) and **Tsingtao** (Chinese). And speaking of beer, many bars and pubs mentioned in chapter 10, “Hong Kong After Dark,” also serve food.
- **Go the dim sum route.** Dim sum, served mainly in Cantonese restaurants, is another way to economize on breakfast or lunch. Dim sum are usually served three or four to a basket or plate; three baskets are usually filling enough for me, which means I can have breakfast or lunch for less than HK\$120 (US\$16/£8). If you don’t want tea, be sure to say so. Otherwise, it will be brought to your table automatically and generally costs HK\$8 (US\$1.05/52p) and up.

jeans, sport shoes, shorts, and flip-flops are inappropriate.

All of Hong Kong’s restaurants went nonsmoking in 2007, prompting those that could to open outdoor terraces for smokers (bars will become nonsmoking on July 1, 2009).

Finally, in addition to the restaurant recommendations below, HKTB maintains

a program called Quality Tourism Services (QTS), in which member restaurants adhere to stringent guidelines designed to help visitors find restaurants they can trust. A list of QTS restaurants is available on its website, www.discoverhongkong.com; restaurants that qualify also display a QTS decal in their shop.

1 BEST DINING BETS

I’m convinced Hong Kong has some of the best restaurants in the world—which makes it extremely difficult to choose the best of the best. Nevertheless, the following are my personal favorites.

- 116** • **Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner:** With views of Hong Kong's fabled harbor from its 56th-floor perch, live piano music, French cuisine, and one of Hong Kong's best wine lists, **Petrus**, Island Shangri-La Hotel, Supreme Court Road, Central (☎ 852/2820 8590), sets the mood for a special evening à deux. You'll want to linger for some time here, savoring the Mediterranean-influenced food, the castle-like ambience, the view, and each other. See p. 144.
- **Best Spot for a Business Lunch:** **Nicholini's**, in the Conrad Hotel, Pacific Place, Central (☎ 852/2521 3838, ext. 8210), serves what some claim is the best Italian food in town, including weekday fixed-price lunches that are dependably good yet won't blow your expense account. Its atmosphere is both highbrow and relaxed, giving it a winning combination for clinching those business deals. See p. 142.
 - **Best Spot for a Celebration:** An elegant, colonial-age setting, attentive service, dependably good French haute cuisine, an extensive wine list, and a long history make **Gaddi's** at The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2315 3171), a natural for a splurge or special celebration. See p. 128.
 - **Best Decor:** The avant-garde **Felix**, in The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2315 3188) and designed by Philippe Starck, manages to hold its own despite competing newcomers. In addition to providing Hong Kong's most unusual, innovative setting, the restaurant offers stunning views, one of the world's smallest discos, and slightly exhibitionist bathrooms. Wear your trendiest duds—you, too, will be part of the display. See p. 126.
 - **Best View:** In a town famous for its views, you might as well go to the very top, where the curved facade of **Cafe Deco**, Peak Galleria, Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 5111), offers Hong Kong's best panorama, along with live jazz in the evening and moderately priced—though occasionally mediocre—international cuisine. Reserve a harbor-view window seat a couple of weeks in advance; what you're really paying for here is the unparalleled view. See p. 162.
 - **Best Wine List:** Not only does **SPOON by Alain Ducasse**, Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2721 1211), offer great harbor views, excellent contemporary French cuisine, and impeccable service, but it also boasts a selection of 3,000 bottles of wine, on display at the restaurant's entrance. See p. 129.
 - **Best Newcomer:** With so many new restaurants in Hong Kong, choosing the best of the new is a truly daunting task. Nevertheless, I'll throw my hat in the ring for **Watermark**, Central Ferry Pier 7, Central (☎ 852/2167 7251), for several reasons. It's easy to find, offers everything from seafood to steaks as well as all-you-can-eat lunch buffets, and boasts sweeping views of the harbor from its terrace and glass-enclosed dining room. See p. 152.
 - **Best Chinese Hot Spot:** Make reservations early for **Hutong**, on the 28th floor of an office building at 1 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/3428 8342). This place is as hip as a Chinese restaurant can be, with fantastic views over Hong Kong, a darkened interior with splashes of red lighting and silhouetted birdcages, and innovative northern Chinese cuisine. Dine here and you may never want to leave Hong Kong—if only to see what could possibly top this dramatic venue; this being Hong Kong, something eventually will. See p. 134.
 - **Best Fusion:** Gregarious Chef Nobu is conquering the world with his modern Japanese cuisine, demonstrated in **NOBU InterContinental Hong Kong**, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2313 2323), with its outstanding Japanese/American/Latin-influenced dishes, great interior design, and fabulous harbor views. See p. 128. For

Chinese fusion cuisine, I also love **Lumiere**, ifc mall, Central (☎ 852/2393 3933), which so successfully blends spicy Sichuan cuisine with Latin American flavors you wonder why no one ever thought of it before. See p. 150.

- **Best Dim Sum Experience:** The quaint ceiling fans, spittoons, and wooden booths evoke a 1930s ambience at **Luk Yu Tea House**, 24–26 Stanley St., Central (☎ 852/2523 5464). First opened in 1933, it's one of Hong Kong's oldest restaurants, famous for its dim sum and filled daily with regular customers. It's hard to find an empty seat here but worth the effort. See p. 168. For a less touristy, completely down-home alternative, **Lin Heung Tea House**, 160–164 Wellington (☎ 852/2544 4556), has been serving dim sum from trolleys at its humble abode for more than 80 years. See p. 168.
- **Best Vegetarian:** With its informal atmosphere, wood furnishings, and health-foods store, **Life**, 10 Shelley St. in SoHo (☎ 852/2810 9777), is a lifesaver for those in search of organic, vegetarian fare, including salads, quiche, noodle and pasta dishes, daily specials, and power drinks. See p. 154.
- **Best Buffet Spread:** Lots of hotels offer buffets, but none can match the sheer extravagance and chic atmosphere of **café TOO**, Island Shangri-La Hotel, Supreme Court Road, Central (☎ 852/2820 8571). Overlooking the greenery of Hong Kong Park and sporting a hip, contemporary look, it features open kitchens and seven “stations” of food presentations spread throughout the restaurant, eliminating the assembly-line atmosphere inherent in most buffet restaurants. The danger? The temptation to try every delectable dish on display. See p. 147.
- **Best Outdoor Dining:** Atop Victoria Peak, away from the constant drone of Hong Kong's traffic, is the delightful **Peak Lookout**, 121 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 1000), which serves international cuisine. From an outdoor terrace surrounded by lush foliage, you can actually hear the birds sing. Some tables provide views of Hong Kong Island's southern coast. Musicians entertain nightly with oldies but goldies. See p. 162.
- **Best Takeout:** There's a little something for everyone at the combination health-food store/cafeteria **Three Sixty**, the Landmark, Central (☎ 852/2111 4880), whether it's hearty meals for carnivores or vegetarian curries. See p. 155.
- **Best Place to Chill Out:** If the stress of travel and the noise and crowds of Hong Kong have pushed you to the breaking point, take the free shuttle boat to Aberdeen's Jumbo Kingdom floating restaurant, where **Top Deck, at the Jumbo** (☎ 852/2553 3331) offers great seafood, comfy sofa seating, and alfresco dining with views of surrounding Aberdeen. See p. 164.
- **Best Afternoon Tea:** For that most British institution, no place is more famous than the golden-age and unparalleled **Lobby of The Peninsula**, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2920 2888), where you can nibble on delicate finger sandwiches and scones, watch the parade of people, and listen to live classical music being played from an upstairs balcony. See p. 169.
- **Best Sunday Brunch:** You'll be spoiled forever—or at least for the rest of the day—if you begin Sunday morning at the **Verandah**, 109 Repulse Bay Rd., Repulse Bay (☎ 852/2812 2722), complete with a three-piece band. Wonderfully reminiscent of the colonial era, it features Hong Kong's most famous Sunday spread, with main courses from the menu like eggs Benedict, a carving of the day, pasta cooked to order, sushi, dim sum, and more. If ever there were a place that inspired champagne for breakfast, this is it. See p. 162.

MEALS & DINING CUSTOMS

Traditionally speaking, Chinese restaurants tend to be noisy and crowded affairs, the patrons much more interested in food than in decor. They range from simple diners where the only adornment is likely to be the Formica atop the tables, to very elaborate affairs with Chinese lanterns, splashes of red and gold, and painted screens. In the 1980s, a new kind of Chinese restaurant exploded onto the scene: trendy, chic, and minimalist, many in Art Deco style, and catering to Hong Kong's young and upwardly mobile.

In any case, Chinese restaurants are places for social gatherings; since Hong Kong apartments are usually too small to entertain friends and family, the whole gang simply heads for their favorite restaurant.

The Chinese usually dine in large groups; the more, the merrier. You'll typically encounter these big groups at dinner, the main meal of the day. In smaller restaurants, sharing a table is a common practice, so if your party is small and a bigger group shows up, you may be asked to share your space or move to another table. As for ordering, the basic rule is to order one dish per person, plus one extra dish or a soup, with all dishes placed in the center of the table and shared by everyone. The more people in your party, therefore, the more dishes are ordered and the more fun you'll have. Dishes usually come in two or three different sizes, so ask your waiter which size is sufficient for your group.

Because most Chinese restaurants cater to groups and Chinese food is best enjoyed if there are a variety of dishes, lone diners are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to Chinese cuisine. A few restaurants make life easier by offering fixed-price meals, but they're usually for parties of two people or more. An alternative is to dine at hotel buffets that offer Chinese and international dishes.

You shouldn't have any problem ordering, since many Chinese restaurants have English menus. If you want to be correct about it, though, a well-balanced meal should contain the five basic tastes of Chinese cuisine—acid, hot, bitter, sweet, and salty. The texture should vary as well, ranging from crisp and tender to dry and saucy. The proper order is to begin with a cold dish, followed by dishes of fish or seafood, meat (pork, beef, or poultry), vegetables, soup, and noodles or rice. Some dishes are steamed, while others may be fried, boiled, or roasted. Many of the dishes are accompanied by sauces, the most common being soy sauce, chili sauce, and hot mustard.

At a Chinese restaurant, the beginning of your meal is heralded by a round of hot towels, a wonderful custom you'll soon grow addicted to and wish would be adopted by restaurants in your home country. Your eating utensils, of course, will be chopsticks, which have been around for 3,000 years and are perfect for picking up bite-size morsels. If you're eating rice, pick up the bowl and scoop the rice directly into your mouth with your chopsticks.

Keep in mind, however, that several superstitions are associated with chopsticks. If, for example, you find an uneven pair at your table setting, it means you are going to miss a boat, plane, or train. Dropping chopsticks means you will have bad luck; laying them across each other is also considered a bad omen, except in dim sum restaurants where your waiter may cross them to show that your bill has been settled. You can do the same to signal the waiter that you've finished your meal and wish to pay the bill. When dining in a group, avoid ordering seven dishes, since seven dishes are considered food for ghosts, not humans.

As for dining etiquette, it's considered perfectly acceptable to slurp soup, since this indicates an appreciation of the food and also helps cool the soup so it doesn't burn the tongue. Toothpicks are also acceptable for use at the table during and after meals; they can even be used to spear foods too slippery or elusive for chopsticks, such as button mushrooms and jellyfish slices. As in most Asian countries, good toothpick manners call for covering your mouth with one hand while you dislodge food particles from your teeth.

A final custom you may see in Chinese restaurants is that of finger tapping: Customers often tap three fingers on the table twice as a sign of thanks to the person pouring the tea.

THE CUISINE

Chinese cooking has evolved over the course of several thousand years, dictated often by a population too numerous to feed. The prospect of famine meant that nothing should be wasted, and the scarcity of fuel meant that food should be cooked as economically as possible; thus, it was chopped into small pieces and quickly stir-fried. Food needed to be as fresh as possible to avoid spoiling. Among the many regional Chinese cuisines, the most common ones found in Hong Kong are from Canton, Beijing (or Peking), Shanghai, Sichuan, and Chiu Chow (Swatow).

Of course, many other dishes and styles of cuisine besides those outlined below are found throughout China and in Hong Kong. It's said that the Chinese will eat anything that swims, flies, or crawls; although that may not be entirely true, if you're adventurous enough, you may want to try such delicacies as snake soup, pig's brain, bird's-nest soup (derived from the saliva of swallows), Shanghai freshwater hairy crabs (available only in autumn), tiny rice birds that are roasted and eaten whole, or eel heads simmered with Chinese herbs. One of the more common—albeit strange—items found on most Chinese menus is *bêche-de-mer*, which translates as sea cucumber but which is actually nothing more than a sea slug.

Dim sum and *congee* are the preferred Chinese breakfast (which is why some Cantonese restaurants open as early as 6 or 7am), but Western choices like scrambled eggs and bacon are also readily available in hotel restaurants and buffets.

Words of warning: According to government authorities, you're safe eating anywhere in the SAR, except when it comes to hawkers (food carts), which have pretty much disappeared from the Hong Kong scene anyway and were largely unlicensed. In addition, don't eat local oysters—there have been too many instances of oyster poisoning. Eat oysters only if they're imported from, say, Australia. The good restaurants will clearly stipulate on the menu that their oysters are imported. Some expats, warning of cholera, also steer clear of local shellfish and fish caught from local waters. Nowadays, restaurants catering largely to tourists offer fresh seafood caught outside Hong Kong's waters.

Hong Kong was also ravaged by several outbreaks of avian flu beginning in 1997 (6 out of 18 people infected in 1997 died), resulting in mass poultry cullings. Vigilance by local authorities has prevented any recent outbreaks in the SAR, and importation from mainland China ceases during outbreaks there. I still eat chicken in Hong Kong, but whether you choose to is up to you.

Watch your reaction to monosodium glutamate (MSG), which is used to enhance the flavor in Chinese cooking. Some people react strongly to this salt, reporting bouts of nausea, headaches, and a bloated feeling. Fortunately, an awareness of the detrimental side effects of MSG has long prompted most Chinese upper- and medium-range restaurants, especially those in hotels, to stop using it altogether. However, Chinese fast food is

XO sauce, first introduced in Hong Kong by The Peninsula hotel, is a spicy condiment made from a secret recipe incorporating, among other things, Hunan ham, scallops, and Chinese spices. It's so good, you may want to bring a bottle home with you; check hotel gift stores or the food emporium **city'super** (p. 227).

likely to be full of MSG, as are dishes prepared using products imported from China, where MSG is used as a matter of course.

Cantonese Food

The majority of Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong are Cantonese; this is not surprising since most Hong Kong Chinese are originally from Canton Province (now called Guangdong). It's also the most common style of Chinese cooking around the world and probably the one with which you're most familiar. Among Chinese, Cantonese cuisine is considered the finest, and many Chinese emperors employed Cantonese chefs in their kitchens.

Cantonese food, which is noted for fast cooking at high temperatures (usually either steamed or stir-fried), is known for its fresh, delicate flavors. Little oil and few spices are used so that the natural flavors of the various ingredients prevail, and the Cantonese are sticklers for freshness (traditionalists may shop twice a day at the market). If you're concerned about cholesterol, Cantonese food is preferable. On the other hand, those with active taste buds may find it rather bland.

Since the Cantonese eat so much seafood, the obvious choice in a Cantonese restaurant is fish. Some restaurants have tanks with live fish, with the price determined by the current market price for a *tael* (a tael is a Chinese unit of measurement approximately equal to 1.2 oz.). I love steamed whole fish prepared with fresh ginger and spring onions, but equally good are slices of garoupa (a reef fish popular in Southeast Asia), pomfret, red mullet, sole, and bream. It's considered bad luck to turn a fish over on your plate (it represents a boat capsizing), so the proper thing to do is to eat the top part of the fish, lift the spine in the air and then extract the bottom layer of meat with your chopsticks. Other popular seafood choices include shrimp and prawns, abalone, squid, scallops, crab, and sea cucumber. Shark's-fin soup is an expensive delicacy, though many consider it a culinary no-no due to the culling of sharks expressly for their fins.

Other Cantonese specialties include roast goose, duck, and pigeon; pan-fried lemon chicken; stir-fried minced quail and bamboo shoots rolled in lettuce and eaten with the fingers; *congee* (thick rice porridge); crab meat; sweet corn soup; and sweet-and-sour pork.

A popular Cantonese dish is dim sum, which means "light snack" but whose Chinese characters literally translate as "to touch the heart." Dating back to the 10th century, dim sum is eaten for breakfast and lunch and with afternoon tea; in Hong Kong it is especially popular for Sunday family outings. It consists primarily of finely chopped meat, seafood, and vegetables wrapped in thin dough and then steamed, fried, boiled, or braised. Dim sum can range from steamed dumplings to meatballs, fried spring rolls, and sparieribs.

Many Cantonese restaurants offer dim sum from about 7:30am until 4pm, traditionally served from trolleys wheeled between the tables but nowadays more likely to be offered from a written menu. There are nearly 100 different kinds of dim sum, but some

of my favorites are *shiu mai* (steamed minced pork dumplings), *har gau* (steamed shrimp dumplings), *cha siu bau* (barbecued pork buns), *au yuk* (steamed minced beef balls), *fun gwor* (steamed rice-flour dumplings filled with pork, shrimp, and bamboo shoots), and *tsuen guen* (deep-fried spring rolls filled with shredded pork, chicken, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, and bean sprouts). A serving of dim sum usually consists of two to four pieces on a plate and averages about HK\$20 to HK\$40 (US\$2.60–US\$5.15/£1.30–£2.60) per plate, though at fine restaurants, particularly in hotels, the prices can be much higher. Your bill is calculated at the end of the meal by the number of plates on your table or, more common nowadays, by a card marked each time you order a dish.

Since I can usually manage only three dishes, dim sum is one of the cheapest meals in Hong Kong and is also the best when dining alone. I often have dim sum for breakfast with lots of tea (the actual term is *yum cha*, traditionally meant as an early breakfast of dim sum and Chinese tea). But it's more than just the price that draws me to traditional dim sum restaurants—they are noisy, chaotic, and the perfect place to soak in the local atmosphere, read a newspaper or gossip. No one should go to Hong Kong without visiting a dim sum restaurant at least once.

For a light snack or late-night meal, try *congee*, which is a rice porridge popular for breakfast and usually topped with a meat, fish, or vegetable. Many of Hong Kong's countless, cheapest restaurants specialize in *congee*, as well as noodles in soup, the most famous of which is probably *wun tun meen*, noodle soup with shrimp dumplings.

Pekingese Food

Many Pekingese dishes originated in the imperial courts of the emperors and empresses and were served at elaborate banquets. This theatrical flamboyance is still evident today in the elaborate pulling of Pekingese noodles and the smashing of the clay around “beggar’s chicken.” Because of its northern source, the food of Peking (or Beijing) tends to be rather substantial (to keep the body warm), and it is richer than Cantonese food. Liberal amounts of peppers, garlic, ginger, leeks, and coriander are used. Noodles and dumplings are more common than rice, and roasting is the preferred method of cooking.

Most famous among Peking-style dishes is Peking duck (or Beijing duck), but unfortunately, a minimum of six people is usually required for this elaborate dish. The most prized part is the crisp skin, which comes from air-drying the bird and then coating it with a mixture of syrup and soy sauce before roasting. It’s served by wrapping the crisp skin and meat in thin pancakes together with spring onion, radish, and sweet plum sauce.

Another popular dish prepared with fanfare is beggar’s chicken: A whole chicken is stuffed with mushrooms, pickled Chinese cabbage, herbs, and onions, wrapped in lotus leaves, sealed in clay, and then baked all day. The guest of honor usually breaks open the hard clay with a mallet, revealing a tender feast more fit for a king than a beggar.

For do-it-yourself dining, try the Mongolian hot pot, where diners gather around a common pot in a scene reminiscent of campfires on the Mongolian steppes. One version calls for wafer-thin slices of meat, usually mutton, to be dipped in a clear stock and then eaten with a spicy sauce. Another variety calls for a sizzling griddle, over which thin-sliced meat, cabbage, bean sprouts, onions, and other vegetables are barbecued in a matter of seconds.

Shanghainese Food

A big, bustling city, Shanghai incorporates the food of several surrounding regions and cities, making it the most diverse cuisine in China. Because of the cold winters in Shanghai, its food is heavier, richer, sweeter, and oilier than Cantonese or Pekingese food,

122 seasoned with sugar, soy sauce, and Shaoxing wine. In addition, because of hot summers, which can spoil food quickly, specialties include pickled or preserved vegetables, fish, shrimp, and mushrooms. Some dishes are rather heavy on the garlic, and portions tend to be enormous. The dishes are often stewed, braised, or fried.

The most popular Shanghaiese delicacy in Hong Kong is freshwater hairy crab (a crab with long, hairy-looking legs), flown in from Shanghai in autumn, steamed, and eaten with the hands. Other Shanghaiese dishes include “yellow fish” (usually marinated in wine lees), braised eel with huge chunks of garlic, “drunken chicken” (chicken marinated in Chinese wine), sautéed shrimp in spicy tomato sauce over crispy rice, and sautéed shredded beef and green pepper. As for the famous 100-year-old egg, it’s actually only several months old, with a limey, pickled-ginger taste. Breads, noodles, and dumplings are favored over rice in this region’s cuisine.

Sichuan Food

This is my favorite Chinese cuisine, because it’s the spiciest, hottest, and most fiery style of cooking. The fact that its spiciness recalls Thailand, India, and Malaysia is no coincidence, since this huge province shares a border with Burma and Tibet.

The culprit is the Sichuan chili, fried to release its explosiveness. Seasoning also includes chili-bean paste, peppercorns, garlic, ginger, coriander, and other spices. Foods are simmered and smoked rather than stir-fried. The most famous Sichuan (also called Szechuan) dish is smoked duck, which is seasoned with peppercorns, ginger, cinnamon, orange peel, and coriander; marinated in rice wine; then steamed; and then smoked over a charcoal fire of camphor wood and tea leaves.

Other specialties include pan-fried prawns in spicy sauce, sour-and-peppery soup, sautéed diced chicken in chili-bean sauce, and dry-fried spicy string beans. Most Sichuan menus indicate which dishes are spicy.

Chiu Chow Food

Chiu Chow refers to the people, dialect, and food of the Swatow area in southeastern Canton. Chiu Chow chefs pride themselves on their talents for vegetable carvings—those incredible birds, flowers, and other adornments that are a part of every Chiu Chow banquet.

Influenced by Cantonese cooking, Chiu Chow food is rich in protein, light, and tasty. Seafood, ducks, and geese are favorites, while sauces, often sweet and using tangerine or sweet beans for flavor, are liberally applied. A meal begins with a cup of *kwun yum* tea, popularly called Iron Buddha and probably the world’s strongest and most bitter tea. It’s supposed to cleanse the system and stimulate the taste buds. Drink some of this stuff and you’ll be humming for hours.

Two very expensive Chiu Chow delicacies are shark’s fin and bird’s nests. Other common menu items include steamed lobster, deep-fried shrimp balls, sautéed slices of whelk, fried goose blood, goose doused in soy sauce, stuffed eel wrapped in pickled cabbage, and crispy fried *chuenjew* leaves, which literally melt in the mouth. While not greasy, the food does favor strong, earthy tastes.

DRINKS

Tea is often provided regardless of whether you ask for it, usually at a small charge (around HK\$8–HK\$13/US\$1.05–US\$1.70/52p–85p). Grown in China for more than 2,000 years, tea is believed to help clear the palate and aid digestion. There are three main types: green or unfermented tea; black *bo lay* fermented tea (the most popular in Hong

Kong); and oolong, or semifermented tea. These three teas can be further subdivided into a wide variety of specific types, with taste varying according to the region, climate, and soil. If you want free refills, simply cock the lid of the teapot half open and someone will come around to refill it. Afterward, tap three fingers on the table twice as a sign of thanks.

If you want something a bit stronger than tea, choose a **Chinese wine**. Although some Chinese red and white wines are made from grapes, most Chinese wines aren't really wines in the Western sense of the word. Rather, they are spirits distilled from rice, millet, and other grains, as well as from herbs and flowers. Popular Chinese wines include *siu hing*, a mild rice wine that resembles a medium-dry sherry, which goes well with all kinds of Chinese food, and is best served warm; *go leung* and *mao toi*, fiery drinks made from millet with a 70% alcohol content; and *ng ka pay*, a sweet herbal wine favored for its medicinal properties, especially against rheumatism. These wines can be cheap or expensive, depending on what you order.

As for **beer**, there's Tsingtao from mainland China, first brewed years ago by Germans and made from sparkling mineral water. San Miguel is also very popular. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that excess drinking is frowned upon by the Chinese, especially the older generation, who often don't drink anything stronger than tea in restaurants. In fact, one waiter told me that Westerners spend much more in restaurants than Chinese simply because Westerners drink alcoholic beverages. Hong Kong's young, affluent generation, however, has developed a growing appreciation for imported wine, though it's rare to find a good international wine list at Chinese restaurants outside of hotels and the trendiest of restaurants.

3 RESTAURANTS BY CUISINE

Afternoon Tea

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The Spice Market (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 135)

American

California Pizza Kitchen (Tsim Sha Tsui, Mong Kok, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 138)

Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill ★ (Central, Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 133)

The Flying Pan (Central, Wan Chai, \$, p. 153)

Main Street Deli ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

Ruth's Chris Steak House ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui East, Central, \$\$\$, p. 131)

Asian

Mido Cafe (Yau Ma Tei, \$, p. 140)

Nomads ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

Australian

Pearl on the Peak ★★ (Victoria Peak, \$\$\$, p. 161)

Buffet

café TOO ★★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 147)

Gaylord ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 133)

The Greenery (Tsim Sha Tsui East, \$\$, p. 134)

Harbourside ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 131)

Nomads ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

The Salisbury (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

The Spice Market (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 135)

Cantonese

- Fook Lam Moon ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Wan Chai, \$\$\$, p. 130)
 Jade Garden (Tsim Sha Tsui, Causeway Bay, \$\$, p. 135)
 Jumbo Kingdom ★ (Aberdeen, \$\$, p. 164)
 One Harbour Road ★★ (Wan Chai, \$\$\$, p. 156)
 Shang Palace ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui East, \$\$\$, p. 131)
 The Square ★ (Central, \$\$, p. 151)
 Super Star Seafood Restaurant ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, \$\$, p. 136)
 T'ang Court ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 132)
 Tsui Hang Village Restaurant (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, \$\$, p. 137)
 Yan Toh Heen ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 132)
 Yung Kee ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 152)
 Zen ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 152)

Chiu Chow

- Chiuchow Garden (Central, \$\$, p. 147)
 City Chiuchow Restaurant (Tsim Sha Tsui East, \$\$, p. 133)
 Golden Island Bird's Nest Chiu Chau Restaurant (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 134)

Continental

- Azure ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 146)
 Jimmy's Kitchen ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, \$\$, p. 148)
 M at the Fringe ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 145)
 Post 97 ★ (Central, \$\$, p. 150)
 Sammy's Kitchen (Western District, \$, p. 165)
 The Verandah ★★★★★ (Repulse Bay, \$\$\$, p. 162)
 Watermark ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 152)

Dim Sum

See "Dim Sum," on p. 165

French

- BB's Bistro (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 132)
 Caprice ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$\$\$, p. 141)
 Gaddi's ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$\$, p. 128)
 Le Petit Paris ★ (Central, \$\$, p. 149)
 Le Tire Bouchon ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 149)
 Petrus ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$\$\$, p. 144)
 The Press Room ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 150)
 Riva ★★ (Causeway Bay, \$\$\$, p. 156)
 SPOON by Alain Ducasse ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$\$, p. 129)

Fusion

- Felix ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$\$, p. 126)
 Lumiere ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 150)
 ToTT's ★★★★★ (Causeway Bay, \$\$\$, p. 156)

Hunanese

- Hunan Garden ★★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 144)

Indian

- Gaylord ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 133)
 Khana Khazana (Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)
 Koh-I-Noor ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, \$, p. 139)
 Spice (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 135)
 The Viceroy ★★ (Wan Chai, \$\$, p. 158)

International

- The Boathouse (Stanley, \$\$, p. 163)
 Cafe Deco ★ (Victoria Peak, \$\$, p. 162)
 café TOO ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 147)
 The Greenery (Tsim Sha Tsui East, \$\$, p. 134)

Harbourside ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 131)

Lucy's ★ (Stanley, \$\$, p. 163)

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The Peak Lookout ★★ (Victoria Peak, \$\$, p. 162)

The Salisbury (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

Three Sixty ★ (Central, \$, p. 155)

Top Deck, at the Jumbo ★★ (Aberdeen, \$\$, p. 164)

ToTT's ★★★★★ (Causeway Bay, \$\$\$, p. 156)

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Fat Angelo's (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 139)

Gaia Ristorante ★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 144)

Grappa's ★ (Central, \$\$, p. 147)

Grissini ★★★★★ (Wan Chai, \$\$\$\$, p. 155)

Isola ★★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 145)

Nicholini's ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$\$\$, p. 142)

Sabatini ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui East, \$\$\$\$, p. 129)

Spaghetti House (Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 141)

Tutto Bene ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 137)

Va Bene ★★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 145)

Japanese

Genki Sushi (Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 139)

Hanagushi (Central, \$\$, p. 148)

Kiku (Central, \$\$, p. 149)

Nobu InterContinental Hong Kong ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$\$, p. 128)

Tokio Joe ★ (Central, \$\$, p. 151)

Unkai ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$\$, p. 130)

Wasabisabi ★★ (Causeway Bay, \$\$, p. 159)

Yagura ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 138)

Zuma ★★★★★ (Central, \$\$\$, p. 146)

Korean

Sorabol ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 161)

Malaysian

Spice (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 135)

Mexican

¡Caramba! (Central, \$, p. 153)

Northern Chinese

Hutong ★★★★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 134)

Watermargin ★★ (Causeway Bay, \$\$, p. 159)

Pekingese

American Restaurant (Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)

Peking Garden ★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, \$\$, p. 135)

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Pizza

Baci Pizza ★ (Central, \$, p. 153)

Café O ★ (Central, Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)

California Pizza Kitchen (Tsim Sha Tsui, Mong Kok, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 138)

PizzaExpress (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, Wan Chai, Stanley, \$, p. 154)

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Sandwiches

Café O ★ (Central, Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)

Main Street Deli ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 140)

Pret A Manger (Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, \$, p. 155)

Seafood

Dot Cod Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Bar (Central, \$\$, p. 147)

Harbourside ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 131)

Super Star Seafood Restaurant ★
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Top Deck, at the Jumbo ★★
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Shanghaiese

Chinese Kitchen (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 138)

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Wu Kong ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui, Causeway Bay, \$\$, p. 137)

Sichuan

Chinese Kitchen (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 138)

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Lumiere ★★ (Central, \$\$, p. 150)

Red Pepper ★★ (Causeway Bay, \$, p. 158)

Steaks

Ruth's Chris Steak House ★★ (Tsim Sha Tsui East, Central, \$\$\$, p. 131)

STEAK HOUSE winebar + grill ★★★
(Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$\$, p. 129)

Taiwanese

Chinese Kitchen (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$, p. 138)

Heaven on Earth (Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, \$, p. 154)

Thai

Chili Club (Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)

Simply Thai (Causeway Bay, Sha Tin, \$, p. 161)

Spice (Tsim Sha Tsui, \$\$, p. 135)

Thai Lemongrass ★★ (Central, \$, p. 151)

Vegetarian

Khana Khazana (Wan Chai, \$, p. 160)

Life ★ (Central, \$, p. 154)

Vietnamese

Indochine 1929 ★★ (Central, \$, p. 148)

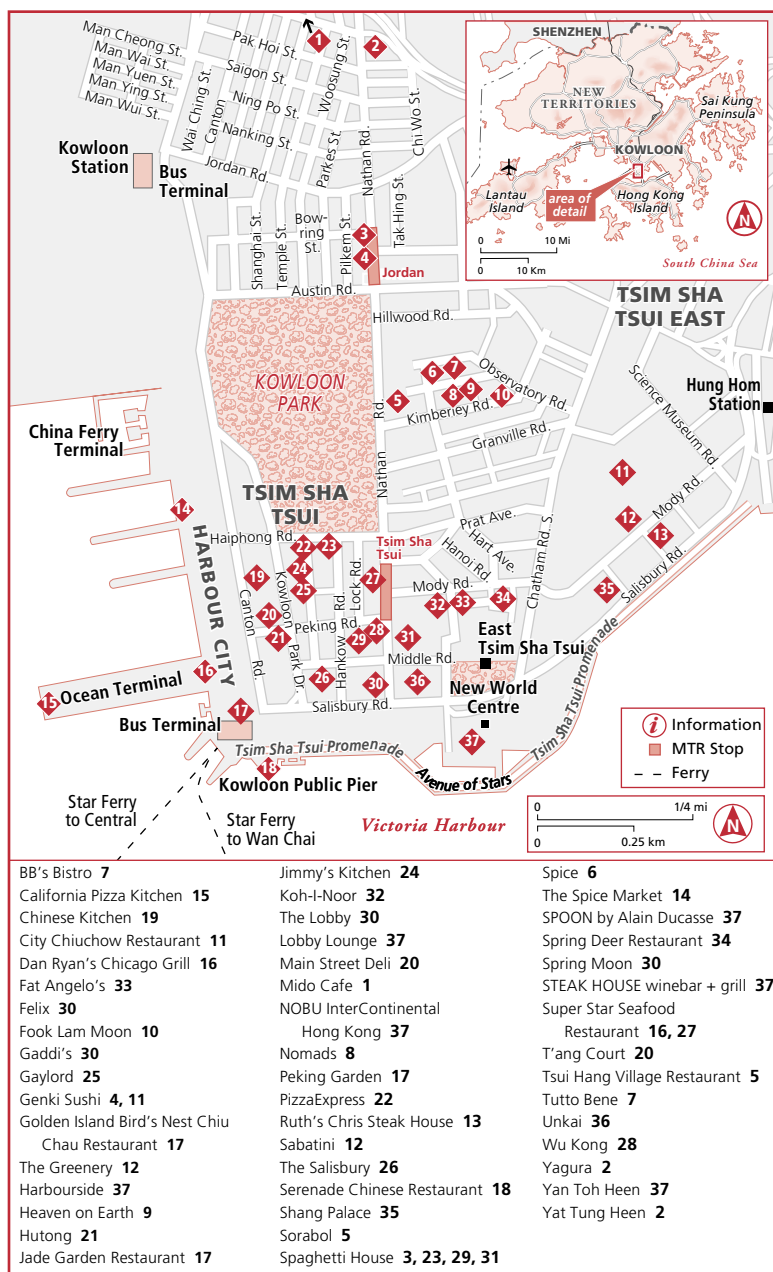
Western

Mido Cafe (Yau Ma Tei, \$, p. 140)

4 KOWLOON

VERY EXPENSIVE

Felix ★★★ **Value** FUSION Located on the top floor of The Peninsula, this strikingly avant-garde restaurant comes as something of a shock in the otherwise traditionally conservative hotel. But what else can you expect from a restaurant designed by Philippe Starck? Your first hint that Felix is not your ordinary dining experience begins with the elevator's wavy walls, which suggest a voyage to the world beyond, and continues inside the restaurant with its huge aluminum wall, glass facades that curve seductively to reveal stunning views, and two eye-catching zinc cylinders that resemble gigantic snails and contain a cocoon-cozy bar and what may be one of the world's tiniest discos (spiraling staircases also lead to bars on top). The dining area itself is rather—what can I say—stark, and even the views tend to take second place in this self-conscious, people-watching setting (you, however, should reserve a window seat on the harbor side). The menu, featuring Pacific Rim ingredients brought together in East-meets-West combinations, rarely disappoints. You might start with Dungeness crab cake served with avocado and jalapeño remoulade, followed by the prawn cracker-crust sea bass. Bargain hunters can save



If you've ever wondered what a kitchen is like during the hustle and bustle of meal times, you have your chance to experience it firsthand by participating in Gaddi's Chef Table at The Peninsula hotel. Seating only four (with a minimum of two persons), it offers a fascinating front-row view of Gaddi's kitchen in action, a tour of The Peninsula's massive kitchens, and includes three-course lunches for HK\$688 (US\$89/£45) or five-course and 10-course dinners for HK\$1,688 (US\$219/£110) and HK\$2,388 (US\$310/£155) per person. For Chinese food enthusiasts, a similar dining experience is offered by The Peninsula's Spring Moon Chef's Table. For reservations, contact The Peninsula at ☎ **852/2920 2888** or by e-mail at dining.pen@peninsula.com.

bundles by dining early (before 7pm) and opting for the early bird, three-course dinner for HK\$448 (US\$58/£29), including a glass of wine. You can also come just for a drink, though note that the dress code is smart casual (no flip-flops or shorts allowed).

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2315 3188**. www.peninsula.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$280–HK\$510 (US\$36–US\$66/£18–£33); fixed-price dinner HK\$928 (US\$121/£60). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 6pm–1:30am (last order 10:30pm). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Gaddi's ★★★ FRENCH Opened in 1953 and named after a former general manager of The Peninsula, Gaddi's was once considered the best European restaurant in Hong Kong. Although that reputation has long been challenged by other superb restaurants, Gaddi's is still a legend, the epitome of old Hong Kong. Its atmosphere, intended to evoke the hotel's original 1928 neoclassical architecture, is that of an elegant European dining room blended with the best of Asia, with crystal-and-silver chandeliers from Paris, Tai Ping carpet, and a Chinese coromandel screen dating from 1670. The food is French haute cuisine at its finest, classically French but with inventive, European influences, with past dishes on the changing menu including pan-fried Brittany sea bass with roasted scallop and black truffle as well as poached Bresse chicken with leg confit, cep and white truffle crust, pureed pumpkin, and deep-fried gooseliver. The wine cellar, with a collection of rare vintages, is among the best in Hong Kong—but who could blame you if you get carried away and splurge on champagne? There's live, discreet music at night and a small dance floor.

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2315 3171**. www.peninsula.com. Reservations recommended for lunch, required for dinner. Jacket required for men at dinner. Main courses HK\$510–HK\$610 (US\$66–US\$79/£33–£40); fixed-price dinner HK\$1,388 (US\$180/£90); fixed-price lunch HK\$408 (US\$53/£26). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 7–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

NOBU InterContinental Hong Kong ★★★ JAPANESE Where isn't there a Nobu these days? Opened in 2006 as the 17th venue in Nobuyuki Matsuhisa's culinary empire, this one offers fabulous harbor views and a sleek design that utilizes wood, bamboo, sea urchin spines, rocks, and other natural materials in a thoroughly modern way. The Yuzu and Piña Martini (pineapple vodka, fresh pineapple puree and yuzu juice) serves as an apt introduction to the unique pairing of Japanese/American/Latin cuisines (Chef Nobu, as everyone calls him, has lived in Japan, Peru, and the United States). Sushi, sashimi, and tempura (meat and vegetables coated in batter and then deep-fried) are listed on the long menu, along with such intriguing choices as yellowtail sashimi with

jalapeño, steamed Chilean sea bass with black bean sauce, and beef tenderloin with wasabi salsa. If making a choice is too daunting, order the *omakase*, the chef's recommended dinner starting at HK\$888 (US\$115/£58). Despite the huge wine selection, this cuisine goes great with sake; ask the knowledgeable staff to make recommendations based on what you've ordered.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2313 2323**. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$250–HK\$760 (US\$32–US\$99/£16–£49); fixed-price lunches HK\$165–HK\$588 (US\$21–US\$76/£11–£38). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Sabatini ★★★ Finds ITALIAN In 1954, three Sabatini brothers opened their first restaurant in Rome; their success led them to open branches in Japan and, in 1992, Hong Kong. The dining hall here is rustic and cozy yet refined, with a terra-cotta tile floor, wooden ceiling, and traditional Roman murals, giving it a more casual and relaxed ambience than most hotel Italian restaurants in the same price range. Its menu is a faithful replica of the original Roman fare, with liberal doses of olive oil, garlic, and peppers and featuring such popular dishes as Dover sole with *prosecco* and artichokes, and veal with mustard flan, marsala and porcini mushroom sauce. The pasta is all handmade, and the antipasti buffet is so delicious it's tempting to fill up just on its selections, but don't forget to leave room for the tiramisu. The list of mostly Italian wines is seemingly endless. Evenings feature live music; lunch is popular for its reasonable fixed-price menus. The service is cheerful and polished.

In the Royal Garden hotel, 69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2733 2000**. www.rghk.com.hk. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$328–HK\$598 (US\$43–US\$78/£21–£39); fixed-price lunch HK\$188–HK\$298 (US\$24–US\$39/£12–£19); Sun/holiday buffet HK\$448 (US\$58/£29). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

SPOON by Alain Ducasse ★★★ FRENCH Dinner at this sophisticated, seductive venue is more than just a meal—it's an experience. From the moment you walk past the restaurant's "wine cellar," with approximately 3,000 bottles of both New and Old World selections, you know that this is a place of superlatives. The focal point of the dining room is the ceiling, where 550 hand-blown Murano glass spoons are lined up like a landing strip, directing one's attention to the open kitchen and to the stunning harbor view just beyond the massive windows. The restaurant is so low and close to the water that dining here is almost like being on a junk—albeit a very luxurious one. The menu is divided into two sections: classic French favorites inspired by chef and restaurateur Alain Ducasse and contemporary SPOON originals. You might, therefore, opt for the classic duck foie gras followed by Wagyu beef tenderloin with truffle sauce, or go with the original creation of steamed duck foie gras with chutney pears and ginger and herb salad, followed by pan-seared red tuna with satay sauce and vegetables. Alternatively, your entire group may opt for the Sexy Spoon, a special tasting menu costing HK\$788 (US\$102/£51) per person for six courses or HK\$988 (US\$128/£64) for eight courses.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2313 2323**. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$270–HK\$520 (US\$35–US\$68/£18–£34); Sun lunch HK\$558 (US\$72/£36), including champagne and wine. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun noon–2:30pm; daily 6–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

STEAK HOUSE winebar + grill ★★★ STEAKS Not only is the food great, but dining here is fun! Start your meal with a trip through one of Hong Kong's most extensive salad bars, featuring 24 different vegetables, six homemade salad dressings, and 11

130 condiments. Follow it with a filet mignon, Australian Wagyu beef, a New York strip, or other meat imported from around the world, cooked on Hong Kong's only charcoal grill. You then get to choose your gourmet steak knife (10 different options, from Japan, France, Germany, and other parts of the globe), your mustard (from a dozen homemade varieties), sauce (eight different kinds), and salt (from a selection of rock salts from around the world). Even though the restaurant has no view, to be truthful I barely noticed, since I was so absorbed in making my many selections, including—need I add?—wine from the cellar's 3,000 choices.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2313 2323**. www.hongkong-intercontinental.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$300–HK\$1,380 (US\$39–US\$179/£19–£90); Sun lunch HK\$518 (US\$67/£34). AE, DC, MC, V. Sun noon–2:30pm; daily 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Unkai ★★ JAPANESE The Hong Kong branch of a well-known group of restaurants in Japan, Unkai serves excellent and authentic traditional Japanese cuisine, prepared by chefs from Osaka (known for its food) and catering to discerning Japanese, who make up a large proportion of the Sheraton's guests. True to Japanese form, the elegance of the restaurant is subtly understated, an aesthetic that is also carried into the food presentation. Foremost, of course, are the *kaiseki* courses, artfully arranged dishes that change according to the season. There's also tempura (meat and vegetables coated in batter and then deep-fried), *teppanyaki* (grilled foods), and sushi counters. Since ordering a la carte can be expensive and bewildering due to the many choices, order a fixed-price meal (called a "course" on the menu) or come for lunch, when you have a choice of many fixed-price meals, including sushi, tempura, and *teppanyaki* courses and *obento* lunch boxes.

In the Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel and Towers, 20 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2369 1111**, ext. 3087. www.starwoodhotels.com. Reservations recommended. *Kaiseki* fixed-price meals HK\$500–HK\$795 (US\$65–US\$103/£32–£52); *teppanyaki* fixed-price meals HK\$820–HK\$990 (US\$106–US\$129/£53–£64); fixed-price lunches HK\$250–HK\$450 (US\$32–US\$58/£16–£29). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

EXPENSIVE

Fook Lam Moon ★★★ CANTONESE Upon entering this restaurant (look for the shrine to the kitchen god at the entrance), you immediately feel as if you've stepped back a couple of decades to a Hong Kong that has all but vanished. The decor is outdated and, unless you're a regular, the waiters are indifferent. Yet for almost 40 years this has remained *the* place to go for exotic dishes, including shark's fin (the obvious number-one choice, with 12 different renditions listed on the menu, starting with shark's fin with crabmeat or shredded chicken for HK\$350/US\$45/£23), bird's nest, and abalone, as well as more down-to-earth dishes such as fried crispy chicken and pan-fried lobster bars (the spicy XO sauce on every table is a great condiment). If you're not careful, you could end up spending a small fortune, but whatever you order it's apt to be memorable. Indeed, some Hong Kong old-timers swear this restaurant serves the best Cantonese food in the world.

Another branch is in Wan Chai at 35–45 Johnston Rd. (☎ **852/2866 0663**; MTR: Wan Chai), with the same hours.

53–59 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2366 0286**. www.fooklammoon-grp.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Main dishes (excluding exotic dishes) HK\$120–HK\$250 (US\$16–US\$32/£8–£18). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm; Sun 11am–3pm; daily 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Harbourside ★★ INTERNATIONAL/SEAFOOD/BUFFET This bright and airy informal dining hall is the InterContinental's all-day "casual" restaurant, but if you go for the very tempting international seafood dinner buffet—and who can resist?—you'll pay a pretty penny for the privilege of chowing down on fish, shrimp, sushi, and other seafood, along with pastas, pizzas, and salads. Included in the dining experience are views of people strolling along the waterfront Avenue of Stars promenade and chefs bustling about in an open kitchen. You can, however, eat more cheaply by dining after 9pm Friday and Saturday, when the buffet costs HK\$518 (US\$67/£34); coming for the lunch buffet; or ordering a la carte, with selections ranging from burgers, pizza, sandwiches, and steaks to Chinese and Japanese dishes. Harbourside even has a health-conscious menu, with specific dishes designed to help aid against diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and a lack of antioxidants.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2313 2323**. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$155–HK\$395 (US\$20–US\$51/£10–£26); dinner buffet HK\$588 (US\$76/£38) Mon–Sat, HK\$618 (US\$80/£40) Sun; lunch buffet HK\$248 (US\$32/£16) Mon–Fri, HK\$388 (US\$50/£25) Sat; Sun champagne brunch HK\$638 (US\$83/£41). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 6am–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Ruth's Chris Steak House ★★ STEAKS/AMERICAN Craving a big, juicy steak? This well-known American chain fits the bill with its U.S. prime Midwestern beef, available in cuts of filet, rib-eye, strip, porterhouse, and T-bone in various sizes, broiled to exact specifications and served sizzling. Other entrees include tuna, chicken, lamb chops, and lobster; side dishes, which cost extra, range from mashed potatoes with roasted garlic to fresh sautéed spinach and Caesar salad. Less expensive fare for lunch includes sandwiches in addition to steak.

Another branch is in the Lippo Centre, 89 Queensway, Central (☎ **852/2522 9090**; MTR: Admiralty), open the same hours.

Empire Centre (opposite Regal Kowloon Hotel), 68 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2366 6000**. www.ruthschris.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Main courses HK\$260–HK\$565 (US\$34–US\$73/£17–£37); fixed-price dinner HK\$260–HK\$580 (US\$34–US\$75/£17–£38). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 5:30–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Shang Palace ★★ CANTONESE While most Chinese restaurants have ditched time-honored red and gold for a more contemporary look, this remains one of Hong Kong's most traditionally and elaborately decorated restaurants, with walls of carved red lacquerware and Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling. All in all, it fits every expectation of how an "authentic" Chinese restaurant should look. If your experience of Chinese food is limited to chop suey, this is a comfortable and memorable place to go, though you also can't go wrong if you're a Chinese-food connoisseur. The dinner menu, which changes with the seasons, is quite extensive, with an emphasis on fresh seafood (plucked from a tank in the kitchen), but also serving chicken, duck (including Peking duck), pigeon, beef, and pork, Cantonese-style. Consider starting with shark's-fin soup, followed by the deep-fried crispy chicken or the sparerib casserole, cooked in a clay pot and doused with homemade sweet-and-sour sauce with Chinese wine. If cost is no object, you might consider bird's nest with crab meat, which runs HK\$450 (US\$58/£29) or more. Otherwise, expect to spend about HK\$500 (US\$65/£32) per person for a royal feast. Lunch is more economical and always includes a dozen or more varieties of dim sum.

In the Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2733 8754**. www.shangri-la.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$125–HK\$300 (US\$16–US\$39/£8.10–£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; Sun and holidays 10:30am–3pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

132 T'ang Court ★★ CANTONESE Jackie Chan and a host of other celebrities have dined here, testament to this restaurant's award-winning cuisine famous for its original take on classic Cantonese fare. Named after the T'ang Dynasty, often characterized as the Golden Age in Chinese history, this hotel restaurant is richly decorated in burgundy and gold, with velvet curtains, contemporary sculptures, and generously spaced tables. Faced with an extensive menu of interesting choices, you might opt for one of the signature dishes like stir-fried lobster with spring onion, red onion and shallots; sautéed prawns and crab roe with golden-fried pork and crab meat puffs; or baked seafood rice in a crab shell. If the sky's the limit, you can also dine on bird's nest and abalone, but on the other end of the spectrum are the fixed-price meals and the dim sum lunch (both good for lone diners).

In the Langham Hotel, 8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2375 1133**, ext. 2250. <http://hongkong.langhamhotels.com>. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$140–HK\$380 (US\$18–US\$49/£9.10–£20); fixed-price meal HK\$420 (US\$55/£27); dim sum lunch HK\$248 (US\$32/£16). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 11am–3pm; daily 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Yan Toh Heen ★★★ CANTONESE With a name that translates loosely as an “elegant dining establishment to enjoy the beautiful view,” this great restaurant envelops diners in a sophisticated, hushed environment, with large windows treating diners to a view of famous Victoria Harbour. The decor emphasizes the beauty of stark simplicity, with bonsai trees and flower arrangements that change with the lunar calendar; the restaurant is famous for its beautiful jade table settings (each setting is valued at approximately HK\$8,000/US\$1,039/£519!). Dishes are traditional Cantonese, as well as imaginative creations that border on Chinese nouvelle cuisine. The menu changes with each lunar month but always includes seafood, the restaurant's signature barbecued suckling pig, Peking duck (HK\$660/US\$86/£43; advance orders required), Lung Kong chicken, and sautéed prawns with XO chili sauce. The restaurant is also known for its dim sum. Since most diners follow the Chinese custom of ordering several dishes and then sharing, the average dinner bill without wine here is HK\$1,200 (US\$156/£78) for two.

In the InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2313 2323**. www.hongkong-intercontinental.com. Reservations recommended (request a window seat). Main dishes HK\$165–HK\$360 (US\$21–US\$47/£11–£23); fixed-price lunch HK\$498 (US\$65/£32). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun 11:30am–3pm; daily 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

MODERATE

In addition to the choices here, a good standby for Continental cuisine is the Tsim Sha Tsui branch of **Jimmy's Kitchen**, covered in the Central dining section (p. 148).

BB's Bistro FRENCH This is a good choice for casual dining on Knutsford Terrace, a tucked-away pedestrian lane lined with bars and restaurants at the north end of Tsim Sha Tsui. You can choose to sit outside and watch the human parade, or settle in the simple, dark restaurant at one of the booths or tables. A live jazz combo serenades from 10pm. The cuisine ranges from classic French recipes to more interesting creations, including roasted loin of black pork served with polenta cake and glazed vegetables with morel mushroom sauce, and pan-fried duck breast with dried figs and apricot. The cheerful service is a bit slow but not deliberately so, making this a good bet only when you won't be ruffled by a languorous—or should I say French?—and carefree dinner. Lunchtime is faster and more economical.

13–13a Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2316 2212**. www.mhihk.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$168–HK\$228 (US\$22–US\$30/£11–£15); fixed-price lunch HK\$68–HK\$98

City Chiuchow Restaurant CHIU CHOW A longtime favorite for Chiu Chow food, this spacious restaurant overlooks gardens leading down to a major promenade in Tsim Sha Tsui East. Seating 500, it features a big tank with fish swimming about, soon to end up on the chopping block. Famous dishes here include Chiu Chow shark's-fin soup, much thicker and stronger tasting than the Cantonese version; double-boiled shark's-fin-and-chicken soup, not as strong but equally popular; sliced spicy goose; stir-fried pickled olive, minced pork, and French beans; Chiuchow superior hot pot; and seafood dishes, including lobster. I particularly recommend the cold sliced lobster in a special honey sauce—it's not on the menu but it's available year-round. Dim sum is also served. And don't forget to try the Iron Buddha tea, a specialty of Chiuchow's, a tea that is so strong it will knock your socks off—and may keep you awake all night.

East Ocean Centre, 98 Granville Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2723 6226**. Main dishes HK\$68–HK\$120 (US\$8.85–US\$16/£4.40–£7.80). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill ★ **Kids** AMERICAN Located in the huge Ocean Terminal complex at its southernmost end, where cruise ships dock, this casual restaurant serves real American food, with portions big enough to satisfy a hungry cowboy. The decor is Anywhere, USA, but with a difference—since it's located right by the Star Ferry, the Chicago Grill offers views of the famous harbor from a few select barstool seats. The lunch menu is substantial, including such classic American favorites as buffalo chicken wings, potato skins, New England clam chowder, barbecued ribs, steaks, spaghetti, lasagna, great hamburgers (a hit with kids, as is the children's menu), and large deli sandwiches. Daily lunch specials are available Monday through Friday, beginning at HK\$78 (US\$10/£5.05). The dinner menu is confined mainly to barbecued steaks, chops, fish, and pasta. Admittedly, most dishes here are a bit pricey, but if you're hungering for the real thing, you might consider it a lifesaver. You can also come just for a drink at its bar, and English-language newspapers are available for customer perusal.

Another Dan Ryan's is in Pacific Place in Admiralty, 88 Queensway (☎ **852/2845 4600**; MTR: Admiralty), open Monday through Friday from 11am to midnight, Saturday from 9am to 2am, and Sunday from 9am to midnight.

200 Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2735 6111**. www.windy-city.com.hk/dans. Main courses HK\$98–HK\$250 (US\$13–US\$32/£6.35–£16) before 6pm, HK\$118–HK\$360 (US\$15–US\$47/£7.65–£23) after 6pm. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–midnight; Sat–Sun 10am–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Gaylord ★★ **Value** INDIAN/BUFFET This long-established, first-floor restaurant in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui is classy and comfortable, with private booths and overstuffed sofas. It's popular for its authentic North Indian classics, including tandoori, lamb curry cooked in North Indian spices and herbs, chicken cooked in hot fiery vindaloo curry, prawns cooked with green pepper and spices, and fish with potatoes and tomatoes. You can also choose from a dozen vegetarian dishes; the lunchtime buffet, served every day until 2:30pm except Sundays and public holidays, is a winner. Fixed-price dinners, along with a dinner buffet (HK\$148/US\$18/£9.85) are available until 9:30pm.

23–25 Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2376 1001**. Main dishes HK\$90–HK\$175 (US\$12–US\$23/£5.85–£11); lunch buffet HK\$98 (US\$13/£6.35); fixed-price lunches HK\$48–HK\$58 (US\$6.25–US\$7.55/£3.10–£3.75); fixed-price dinners HK\$138–HK\$198 (US\$18–US\$26/£8.95–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

134 Golden Island Bird's Nest Chiu Chau Restaurant CHIU CHOW This Chiu Chow restaurant, traditionally decorated but without views, is conveniently located right in front of the Star Ferry terminus. You can eat quite cheaply here if you order only one dish per person, but you'll pay more if you choose the house specialty—bird's nest, prepared 14 different ways and available as a soup, entree, and even dessert. This was Hong Kong's first restaurant to offer bird's nest as a specialty; although the prices for this dish have risen dramatically over the years, here it costs around HK\$380 (US\$49/£25)—expensive, but less than what you'd pay elsewhere. Anyway, you might want to try at least one bird's-nest dish, along with such Chiu Chow preparations as oyster omelets, prawn balls, or roast soy goose, topping it all off with a thimble-size cup of Chiu Chow tea, which is believed to aid in digestion.

Star House (2nd floor), 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2736 6228**. Main dishes HK\$60–HK\$150 (US\$7.80–US\$19/£3.90–£9.75). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun and holidays 11am–2:30pm; daily 5:30–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

The Greenery INTERNATIONAL/BUFFET If you're looking for a quick, filling feast in Tsim Sha Tsui East, look no farther than the buffets offered in this popular, airy restaurant, located in a 15-story atrium. The sounds of piano music, a waterfall, and multitudes of hungry diners make eating a rather noisy affair, but the food is good and varied, ranging from Chinese and Japanese to Western fare, from salads and vegetables to ribs and fish, and an efficient staff keeps water glasses filled and used plates whisked away. Bargain-seeking night owls take note: A lighter supper buffet is available Thursday to Saturday evenings from 10:15pm for HK\$188 (US\$24/£12).

In the Royal Garden Hotel, 69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2733 2030**. www.rghk.com.hk. Lunch buffet HK\$185 (US\$24/£12) Mon–Fri, HK\$205 (US\$27/£13) Sat–Sun and holidays; dinner buffet HK\$358 (US\$46/£23) Mon–Thurs, HK\$398 (US\$52/£26) Fri–Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Sat–Sun and holidays noon–3pm; Sun–Wed 6:30–10pm; Thurs–Sat 6:30–9:45pm and 10:15pm–12:15am. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Hutong ★★★  **Finds** NORTHERN CHINESE A *hutong* is an ancient alley or lane, once common in Beijing's courtyard neighborhoods but now quickly disappearing. This stunning restaurant, however, is about as far from a real *hutong* as one can get, since it's located on the 28th floor of a strikingly modern high-rise. Still, the restaurant is to be commended for its down-to-earth yet dramatic setting, with red lanterns providing the only splash of color against a dark, muted interior, and with birdcages everywhere—hanging from the ceiling, decorating tables, and silhouetted against windows providing fantastic views of Hong Kong. Indeed, everything about this place is a class act. The cuisine, which is northern Chinese in origin but uses new ingredients and combinations to create its own trademark dishes, is so enticing it's hard to know what to recommend. I love the drunken raw crab (an appetizer marinated 3 days in Chinese wine), the crispy deboned lamb ribs, and crispy soft-shelled crab with Sichuan red chili. Even the pig throat with scallions and cilantro is a whole lot better than it sounds, especially when you wash it down with chilled lychee wine with a touch of soda. In short, Hutong raises the bar in chic Chinese restaurants, winning hands down in cuisine, presentation, atmosphere, view, and service. Note that there's a minimum charge of HK\$300 (US\$39/£19) per person.

1 Peking Rd. (28th floor), Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/3428 8342**. www.aqua.com.hk. Reservations required for dinner. Main dishes HK\$128–HK\$348 (US\$17–US\$45/£8.30–£23). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Jade Garden CANTONESE Jade Garden is part of a chain of restaurants owned by the Maxim's Group, a company that has long been wildly successful throughout Hong Kong and is popular with large Chinese families (other establishments in the group include Sichuan Garden, Shanghai Garden, Chiu Chow Garden, and Peking Garden; the last one also has a branch in Star House, in front of the Star Ferry). Jade Garden is the place to go if you don't know much about Chinese food, feel that you should try it, but still aren't very keen on the idea. A plus is the view of the old KCR clock tower and harbor afforded by some of the window-side tables. Dim sum is available for lunch from an English menu. If you'd rather come for dinner, you might consider drunken shrimp boiled in Chinese rice wine, deep-fried boneless chicken with lemon sauce, or stir-fried minced pigeon served with lettuce leaves.

Jade Garden has another branch at 1 Hysan Ave., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2577 9332), open daily from 7:30am to midnight.

Star House (4th floor), 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2730 6888. Main dishes HK\$98–HK\$198 (US\$13–US\$26/£6.35–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–11:30pm; Sun and holidays 10am–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Peking Garden ★ PEKINGESE Another Maxim's Group of restaurants, elegant Peking Garden specializes in Pekingese and northern Chinese dishes, including stir-fried Pekingese noodles with shredded pork, braised prawns in red-wine sauce, Hunan ham with lotus seed in honey sauce, and beggar's chicken for HK\$320 (US\$42/£21; order it 24 hr. in advance). Try to be here during its nightly presentation of handmade noodles at 8 or 8:30pm. It's located in the Star House right in front of the Star Ferry, with harbor views.

You'll find a branch in the first and second basements of Alexandra House, 6 Ice House St., Central (☎ 852/2526 6456; MTR: Central), with the same open hours.

Star House (3rd floor), 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2735 8211. Main dishes HK\$90–HK\$195 (US\$12–US\$25/£5.85–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun 11am–3pm; daily 5:30–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Spice INDIAN/THAI/MALAYSIAN This dark, cozy restaurant, with candle-lit tables, stands out from the others on Knutsford Terrace (a tiny narrow lane known for its bars and restaurants) for two reasons: It has no outdoor terrace (which is regrettable) and it is an independent, meaning it doesn't belong to any restaurant conglomeration (which is remarkable). In addition, its Indian and Thai chefs have created a menu that's a modern take on Indian, Thai, and Malaysian cuisine, with standouts including the tandoori black cod tikka, jumbo prawns with chili, and Malay beef Randang (braised with galangal, lemongrass and lime). A good choice for a quiet, romantic meal.

1 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2191 9880. Main dishes HK\$90–HK\$178 (US\$12–US\$23/£5.85–£12); fixed-price lunches HK\$59–HK\$79 (US\$7.65–US\$10/£3.85–£5.15). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sat–Sun and holidays noon–3:30pm; Mon–Thurs 6–11:30pm; Fri–Sun and holidays 6pm–12:30am. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

The Spice Market ASIAN/BUFFET Accessible from both the Marco Polo Prince Hotel and the third floor of Harbour City shopping mall, this dark and cozy restaurant specializes in buffets offering diners a culinary adventure throughout Asia. On offer are Chinese noodles; Indian curries; Japanese sushi; and Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Singaporean favorites. Included are steamed fish, satays, Mongolian stir-fried noodles, tandoori, *congee*, dim sum, soups, salads, appetizers, and desserts. True to its name, some of the foods are spicy, but others lack pizzazz, probably due to international palates unaccustomed to fiery cuisine. While none of the dishes are outstanding, most of them are

136 good; with so many choices, you'll probably end up eating more than you should. The best deal: Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 3:15 to 5:15pm, when the entire buffet costs only HK\$138 (US\$18/£8.95) per person.

In the Marco Polo Prince Hotel, 23 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. (☎ **852/2113 6046**. www.marcopolohotels.com. Lunch buffet HK\$168 (US\$22/£11) Mon–Fri, HK\$188 (US\$24/£12) Sat–Sun and holidays; dinner buffet HK\$298 (US\$39/£19) Sun–Thurs, HK\$338 (US\$44/£22) Fri–Sat and holidays. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Sat–Sun and holidays noon–2:30pm and 3:15–5:15pm; daily 6:30–9:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Spring Deer Restaurant ★ **Finds** PEKINGESE A longtime favorite in Hong Kong, this 40-some-year-old restaurant offers excellent Pekingese food at reasonable prices. Spring Deer is cheerful and very accessible to foreigners, but don't expect anything fancy; it's just a long, brightly lit dining hall packed with groups of loyal fans (I don't think they've remodeled since they opened). This restaurant is famous for its specialty—honey-glazed Peking duck, which costs HK\$280 (US\$36/£18) and is good for two to four persons. Since you'll probably have to wait 40 minutes for the duck if you order it during peak time (7:30–9:30pm), it's best to arrive either before or after the rush. Chicken dishes are also well liked, including the deep-fried chicken and walnuts in soy sauce, and the handmade noodles are excellent. Other recommendations include the hot-and-sour soup, freshwater shrimp, and stewed ham and cabbage. Most dishes come in three sizes; the small dishes are suitable for two people. Remember, you'll want to order one dish apiece, plus an additional one to share. Unfortunately, since Spring Deer is crowded with groups, the lone diner is apt to be neglected in the shuffle; it's best to come here only if there are at least two of you.

42 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. (☎ **852/2366 4012**. Reservations recommended. Small dishes HK\$58–HK\$90 (US\$7.55–US\$12/£3.75–£5.85). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Super Star Seafood Restaurant ★ CANTONESE/SEAFOOD Walk past the tank filled with sea creatures up to this lively Cantonese restaurant on the first floor. It's very popular with local Chinese, many of whom consider it one of Hong Kong's top Cantonese restaurants. Its menu includes pictures of major dishes; as its name implies, the restaurant specializes in fresh seafood, though the menu does offer more than seafood (including, oddly enough, Wagyu beef). Recommended are the steamed lobster with garlic, stewed crab with Chinese wine, drunken shrimp in wine, giant scallops, stir-fried assorted mushrooms, and Royal crab (available June to Sept). Otherwise, prices for live seafood vary with the season and depend on the size of the creature you desire. If you want a specific fish or something else in the tank, be sure to ask the price first. Stone fish is popular with the Chinese and is the restaurant's specialty. It's a rather ugly fish, expensive, and poisonous to boot if not prepared correctly. If this is what you want, you'll have to wait an hour for it to cook, though you can alternatively order a quicker, cheaper option, like the stone fish potage or stone fish fried roll. Dim sum, served until 5pm, starts at HK\$13 (US\$1.70/85p) per plate.

Super Star has many branches, including: Tsim Sha Tsui's Harbour City (4th floor), 21 Canton Rd. (☎ **852/2628 0336**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); in Central at 19–27 Wyndham St. (☎ **852/2628 0826**; MTR: Central); in Wan Chai on the first floor of the Shui On Centre, 8 Harbour Rd. (☎ **852/2628 0989**; MTR: Wan Chai); and in Causeway Bay on the 10th floor of Times Square, 1 Matheson St. (☎ **852/2628 0886**; MTR: Causeway Bay). Call for individual open hours.

83–97 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. (☎ **852/2628 0339**. www.superstarrest.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$88–HK\$368 (US\$11–US\$48/£5.70–£24). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 10:30am–4:30pm; Sat–Sun 9:30am–4:30pm; daily 5–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Tsui Hang Village Restaurant CANTONESE Tsui Hang is named after the home village of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (a Chinese revolutionary leader and statesman who lived from 1866–1925). Located across the street from the Miramar Hotel on the ground floor of a shopping complex called Miramar Plaza, it's a windowless, bright (a bit too bright) and characterless place, but people clearly don't come here for the atmosphere. Rather, Tsui Hang is renowned for its own Cantonese original creations but also serves traditional, home-style Chinese cooking. Dishes you might want to try include braised superior shark's fin and chicken soup in casserole, deep-fried minced shrimp balls with crisp almond, sautéed minced pigeon with lettuce, barbecued Peking duck, deep-fried crispy chicken with green onion, or roast goose. Dim sum is also available until 5pm.

Another Tsui Hang Village is in Central on the second floor of the New World Tower, 16–18 Queen's Rd., Central (☎ **852/2524 2012**; MTR: Central), open Monday through Friday from 11am to 3pm and 5:30 to 11:30pm, Saturday from 11am to 11:30pm, and Sunday from 10am to 11:30pm.

Miramar Shopping Centre G11, 132–134 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2376 2882**. www.miramar-group.com. Main dishes HK\$88–HK\$240 (US\$11–US\$31/£5.70–£16). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–11:30pm; Sun 10am–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Tutto Bene ★ ITALIAN This is one of the oldest restaurants on Knutsford Terrace (since 1992), and now that it's faced with so much competition, it's easier to get a table. Still, it can be packed, and tight indoor quarters prevent it from being even remotely romantic (unless you speak some obscure language, your neighbor is going to hear every word you say); try for one of the outdoor tables in front or out back. Prices seem a bit high for this neck of the woods (about HK\$400/US\$52/£26 per person without drinks), but the imaginative Italian food, spiced with Asian ingredients, has clearly won over a faithful clientele. Start with the buffalo mozzarella with fresh tomatoes and basil dressing or portobello mushroom caps. The antipasto platter is so huge that two can share. For a main course, consider the breaded veal scaloppini fried in olive oil and topped with prosciutto and mozzarella or the grilled tiger prawns with shiitake mushrooms and Italian parsley butter. This is a good, reliable choice for Italian food, especially if you wish to dine alfresco in Tsim Sha Tsui.

7 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2316 2116**. www.mhikh.com. Reservations recommended. Pasta HK\$148–HK\$248 (US\$19–US\$32/£9.60–£16); main courses HK\$208–HK\$268 (US\$27–US\$35/£14–£17). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Wu Kong ★★ SHANGHAISE This basement restaurant, in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui just off Nathan Road, is often packed with locals who come for the good food at excellent prices. More upscale than many Shanghainese restaurants, with its stark-white walls and tank of colorful fish in the foyer, it serves a variety of shark's fin dishes, as well as cold pigeon in wine sauce (its signature appetizer), braised shredded eels, braised eggplant with hot garlic meat sauce, Peking duck, and crispy duck. If you've had your fill of the more readily available and popular Cantonese and Sichuan food and are ready to experiment with other types of Chinese cuisine, this is an excellent place to start.

Another branch is located on the 13th floor of Food Forum, Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2506 1018**; MTR: Causeway Bay), open daily from 11:45am to 3pm and 5:45 to 11:30pm.

27 Nathan Rd. (entrance on Peking Rd.), Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2366 7244**. www.wukong.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$60–HK\$140 (US\$7.80–US\$18/£3.90–£9.10). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11:15pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

138 Yagura ★ JAPANESE This *izakaya* (Japanese-style pub) is convenient if you're visiting nearby Temple Street Night Market. Casual yet hip, with dark wooden beams reminiscent of Japanese farmhouses, latticed screens, and an entire wall lined with sake bottles (including the restaurant's own private label), Yagura is divided into a general seating area plus sushi and tempura counters. You can, however, order whatever you like no matter where you sit, allowing you to design your own meal. You might, for example, wish to start with sushi rolls (the lobster or Wagyu with asparagus rolls are pricey but excellent choices), progress to red snapper or sweet potato tempura, and finish up with noodles or one of the *robatayaki* (grilled) dishes, like grilled tuna with wasabi soy sauce or grilled Wagyu beef with teriyaki or garlic soy sauce. Since the purpose of an *izakaya* is to socialize with friends, it's common to order one or two dishes at a time rather than the whole meal at once, making it a good choice for both a snack with drinks or a relaxed, drawn-out meal.

380 Nathan Rd. (below the Eaton Hotel), Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2710 1010**. www.yagura.com.hk. Sushi rolls HK\$68–HK\$198 (US\$8.85–US\$26/£4.40–£13); main dishes HK\$78–HK\$348 (US\$10–US\$45/£5.05–£23). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight. MTR: Jordan.

INEXPENSIVE

These restaurants have branches in Kowloon: **PizzaExpress** (p. 154), specializing in pizza, and **Heaven on Earth** (p. 154), offering Shanghaiese, Sichuan and Taiwanese food, and **Sorabol** (p. 161), a Korean restaurant.

California Pizza Kitchen PIZZA/AMERICAN This Beverly Hills transplant is known for its gourmet pizzas with unusual toppings, some of which sound like pizza sandwiches. For example, the Reuben with pastrami, Swiss and mozzarella cheeses, sauerkraut, and Thousand Island dressing; the Thai chicken with chicken marinated in a spicy peanut-ginger and sesame sauce, mozzarella, green onions, bean sprouts, julienne carrots, cilantro, and roasted peanuts; and the Peking duck with roasted duck breast, mozzarella, soy-glazed shiitake mushrooms, crispy wontons, slivered green onions and ginger hoisin sauce. More than two dozen pizzas are listed on the menu, and I'd like to try all of them. You can also choose from a lengthy list of pastas, salads, and sandwiches. Although this location, at the far end of LCX (a department store catering to teenagers), is quite a hike, it has a great view of the bay and cruise ships docked at the terminal.

You'll find branches on the 13th floor of Times Square in Causeway Bay (☎ **852/3102 9132**; MTR: Causeway Bay) and near Ladies' Market at 56 Dundas St., Mong Kok (☎ **852/2374 0032**; MTR: Mong Kok), both open daily 11:30am to 11pm.

Ocean Terminal, Level 3 LCX, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/3102 0375**. www.cpk.com. Pizzas HK\$72–HK\$112 (US\$9.35–US\$15/£4.70–£7.30). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Chinese Kitchen SHANGHAI/SE/SICHUAN/TAIWANESE This all-purpose Chinese-style diner is a large, brightly lit room, with round stools gathered around round tables and with what can only be called Chinese elevator music. It lists more than 150 items on the menu, including Taiwan beef noodles, Taiwan chicken with chrysanthemum, boneless Hainan chicken, roasted goose, mandarin fish in chili and aniseed sauce, stir-fried bean curd, and minced pork in chili sauce. It's popular with locals looking for a quick, cheap meal, but it also lures tourists with an English menu posted outside the door. The food isn't spectacular, but it will do for a fast fix in what is otherwise a pricey neighborhood.

78 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2926 3088**. Main dishes HK\$39–HK\$98 (US\$5.05–US\$13/£2.55–£6.35). MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Fat Angelo's  **ITALIAN** With its checkered tablecloths, black-and-white family photographs, and other decor reminiscent of a New World Italian restaurant from the first half of the 20th century, this chain offers good value with its hearty, American renditions of Italian food, including pastas ranging from traditional spaghetti marinara to fettuccine with salmon and main courses like rosemary roasted chicken, grilled salmon with pesto, and eggplant Parmesan, all of which come with salad and homemade bread. The emphasis here is on quantity, not quality, though the food isn't bad. And they really pack 'em in; this place is bustling, loud, and slightly chaotic, making it sometimes hard to flag down your waitress. Still, all in all, this place is good for a fun outing with a group.

Three branches are on the other side of the harbor, at 49A–C Elgin St., Central (☎ **852/2973 6808**; MTR: Central); Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Rd. E., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2126 7020**; MTR: Wan Chai); and in the Elizabeth House, 250 Gloucester Rd. in Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2574 6263**; MTR: Causeway Bay). All are open daily noon to midnight.

The Pinnacle (basement), 8 Minden Ave., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2730 4788**. www.fatangelos.com. Reservations recommended. Pastas HK\$92–HK\$162 (US\$12–US\$21/£6–£11); main dishes HK\$142–HK\$202 (US\$18–US\$26/£9.20–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Genki Sushi **JAPANESE** Taking advantage of Hong Kong's surge in popularity of everything Japanese, this simple and always-crowded establishment offers plates of sushi, which circle around the counter via a conveyor belt. Customers seated at the counter simply reach out and take whatever they want. The color-coded plates vary in price and include traditional selections such as tuna and shrimp sushi, along with more unusual combinations like corn sushi, crab salad sushi, and California handrolls (seaweed rolled around rice, crab, and avocado). During lunch and dinner, a line of customers is often waiting at the door (when I don't want to wait, I go straight inside and order takeout). While the food is too generic to pass in Japan, this place is as good as it gets for rock-bottom sushi prices in Hong Kong.

Other branches can be found in Shop G36 on the ground floor of Chuang's London Plaza, 219 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei (☎ **852/2736 0019**; MTR: Jordan); Shop 6, Level 4A in Langham Place, 555 Shanghai St., Mong Kok (☎ **3514 4223**; MTR: Mong Kok); on the ground floor of the Far East Finance Centre, 16 Harcourt Rd., Central (☎ **852/2865 2933**; MTR: Admiralty); Shop B222 in the second basement of Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2506 9366**; MTR: Causeway Bay); Shop P211A, Podium 2, World Trade Centre, Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2890 2600**; MTR: Causeway Bay); and Shop A, on the ground floor of the CRE Building, 303 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2802 7018**; MTR: Wan Chai); all with the same open hours given below.

Shops G7–9, East Ocean Centre, 98 Granville Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2722 6689**. Main dishes HK\$9–HK\$35 (US\$1.15–US\$4.55/60p–£2.30). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Koh-I-Noor ★ **INDIAN** Don't let the dinginess of the Peninsula Apartments building deter you from trying this restaurant. Located up on the first floor, it's modern and clean, with spotless tablecloths and a pleasant pink color scheme. What's more, service is prompt and courteous and the food is great and reasonably priced; the specialties here are North Indian tandoori and fresh seafood. The restaurant is especially proud of its king prawns, but they also make fine chicken, lamb, and vegetable curries. My favorites on the menu include the samosas, crab with coconut, and the Gosht vindaloo, a spicy mix of lamb and potatoes; mashed eggplant with onions and tomatoes; *palak paneer* (Indian cottage cheese with spinach); garlic-flavored nan (Indian flat bread) or nan stuffed with cheese, potatoes, or other ingredients. All of it is good and recommendable.

140 Another branch is on the other side of the harbor in the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district, on the first floor of the California Entertainment Building, 34 D'Aguilar St., Central (☎ **852/2877 9706**; MTR: Central), open Monday through Saturday from noon to 2:30pm and daily from 6 to 11pm.

Peninsula Apartments, 16C Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2368 3065**. www.lankwaifong.com. Curries HK\$75–HK\$100 (US\$9.75–US\$13/£4.85–£6.50); tandoori HK\$80–HK\$135 (US\$10–US\$18/£5.20–£8.75); buffet lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK\$58 (US\$7.55/£3.75) for vegetarian, HK\$75 (US\$9.75/£4.85) with meat. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Main Street Deli ★★ Finds AMERICAN/SANDWICHES Hong Kong's first traditional New York-style deli comes as close as you can get to the real thing—its chef was trained at the 2nd Avenue Deli in the Big Apple and the authentic ingredients are flown in from New York. The tiled floor, open kitchen, deli case, strung sausages, and wood furniture add to the ambience, but the chandeliers left over from a previous restaurant seem woefully out of place. Still, serious deli lovers will find plenty to love, including latkes, matzo ball soup, salads, pizza, pasta, burgers, and a large selection of three-decker and hot deli sandwiches, including a Reuben, the restaurant's signature sandwich (if you're counting carbs, order the Naked Reuben, which comes without bread). This is a lifesaver for those in desperate need of Western comfort food. Portions are so generous that the restaurant has instituted the doggy bag, a previously unknown concept in Hong Kong. Don't forget to save room for the cheesecake.

In the Langham Hotel, 8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2375 1133**, ext. 7883. <http://hongkong.langhamhotels.com>. Main dishes HK\$128–HK\$158 (US\$17–US\$21/£8.30–£10); fixed-price meals HK\$228–HK\$258 (US\$30–US\$34/£15–£17). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Mido Cafe Finds WESTERN/ASIAN I'm not sure how to classify the food here, but that's beside the point. This retro diner, open since 1950, is a time capsule with its mosaic tiled walls, ceiling fans, hard booths and windows overlooking the Tin Hau Temple across the street (head upstairs to the second level for the best views and ambience). The food is so-so, ranging from pork chops and curry chicken with rice to fried noodles with sliced pork. The cashier couldn't be more indifferent, and the kitchen and bathroom wouldn't meet U.S. regulations (a local Chinese friend dismissed the Mido as being too low-class for foreigners). Still, this old-timer is unique in fast-changing Hong Kong. No wonder it's been used in countless movies.

63 Temple St., Yau Ma Tei. ☎ **852/2384 6402**. Main dishes HK\$40–HK\$110 (US\$5.20–US\$14/£2.60–£7.15). No credit cards. Daily 8:30am–9:30pm. MTR: Yau Ma Tei.

Nomads ★ Finds ASIAN/BUFFET This very popular Mongolian restaurant allows diners to select their own raw ingredients for one-dish meals and pizzas prepared by short-order cooks. All-you-can-eat lunches and dinners offer vegetables, meats, seafood, sauces, noodles, rice, and spices, spread buffet-style along a counter together with salads, and dessert. Sheepskin-draped chairs, rawhide lampshades, animal skins, and tribal weaponry hung on walls transport this restaurant straight into the Mongolia of our fantasies, making dining here not only cheap but fun.

55 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2722 0733**. www.igors.com. Lunch buffet HK\$68 (US\$8.85/£4.40) Mon–Fri, HK\$80 (US\$10/£5.20) Sat–Sun and holidays; dinner buffet HK\$178 (US\$23/£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

The Salisbury Value INTERNATIONAL/BUFFET One of the cheapest places for a filling meal in Tsim Sha Tsui is the YMCA's main restaurant, a bright and cheerful dining hall on the fourth floor of the south tower. It serves both Western and Asian food,

with an à la carte menu offering sandwiches, pasta, and Asian dishes. Best, however, are the lunch and dinner buffets. The lunch buffet includes a roast-beef wagon, as well as other meat dishes, soups, salads, and desserts, while the dinner buffet includes many more entrees plus one soda or beer. A rare plus for seniors: They get a discount off the lunch buffet. While the food won't win any culinary awards, there's enough variety that probably all can find something they like. And if the prices here are too high, a cheaper ground-floor cafeteria, the Mall Cafe, offers sandwiches and daily specials.

In the Salisbury YMCA, 41 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2268 7818**. www.ymcahk.org.hk. Lunch buffet HK\$115 (US\$15/£7.45); Sun brunch buffet HK\$158 (US\$21/£10); dinner buffet HK\$228 (US\$30/£15) Mon–Thurs, HK\$258 (US\$34/£17) Fri–Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 6:15–9:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Spaghetti House  PIZZA/ITALIAN The Spaghetti House chain has a total of 24 branches throughout Hong Kong—and there will probably be more by the time you read this. They're popular with families, young Chinese couples on dates, and foreigners who have had their fill of Chinese food and crave something familiar but cheap. Spaghetti and pizza cooked American-style or with Asian ingredients are the specialties here, and the decor and atmosphere resemble those of an American pizza parlor. Choose from more than a half-dozen varieties of spaghetti with both Western and Asian toppings, as well as pizzas (in two sizes). Although the food is only average in quality, the quantity more than makes up for it; most orders can be taken out.

Branches include 57 Peking Rd. (☎ **852/2367 1683**) and 38 Haiphong Rd., both in Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2376 1015**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); 221 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei (☎ **852/2377 2005**; MTR: Jordan); 594 Nathan Rd., Mong Kok (☎ **852/2388 4379**; MTR: Mong Kok); Admiralty Centre, 18 Harcourt Rd., Central (☎ **852/2866 1522**; MTR: Admiralty); 68 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2529 0901**; MTR: Wan Chai); Shop 8, PJ Plaza, Paterson Street, Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2895 2928**; MTR: Causeway Bay); Matheson Centre, 3-5 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2234 0605**; MTR: Causeway Bay); and Shop P113, World Trade Centre, Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2972 2143**; MTR: Causeway Bay). All Spaghetti Houses are open daily 11am to 11pm.

32 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2721 6703**. www.spaghetthouse.com. Individual-size pizza and pasta HK\$60–HK\$118 (US\$7.80–US\$15/£3.90–£7.65). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

5 CENTRAL DISTRICT

VERY EXPENSIVE

Caprice ★★★ FRENCH Ensconced in the sleek Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, this is one of *the* places to dine in Hong Kong, and deservedly so. (Need I add that reservations are a must?) Caprice garners high marks for its innovative take on French classics and its gorgeous setting. A glowing catwalk lends a celebrity feel upon entering the dining room, which mirrors the cuisine's contemporary/classic theme with portraits of women that combine an Art Nouveau style with Chinese influences, shimmering custom-made chandeliers, an open kitchen, and dramatic views of Victoria Harbour. The knowledgeable staff is happy to make recommendations from the menu, orchestrated around the seasons and drawing inspiration from provincial France. You might, for example, opt for the langoustine ravioli with veal sweetbreads, chanterelle mushrooms, and delicate lobster bisque, followed by Wagyu beef filet and beef cheek Wellington,



Family-Friendly Restaurants

Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill (p. 133) These two restaurant/bars serve some of the best burgers in town, as well as huge deli sandwiches. There are plenty of other American dishes and a children's menu as well.

The Flying Pan (p. 153) If *congee* (rice porridge) is not your kid's idea of breakfast, this restaurant specializing in American breakfasts offers lots of familiar Western choices, including a children's menu offering French toast, waffles, and grilled cheese sandwiches.

Spaghetti House (p. 141) Locations all over town and low prices make this family chain a winner. The menu is filled with more than a half-dozen different kinds of spaghetti, as well as a wide range of pizza.

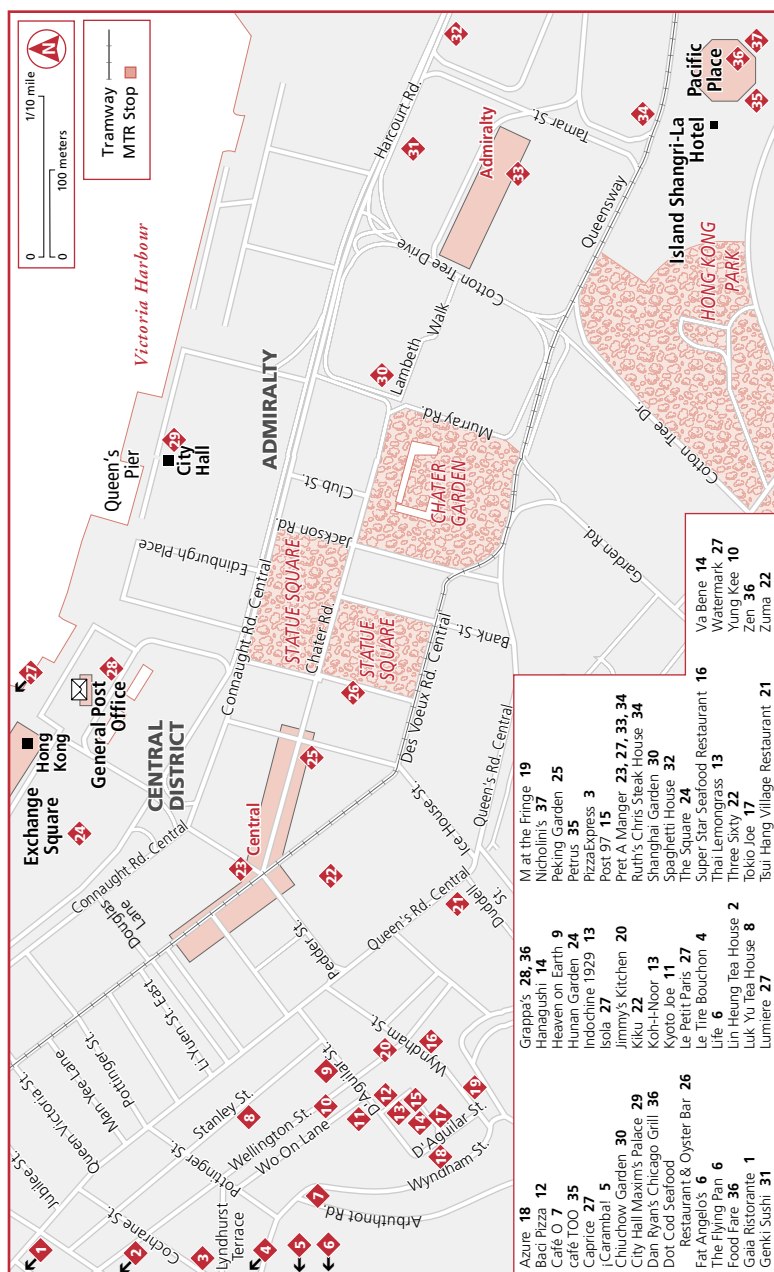
Top Deck, at the Jumbo (p. 164) A short shuttle by boat through Aberdeen harbor should catch any child's attention, but this alfresco seafood restaurant on top of a huge floating restaurant follows through with a children's menu and, during Sunday brunch, a play corner, allowing parents to relax as they soak in the views and feast on everything from salmon and sushi to steaks and curries.

served with potato Dauphinois in a black truffle infusion. If making a decision is too painful, opt for the fixed-price tasting menu (which must be ordered by the entire table) for HK\$1,280 (US\$166/£83) per person.

In the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, 8 Finance St., Central. ☎ **852/3196 8860**. www.fourseasons.com/hongkong. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$410–HK\$770 (US\$53–US\$100/£27–£50). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

Nicholini's ★★★★★ ITALIAN Most of Hong Kong's Italian restaurants seem to fall into one of two categories—highbrow and sophisticated, or rustic and trattoria-like. This one is neither and yet both, combining elegance and lightheartedness in keeping with the Conrad Hotel's overall playful style. Dress is casual to smart casual (though no jeans or tennis shoes are allowed), and the dining room bathes patrons in soothing colors of gold. If you're a fan of Murano glass, be sure to check out the collection spread throughout the restaurant. The cuisine here is northern Italian, combined with inventiveness—some claim it's the best Italian restaurant in Hong Kong. Entrees range from roasted sea bass with herbs to veal shank *osso buco* in a vegetable orange-flavored sauce served with saffron risotto. Pasta—like the favorite angel-hair pasta with Maine lobster, fresh tomato, and basil—is available as either a side dish or a main course. For dessert, the Chef's Special Dessert Sampler solves the dilemma for those who want it all. The extensive wine list features mainly Italian selections, and the service is beyond reproach. Too bad this restaurant doesn't have a view.

In the Conrad Hotel, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2521 3838**, ext. 8210. www.conradhotels.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$308–HK\$720 (US\$40–US\$94/£20–£47); fixed-price dinners HK\$658–HK\$1,018 (US\$85–US\$132/£43–£66); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Fri only) HK\$298–HK\$395 (US\$39–US\$51/£19–£26); Sun brunch HK\$598 (US\$78/£39). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sun 11am–3pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.



Petrus ★★★ (Finds) FRENCH Simply put, the views from this 56th-floor restaurant are breathtaking. In fact, they are probably the best of any hotel restaurant on the Hong Kong side; the only place with a better view is atop Victoria Peak. If you can bear to take your eyes off the windows, you'll find the restaurant decorated like a French castle, with the obligatory crystal chandeliers, black marble and gilded columns, statues, thick draperies, Impressionist paintings, murals gracing dome-shaped ceilings, and a pianist playing softly in the background. The traditional haute cuisine is spiced sparingly to complement the dishes' natural aroma and flavor. The menu changes often but has included such intriguing choices as sautéed frog legs and veal sweetbread in a watercress sauce or poached salmon with garlic, black olives, and artichokes. As expected, the wine list—particularly bordeaux—is among the best in Hong Kong, if not the world. With the impressive blend of great views, refined ambience, excellent cuisine, tables spaced far enough apart for intimacy, and professional staff, this restaurant is a top choice for a splurge, romantic dinner, or special celebration.

In the Island Shangri-La (56th floor), Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2820 8590**. www.shangri-la.com. Reservations recommended. Jacket required for dinner. Main courses HK\$360–HK\$780 (US\$47–US\$101/£23–£51); fixed-price lunches HK\$328–HK\$388 (US\$43–US\$50/£21–£25). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6:30–11pm. MTR: Admiralty.

EXPENSIVE

In addition to the restaurants here, **Ruth's Chris Steak House**, reviewed in the Kowloon section earlier (p. 131), has a branch near Pacific Place.

Gaia Ristorante ★ (Finds) ITALIAN If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. That's the way I feel about all the new construction encroaching on the quaint Western District. This restaurant, ensconced in the colossal Grand Millennium Plaza building on the border between the Central and Western districts, has won me over with a great terrace, surrounded by lush trees and bushes that create the illusion of dining in a park. The contemporary interior is also inviting, with glass windows overlooking the terrace and a blindingly red bar off to one side. Of course, none of this would matter if the food didn't hold up, which it does. It's hard to resist such temptations as the wafer-thin Roman-style pizzas, homemade pasta tossed in a sangiovese-marinated rabbit stew ragout, or the red snapper sautéed with porcini mushrooms, leeks and artichokes. I also love coming for lunch, when the fixed-price meal includes a sumptuous antipasto buffet. The wine list is heavy on Italian imports.

Grand Millennium Plaza (look for the advertising screen), 181 Queen's Rd. Central, Central. ☎ **852/2167 8200**. www.gaiaistorante.com. Reservations necessary. Pizza and pasta HK\$158–HK\$228 (US\$21–US\$30/£10–£15); main dishes HK\$238–HK\$398 (US\$31–US\$52/£15–£26); fixed-price lunch HK\$228 (US\$30/£15). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6:30–11pm. MTR: Sheung Wan.

Hunan Garden ★★ (Finds) HUNANESE Although the chili-rich cuisine of Hunan province is quite popular in Taiwan, this has long been one of the few Hunan restaurants in Hong Kong. It's puzzling, because Hunanese food is very spicy, and one would think that with the booming popularity of Thai and Sichuan food in the SAR Hunanese food would eventually catch on. In any case, this restaurant does a thriving business, especially for lunch due to its location next to Hong Kong Station (terminus of the Airport Express Line) and ifc mall. It's a great restaurant, both in decor and food, and even has live Chinese classical music from 7 to 9pm nightly. The chefs were trained in both Hunan province and Taiwan and they don't tone down the spiciness of their authentic dishes. Start your meal with one of the soups like the Hunan minced-chicken soup, a clear soup

base with ginger and mousse of chicken, served piping hot in a length of bamboo. If you like hot-and-spicy foods, you'll love the braised bean curd with shredded pork and chili, developed by one of Hunan province's most famous chefs. Other recommended dishes include the honey-glazed Hunan ham served in pancakes and fried chicken with chili and garlic. As a special treat, try one of the Hunanese wines.

The Forum (3rd floor), Exchange Square, Central. ☎ **852/2868 2880**. Reservations required, especially for lunch. Main dishes HK\$88–HK\$168 (US\$11–US\$22/£5.70–£11). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

Isola ★★ **Finds** ITALIAN This restaurant bills itself as Hong Kong's most stunning waterfront restaurant. While other waterfront properties can now compete with the views, what sets this one apart is its extensive outdoor terrace, along with a popular bar with views and a balcony. Even in inclement weather, the restaurant's crisp white interior with a glass facade is an inviting venue. But don't expect a quiet tête-à-tête, since this bustling place, with an open kitchen, does a roaring business. All the pasta is handmade, the large, stone-baked, thin-crust pizzas can be ordered with different ingredients on each half (making them good for two people to share), and all the meat and fish arrive fresh at the restaurant instead of frozen. Main dishes include the likes of oven-broiled black cod with lemon, capers, and parsley and roasted veal chop with sage mashed potatoes, asparagus, and mushroom sauce. Lunch is a good time for grazers, who can choose their meal entirely from the antipasto buffet (which costs HK\$228/US\$30/£15 weekdays and HK\$258/US\$34/£17 weekends) or add a main dish to create their own fixed-price meal.

Levels 3 & 4, ifc mall, Central. ☎ **852/2383 8765**. www.isolabarandgrill.com. Reservations required. Pizza and pasta HK\$138–HK\$238 (US\$18–US\$31/£8.95–£15); main courses HK\$198–HK\$338 (US\$26–US\$44/£13–£22). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs 6:30–11pm; Fri–Sat 6:30–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

M at the Fringe ★★★ **Finds** CONTINENTAL For a memorable dining experience, head for this delightful, quirky restaurant, located on the upper floor of a former dairy farm building, which is also home of the Fringe Club's theater (p. 241). This has been a local favorite since 1989, with a meal here a treat in more ways than one: The artsy furnishings are a feast for the eyes, while the food, influenced by cuisines along the Mediterranean, is to die for. The handwritten menu changes every 3 months but is always creative and always includes lamb and vegetarian selections. An example of the former is a salt-encased, slowly baked leg of lamb with mashed roots and roasted beet root. The lunch menu includes a list of starters, all priced at HK\$78 (US\$10/£5.05), and main dishes that cost HK\$138 (US\$18/£8.95). Whatever you choose, don't pass up the Pavlova for dessert. Note that this is actually a private club, but nonmembers can dine here by paying a HK\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) temporary membership fee.

2 Lower Albert Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2877 4000**. www.m-atthefringe.com. Reservations strongly recommended. Main courses HK\$218–HK\$292 (US\$28–US\$38/£14–£19). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; daily 7–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

Va Bene ★★ ITALIAN This stylish Italian restaurant, in the middle of Central's Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district, strives for elegant simplicity in both food and decor, making it a good choice for a romantic meal away from the surrounding hubbub. The long, dimly lit dining room's most eye-catching features are a wine cellar that extends the length of one wall and a sky-blue ceiling etched with floating clouds. With consistently creative and excellent, mostly northern Italian food, it has been popular with Hong Kong's well-heeled expat community for almost 2 decades. Perhaps you'll want to start with wafer-thin carpaccio, followed by one of the homemade pastas like fresh pasta

146 pockets filled with meat ragout in sage, butter, bacon, and black truffle. As a main course, you can choose from a number of veal, beef, and seafood dishes cooked to draw out natural flavors, including monk fish wrapped in ham served on a bed of lentils, or pan-fried beef tenderloin with a red wine sauce. Good Italian wines, great desserts, and attentive service round out the meal.

17–22 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ☎ **852/2845 5577**. www.vabeneristorante.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$238–HK\$368 (US\$31–US\$48/£15–£24); fixed-price lunch HK\$198 (US\$26/£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs 6:30–11:30pm; Fri–Sat 6:30pm–midnight. MTR: Central.

Zuma ★★ ★ JAPANESE Located in the upscale Landmark shopping center, Zuma is a contemporary twist on the casual Japanese *izakaya* style of eating and drinking, in which dishes are shared and ordered in no particular order (you can, for example, order a couple dishes to start with, and then order more dishes after you've finished the first). A seductive spiraling staircase joins the main dining room and outdoor terrace to the lounge and sake bar (where you should order the Rubabu, a rhubarb-infused sake with vodka and passion fruit). The menu also offers contemporary interpretations of authentic Japanese cuisine, including a wide range of sushi, sashimi, and maki rolls (like the salmon, *hamachi* and seabass with avocado and sesame-lime sauce); grilled foods (like Hokkaido scallops with grated apple, wasabi and sweet soy sauce, or Japanese Wagyu beef with ponzu and wasabi); and signature dishes like miso-marinated black cod wrapped in *hoba* (magnolia) leaf. Tasting menus are available for HK\$870 (US\$113/£56) and HK\$1,280 (US\$166/£83), which require a two-person minimum order and must be ordered by the whole table. In short, this is a fun, sophisticated place for a meal, snack, or a drink.

The Landmark, Levels 5 & 6, 15 Queen's Rd. Central, Central. ☎ **852/3657 6388**. www.zumarestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$180–HK\$1,200 (US\$23–US\$156/£12–£78); fixed-price lunch HK\$480 (US\$62/£31); Sun brunch HK\$500 (US\$65/£32). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Central.

MODERATE

Several moderately priced restaurants already covered in the Tsim Sha Tsui section have branches in Central: **Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill** (p. 133), located in Pacific Place and offering American classics; **Peking Garden** (p. 135), serving food from Beijing; **Super Star Seafood Restaurant** (p. 136), known for its Cantonese seafood and dim sum; and **Tsui Hang Village Restaurant** (p. 137), serving Cantonese fare.

Azure ★★ CONTINENTAL Lan Kwai Fong isn't exactly known for sophisticated dining, but this alluring venue rises above it—literally. Located on the top two floors of the Hotel LKF, it offers striking views of the city from its lofty perch. On the 29th floor is a casual bar with a pool table and free canapés daily from 5:30 to 8:30pm, while a white, winding staircase gives dramatic entrance to the tall-ceilinged restaurant one floor up, decorated in cool blue colors accented by deep-blue water goblets on all the tables. The menu is an innovative twist on classic European cuisine, with artfully presented dishes. You might wish to start with the six-layer blue crab salad, with its layers of avocado, smoked salmon, crispy pancetta, tomato, mesclun greens, and Dijon vinaigrette, followed by the rack of lamb, marinated in soy sauce and Dijon and then roasted. With its gorgeous views, dramatic setting, and great food, this newcomer makes a trip to Lan Kwai Fong worth it even for those who have no intention of joining the nightly party scene below.

LKF Hotel, 29th floor, 33 Wyndham St., Central. ☎ **852/3518 9330**. www.azure.hk. Reservations required. Main dishes HK\$182–HK\$268 (US\$24–US\$35/£12–£17). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6:30–11pm (last order). MTR: Central.

café TOO ★★★ **Find** INTERNATIONAL/BUFFET Leave it to the Island Shangri-La to take a common dining concept and turn it into a feasting extravaganza. Quite simply, this is the most interesting buffet I've seen in Hong Kong. Light and airy with windows overlooking the lush greenery of Hong Kong Park, contemporary decor, and a well-trained staff dressed in hip traditional Chinese jackets and vests, this restaurant features open kitchens and seven "stations" of food presentations spread throughout the room, thereby dispelling the assembly-line atmosphere of most buffets and giving it a theatrical touch. Browse the appetizer-and-salad table, a cold seafood counter with sushi, fresh oysters, crab, and other delights, a Chinese section with dim sum and main courses, Western hot entrees, noodles that are prepared to order and run the gamut from Chinese to Italian, and Asian dishes from Thai curries to Indian tandoori. But don't fill up, because the dessert table is the crowning glory. The wine list, too, is very impressive. Come here after shopping in Pacific Place or visiting the park's Museum of Tea Ware.

In the Island Shangri-La Hotel, Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2820 8571**. www.shangri-la.com. Reservations recommended. Lunch buffet HK\$278 (US\$36/£18) Mon–Fri, HK\$328 (US\$43/£21) Sun and holidays; dinner buffet HK\$378 (US\$49/£25) Mon–Thurs, HK\$418 (US\$54/£27) Fri–Sun and holidays. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Sat–Sun noon–3pm; Mon–Thurs 6:30–10pm; Fri–Sun 6–11pm. MTR: Admiralty.

Chiuchow Garden **Value** CHIU CHOW Chandeliers and a multitude of round tables draped in tablecloths greet hungry diners at this popular Central eatery, renowned for its classic and original Chiu Chow dishes. While shark's fin, abalone, and bird's nest are the obvious stars of the show here, seafood dishes are also plentiful, such as steamed or boiled Mandarin fish or steamed scallops and bean curd in a black bean sauce. Surprises on the menu include pie stuffed shredded chicken in a Portuguese sauce, foie gras served three ways (pan-seared, terrine, and crème brûlée), and the bird's nest with mango dessert.

Hutchinson House, 2nd floor, Murray Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2536 0833**. Main dishes HK\$78–HK\$198 (US\$10–US\$26/£5–£13); fixed-price lunches for 2 people HK\$468–HK\$850 (US\$61–US\$110/£30–£55). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

Dot Cod Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Bar SEAFOOD The Hong Kong Cricket Club owns this basement restaurant (HKCC members get a 30% discount), its location chosen for nostalgic reasons: Until the 1960s, the club practiced in nearby Chater Garden. Decorated in a nautical theme and popular for power breakfasts and lunches (though tables placed too close together rule out secretive deals), it takes its name from the popular choice of cod in its menu but is also a play on the dot.com era. Service is prompt and polished. You might start with the prawn cocktail, followed by such signature dishes as the cod fish and chips or grilled tuna with roast onion, chili, and mint salsa, though you can eat more cheaply at the bar, which also serves light snacks and sandwiches. In any case, I always feel a bit like Alice in yesteryear when I eat lunch in the netherworld here, surrounded by business suits and hardly another woman in sight.

Prince's Building, 10 Chater (entrance on Statue Sq.), Central. ☎ **852/2810 6988**. www.dotcod.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$178–HK\$288 (US\$23–US\$37/£12–£19); fixed-price lunches HK\$188–HK\$228 (US\$24–US\$30/£12–£15). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7:30am–10:30pm (last order). MTR: Central.

Grappa's ★ ITALIAN If you like to eat pizza or pasta to the accompaniment of noise, commotion, and lots of people parading past, this is the place for you. Grappa's is decorated like a trattoria, but with big glass windows overlooking the shops of Pacific Place; you can't escape the fact that this place is not a sidewalk cafe but is in a mall. The open

148 kitchen, while providing some diversion, adds to the noise. Still, this is certainly the best place for moderately priced Italian food anywhere in the area, even though it is strictly standard fare, because all the bread (served with olive oil and fresh Parmesan and brought swiftly to each table), sauces, pasta, sausages, and desserts are made in the restaurant's own kitchen. The salads are good here, as are the dozen or so authentic Italian pizzas and the even larger selection of pastas. The entrees lean toward the tried and true, from veal-shank stew in Barolo red-wine sauce to roasted lamb chops with rosemary.

For more atmospheric dining, head to Grappa's Cellar in the basement of Jardine House, Connaught Road Central (☎ **852/2521 2322**; MTR: Central), open daily 10am to midnight and even offering live jazz several nights a month.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ☎ **852/2868 0086**. www.elgrande.com.hk. Reservations recommended. Pizza and pasta HK\$98–HK\$158 (US\$13–US\$21/£6.35–£10); main courses HK\$130–HK\$270 (US\$17–US\$35/£8.45–£18); fixed-price lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK\$160 (US\$21/£10). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11pm. MTR: Admiralty.

Hanagushi JAPANESE The only thing missing at this traditionally styled Japanese restaurant, with its gleaming woods, tansu chests, woodblock prints, and waitresses decked out in provincial Japanese clothing, are tatami mats. Unfortunately, the tables are so closely packed here that you'd think you were in a Tokyo subway, and the food lacks authenticity. Still, it's good for some R & R between drinking bouts in Lan Kwai Fong and specializes in *yakitori* (morsels of food barbecued on a stick), with 46 different kinds available and costing HK\$25 to HK\$100 (US\$3.25–US\$13/£1.60–£6.50) for a pair. My favorites include asparagus, chicken meatballs, green pepper with minced chicken, and ginkgo nuts. You can also order fixed-price meals of *yakitori* (including a vegetarian version), as well as sushi rolls, *teppanyaki*, tempura, grilled fish, *udon* noodles, and other typical Japanese fare, along with a dozen different kinds of sake to wash it all down.

17–22 Lan Kwai Fong (1st floor), Central. ☎ **852/2521 0868**. www.lankwaifong.com. Main dishes HK\$85–HK\$280 (US\$11–US\$36/£5.50–£18); fixed-price meals HK\$200–HK\$280 (US\$26–US\$36/£13–£18). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

Indochine 1929 ★★ VIETNAMESE Designed to resemble a breezy, 1920s veranda from Vietnam's French colonial era with its wooden shutters, ceiling fans, fringed lampshades, wicker chairs, and tropical plants, this Lan Kwai Fong eatery serves delicious Indochinese cuisine to a consciously trendy crowd. Start with the signature spring rolls stuffed with shrimp, pork, and herbs or the hot-and-sour fish soup. Other specialties are the fish prepared Hanoi-style, with dill, turmeric, and vermicelli; the salt-and-pepper soft-shell crabs; and the beef tenderloin with tomato. If you've never had Vietnamese food, this restaurant with a knowledgeable staff and laid-back atmosphere should make you an instant convert.

California Tower (2nd floor), 30–32 D'Aguilar, Central. ☎ **852/2869 7399**. www.lankwaifong.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$128–HK\$280 (US\$17–US\$36/£8.30–£18); fixed-price lunches HK\$106–HK\$162 (US\$14–US\$21/£6.90–£11). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Jimmy's Kitchen ★ CONTINENTAL This restaurant opened in 1928, a replica of a similar American-owned restaurant in Shanghai. Now one of Hong Kong's oldest Western restaurants, Jimmy's Kitchen had several homes before moving in the 1960s to its present site. The atmosphere reminds me of an American steakhouse, with white tablecloths, dark-wood paneling, and elevator music, but it's a favorite with older foreigners living in Hong Kong and serves dependably good, unpretentious European comfort

food. An extensive a la carte menu offers salads and soups, steaks, chicken, Indian curries, and a seafood selection that includes sole, scallops, and the local garoupa. It's also a good place for corned beef and cabbage, beef stroganoff, and hearty German fare, including Wiener schnitzel (breaded veal), pig's knuckle, and knackwurst sausage.

A branch of Jimmy's Kitchen is located at 29 Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2376 0327**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), open the same hours.

1 Wyndham St., Central. ☎ **852/2526 5293**. www.jimmys.com. Main courses HK\$148–HK\$298 (US\$19–US\$39/£9.60–£19); fixed-price meals HK\$238–HK\$278 (US\$31–US\$36/£15–£18). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Central.

Kiku JAPANESE Its location in the basement of the Landmark explains the high prices of this traditionally decorated restaurant (somebody has to pay the rent). Still, it offers a wide range of Japan's best-known dishes, including sushi, sashimi, *shabu-shabu* and *sukiyaki* (sliced beef cooked in a broth at your table), grilled fish, and stone-grilled *teppanyaki* beef, with prawn tempura and obento lunch boxes offered for lunch. Lattices and paper lanterns set the mood and help divide the dining area into smaller areas, but try to get a booth for more intimate dining or opt for the sushi counter. Service is a bit slow, so come only if you want to relax over your meal.

The Landmark, basement, 15 Queen's Rd. Central, Central. ☎ **852/2521 3344**. Main courses HK\$150–HK\$330 (US\$19–US\$43/£9.75–£21); fixed-price dinners HK\$260–HK\$780 (US\$34–US\$101/£17–£51); fixed-price lunches HK\$130–HK\$350 (US\$17–US\$45/£8.45–£23). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm; Sun noon–3pm; daily 6–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

Le Petit Paris ★ (Value) FRENCH Outside of hotels, this is the only French restaurant with a sweeping view of the harbor, and its convenient location in the ifc mall next to Hong Kong Station makes it a popular venue for well-attired business professionals. The friendly, professional staff delivers fixed-price lunches which provide a choice of the first course and main dish. Dinner entrees, with an emphasis on freshness and seasonal choices, can include the likes of roasted sea bass with fennel, black olives and tomato concasse. Make a reservation for a window table or avoid the lunchtime crunch; otherwise, instead of gazing on dreamy views of ferries coming and going, you might be shunted to one of the tables placed out in the shopping mall.

ifc mall, Shop 2076 (Level 2), Central. ☎ **852/2805 5293**. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$188–HK\$428 (US\$24–US\$56/£12–£28); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Sat) HK\$180–HK\$250 (US\$23–US\$32/£12–£16). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Central.

Le Tire Bouchon ★★ (Finds) FRENCH This dark, cozy bistro near the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator was first established in 1986 and claims to be Hong Kong's oldest independent restaurant with a French chef. It sports a Parisian, casual atmosphere and serves classic French food heavy on the sauces. You might wish to start with escargots with garlic and parsley butter or poached green asparagus with Hollandaise sauce and truffle oil, moving on to the cassoulet of duck confit, Toulouse sausage, and Lyonnaise smoked pork belly, all cooked in a haricot greens and garlic ragout. Fatten up even more on any of the sumptuous desserts, and indulge in one of the 190-some bottles of French wines from the restaurant's climatically controlled cellar. You probably wouldn't want to eat like this every day, but you certainly won't regret it while you're here.

48 Graham St., Central. ☎ **852/2523 5459**. www.letirebouchon.com.hk. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$188–HK\$258 (US\$24–US\$34/£12–£17); fixed-price dinner HK\$298 (US\$39/£19); fixed-price lunch HK\$98 (US\$13/£6.35). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Sat 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

150 Lumiere ★★ **Find** SICHUAN/FUSION I like this restaurant for several reasons. Located on the third floor of ifc mall (with an entrance that's shared with Cuisine Cui-sine, a Cantonese restaurant), it offers good harbor views through huge windows. It has an upbeat, contemporary design yet is reasonably priced, making it a great place to recuperate after dropping loads of cash in the mall's designer boutiques. And it offers a tantalizing combination of spicy Sichuan cuisine paired with Latin American flavors, which comes together so effortlessly under the guidance of chef Shao Tak-lung, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the cuisine served here hails from its own country. Choices (served in individual portions rather than shared as in traditional Chinese restaurants) include appetizers like marinated salmon with tequila and Sichuan preserved vegetables, served on cold bean curd, and main dishes like seared jumbo crab claws with spicy Latin fried rice and pickled chili sauce. Probably the best deal is the weekend lunch buffet, which gives a choice of appetizers and dim sum along with a main course ordered from a menu. Although my main course of lobster in a pumpkin cream sauce fell short, virtually every other dish was spot on.

ifc mall, 3101 Podium Level 3, Central. ☎ **852/2393 3933**. www.lumiere.hk. Main dishes HK\$180–HK\$290 (US\$23–US\$38/£12–£19); set lunches (Mon–Fri) HK\$220–HK\$255 (US\$29–US\$33/£14–£17); lunch buffet (Sat–Sun and holidays) HK\$238 (US\$31/£15). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 11:30am–3pm; daily 5:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Post 97 ★ **Value** CONTINENTAL This is one of the old-timers in Lan Kwai Fong, opened in 1982 (its name is a cheeky reference to the handover, which seemed far in the future at the time), but it's every bit as popular as it was before all the surrounding competition moved in. That proves it must be doing something right, which it is: down-to-earth good food, reasonable prices, cheerful staff, an inviting bar with daily happy hours (3 to 8pm), and a comfortable, laid-back atmosphere where diners feel at home. Catering to area businesspeople during the day and to night revelers in the evening, it offers an all-day/all-night menu that includes breakfast items like eggs Benedict, salads (like the detox salad, good after a night of carousing), and lighter fare, adding seasonal entrees for dinner such as duck risotto with forest mushrooms and spinach or chargrilled lamb rack with eggplant, red onion, tabouleh, and rosemary. A civilized place to chill in hectic Lan Kwai Fong.

9 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ☎ **852/2186 1817**. www.ninetysevendgroup.com. Main dishes HK\$90–HK\$220 (US\$12–US\$29/£5.85–£14). AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9:30am–1am; Fri–Sat 9:30am–3am. MTR: Central.

The Press Room ★★ **Value** FRENCH I was surprised to discover such a worldly restaurant so close to the famous Man Mo Temple in what is otherwise a fairly traditional Chinese neighborhood. Occupying a site once held in the 1920s by *Hua Qiao Daily* newspaper (hence the restaurant's name), it's yet more proof of the relentless westward gentrification along Hollywood Road. Still, there's little to reproach in this bustling brasserie that would look right at home in Paris or New York with its wall-to-wall blackboards, split-level dining room, comfortable booths, and open kitchen. Although the emphasis is on French cuisine—with the likes of duck confit cassoulet or black cod served in tomato saffron broth with rouille and croutons, as well as a huge selection of oysters from around the world and sinfully delicious French desserts—it also serves Italian bistro food and burgers, with everything except the bread homemade. The wine list is impressive for an independent restaurant, as is the walk-in cheese room in Classified, the restaurant's next-door shop selling gourmet foods and wine, filled with artisanal cheeses imported directly from producers in France, Switzerland, Ireland, and elsewhere.

Note that this restaurant is so popular, it imposes two seatings for weekend dinners, at 7 and 9:15pm.

108 Hollywood Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2525 3444**. Reservations required. www.thepressroom.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$85–HK\$288 (US\$11–US\$37/£5.50–£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–11pm; Sat–Sun 10am–11pm. MTR: Central.

Shanghai Garden SHANGHAISE This upscale restaurant (part of the Maxim's group of restaurants) does a good job in presentation and cuisine. Since Shanghai does not have its own cuisine, the dishes served here are from Peking, Nanking, Sichuan, Hangchow, and Wuxi. The menu is extensive, including bird's nest and chicken soup or shark's-fin soup, such cold dishes as sautéed eel, and such main courses as sautéed prawns, beggar's chicken (which costs HK\$350/US\$45/£23 and must be ordered in advance), sautéed beef with spring onion, braised pig with vegetables, fried noodles Shanghai-style, and Peking duck (HK\$320/US\$42/£21). This place, pleasantly and soothingly decorated, does a roaring business, especially for lunch, when it also serves dim sum.

Hutchinson House (1st floor), Murray Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2524 8181**. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$75–HK\$168 (US\$9.75–US\$22/£4.85–£11); dim sum HK\$20–HK\$48 (US\$2.60–US\$6.25/£1.30–£3.10). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

The Square ★ CANTONESE Opened in 2000 to capture some of the increased traffic in this area due to Hong Kong Station next door, this smartly decorated restaurant features flowers on each table and cabinets filled with Chinese antiques. On weekday evenings, a trio performs live music of popular tunes. The menu includes both traditional dishes and original creations, with an emphasis on presentation. Recommended are the homemade crispy chicken, minced pigeon with lettuce leaves, and barbecue suckling pig with a sweet dipping sauce. Dim sum is also available for lunch on weekends and holidays, with only a limited number served on weekdays.

Exchange Square II, Central. ☎ **852/2525 1163**. Reservations required for lunch, recommended for dinner. Main dishes HK\$88–HK\$298 (US\$11–US\$39/£5.70–£19); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Fri only, for a minimum of 2 people) HK\$218–HK\$298 (US\$28–US\$39/£14–£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Central.

Thai Lemongrass ★★ THAI Serene statues of Buddha set the mood in this upscale Thai restaurant in Lan Kwai Fong. The menu, drawing from regional cuisines from throughout Thailand and prepared by Thai chefs, includes such favorites as soft-shell crab with chili and garlic on fried basil leaves, steamed Mandarin fish with chili lime, red curry duck, and chicken in green curry, as well as original creations. Unlike most Thai restaurants in Hong Kong, which often serve a watered-down version of Thai food, this one dishes out the real thing (though if you want it spicy hot, you should tell them). The menu also offers suggested cocktails created to go with each dish, as well as cocktails to clean the palate, aid in digestion, and be sipped for dessert; follow the recommendations, and you'll be ripe for Lan Kwai Fong.

California Tower, 3rd floor, 30–32 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ **852/2905 1688**. www.lkfe.com. Main dishes HK\$108–HK\$198 (US\$14–US\$26/£7–£13); fixed-price lunches HK\$128–HK\$148 (US\$17–US\$19/£8.30–£9.60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 6:30–11pm; Fri–Sat 6:30–11:30pm; Sun and holidays 6–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

Tokio Joe ★ JAPANESE As its quirky name suggests, this is a hip sushi bar catering to Lan Kwai Fong's youthful nighttime revelers. Dimly lit even for lunch, it offers sushi and sashimi a la carte, as well as combination platters, prepared by Chinese sushi chefs trained in Japan. A platter of assorted sashimi large enough for two people to share as an

152 appetizer costs HK\$490 (US\$64/£32); sushi combinations run from HK\$150 to HK\$360 (US\$19–US\$47/£9.75–£23). Unique, however, are the California-style roll creations, like the deep-fried soft-shell crab with avocado, cucumber, crab roe, and mayonnaise, and original dishes like the rock shrimp salad or kelp-grilled sea bass. Probably the best deal is one of the set lunches, featuring sashimi, tempura, or a box lunch. As the menu states, this restaurant has a “slightly irreverent, innovative, and casual approach to the Japanese culinary experience.” Luckily, it succeeds.

Nearby is sister restaurant **Kyoto Joe**, 21 D’Aguilar (☎ 852/2804 6800), which serves *robata*yaki grilled meats and vegetables in addition to sushi, open the same hours.

16 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ☎ 852/2525 1889. www.lkfe.com. Sushi a la carte HK\$35–HK\$65 (US\$4.55–US\$8.45/£2.25–£4.20); fixed-price lunches HK\$125–HK\$190 (US\$16–US\$25/£8.10–£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Watermark ★★ **Finds** CONTINENTAL The first restaurant to open atop the new Central ferry piers, this establishment, with a soaring ceiling, glass panel walls that can be pushed open, and an outdoor terrace, provides unobstructed sweeping views of the harbor and feels like you’re dining alfresco even when you aren’t, making it a great choice in any kind of weather. The menu, which offers contemporary Continental cuisine, includes such mouthwatering starters as Boston lobster and leeks with truffle mimosa, and house smoked ocean trout with blinis, crème fraîche and capers, but many simply go with the wonderful seafood platter. Angus beef, aged on the premises, is a house specialty, but other temptations include rabbit loin Wellington with braised shoulder and creamed leeks. Luckily, a dinner tasting menu (HK\$425/US\$55/£28) makes it easier on people who hate to make choices, while lunch and brunch buffets lay on the feast. This is a great addition to Central’s dining scene, and for those hopping off or on the ferries, it couldn’t be more convenient.

Central Ferry Pier 7, Central. ☎ 852/2167 7251. Reservations required. Main dishes HK\$198–HK\$450 (US\$26–US\$58/£13–£29); lunch buffet HK\$218 (US\$28/£14); Sun brunch HK\$298 (US\$39/£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10:30pm (last order). MTR: Central.

Yung Kee ★★ CANTONESE Popular for decades, Yung Kee started out in 1942 as a small shop selling roast goose, which did so well that it soon expanded into a very successful Cantonese enterprise. Through the years, it has won numerous food awards and is the only restaurant in Hong Kong ever to be included in *Fortune* magazine’s top 15 restaurants of the world (although, it must be added, the award was back in 1968). Its specialty is still roast goose with plum sauce, cooked to perfection with tender meat on the inside and crispy skin on the outside; a half bird, enough for five or six people, costs HK\$210 (US\$27/£14), while a smaller portion for two people costs HK\$120 (US\$16/£7.80; note that goose is pulled from the menu any time there’s an avian flu scare). Other specialties include thousand-year-old eggs and any of the fresh seafood, like braised garoupa tail. Dining is on one of the upper three floors, but if all you want is a bowl of *congee* or takeout, join the office workers who pour in for a quick meal on the informal ground floor.

32–40 Wellington St., Central. ☎ 852/2522 1624. www.yungkee.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$88–HK\$180 (US\$11–US\$23/£5.70–£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

Zen ★★ CANTONESE Both its name and its appearance leave no doubt that this is no ordinary Cantonese restaurant. Indeed, it became an instant trendsetter when it opened in 1989, eschewing the traditional flashy decor favored by most Chinese restaurants in favor of an austere Zen Buddhist style, with an open dining hall that allowed

customers to see and be seen. Nowadays, of course, there are many imitators, but Zen remains on the cutting edge, with glass prisms, suspended from the ceiling and glistening with trickling water, making a swirl the length of the restaurant. As for the food, the wide variety of Cantonese specialties border on the nouvelle. Try the sautéed prawns with dried chili and walnuts, sautéed crab in an earthen pot with XO chili sauce, or the baked spareribs with Chin-Kiang vinegar. Lunch is also highly recommended for the large selection of dim sum.

Shop 001, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ☎ **852/2845 4555**. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$98–HK\$190 (US\$13–US\$25/£6.35–£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3:30pm; Sun 10:30am–3:30pm; daily 5:30–10:30pm. MTR: Admiralty.

INEXPENSIVE

Several inexpensive restaurants reviewed in the previous Tsim Sha Tsui section have branches in Central: **Fat Angelo's** (p. 139) is renowned for its massive portions of American-style Italian food; **Genki Sushi** (p. 139) offers conveyor-belt sushi at low prices; **Koh-I-Noor** (p. 139) is recommended for Indian curries; and **Spaghetti House** (p. 144) is a popular family restaurant. In addition, **Café O** (p. 160), in Wanchai, is popular for its sandwiches, pizzas, and other fare.

Keep in mind that many restaurants in the moderate category above offer lunches that even the budget-conscious can afford. Be sure, too, to check the section on “Dim Sum,” later in this chapter, and bars in the nightlife chapter.

Finally, another good place for a casual, inexpensive meal is the **Food Fare** food court in Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, in Central (take the MTR to Admiralty), where various counters offer Chinese, Thai, Korean, and Japanese food, as well as sandwiches and pasta, daily from 7:30am to 10pm.

Baci Pizza ★ PIZZA This tiny, casual, welcoming pizzeria offers good durum or homemade pasta and various kinds of wafer-thin pizza, including a “four seasons” pizza with cheese, mushrooms, black olives, ham, and artichokes, and a pizza with four cheeses—Gorgonzola, Parmesan, mozzarella, and fontina.

1 Lan Kwai Fong (1st floor), Central. ☎ **852/2840 0153**. www.lkfe.com. Pizzas and pastas HK\$110–HK\$218 (US\$14–US\$28/£7.15–£14); fixed-price dinner HK\$275 (US\$36/£18); fixed-price lunch HK\$145 (US\$19/£9.40). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 7–11pm; Fri–Sat 7–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

¡Caramba! MEXICAN Located in the heart of Hong Kong’s popular SoHo dining-and-nightlife district and easily accessible via the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator, this very narrow Mexican restaurant opened in 1997 as one of the first on the street. ¡Caramba! offers hearty dishes of tacos, burritos, enchiladas, chimichangas, fajitas, and fresh fish of the day, all served with side dishes of black beans and rice. Of all the Mexican restaurants in Hong Kong, this is probably the best. Tables are too close together for intimate discussions, but after a few margaritas, who cares? On weekends and holidays, brunch is offered until 6pm for HK\$125 (US\$16/£8.10), including one drink. ¡*Ay caramba!*

26–30 Elgin St., Central. ☎ **852/2530 9963**. www.caramba.com.hk. Reservations recommended. Platters with side dishes HK\$125–HK\$148 (US\$16–US\$19/£8.10–£9.60); Mon–Fri lunch buffet HK\$68 (US\$8.85/£4.40). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–midnight; Sun 11am–11pm. MTR: Central.

The Flying Pan (Kids) AMERICAN Breakfast 24 hours a day is the forte of this homey, casual eatery, located uphill from Hollywood Road in the SoHo district. Everything from hearty omelets and eggs Benedict to Belgian waffles, cheese blintzes, biscuits and gravy, and even British breakfasts comprised of two eggs, bacon, black pudding, and

154 grilled tomato are available from the lengthy menu, all with side dishes and juice. The children's menu includes such favorites as French toast, waffles, and grilled cheese sandwich.

Another branch is located at 81–85 Lockhart Rd. on the third floor, Wan Chai (☎ **852/2528 9997**; MTR: Wan Chai), also open 24 hours.

9 Old Bailey St., Central. ☎ **852/2140 6333**. Breakfast platters HK\$50–HK\$100 (US\$6.50–US\$13/£3.25–£6.50). No credit cards. Daily 24 hr. MTR: Central.

Heaven on Earth SHANGHAI/SE/CHUAN/TAIWANESE Twenty years ago, you'd be hard pressed to find a Hong Kong restaurant outside hotels that offered different regional Chinese cuisines under one roof, but the concept seems to have taken hold with Hongkongers today. This basement establishment near the Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district, decorated in dark red with coiled lampshades that resemble the huge incense you see at temples, offers an assortment of dishes, with spicy dishes marked on the picture menu (you'll have to ask them to turn up the heat, however, as even the so-called hot dishes seem only mildly spicy to my palate). You might start with the hot and sour mushroom soup or the marinated beef and tendon with chili peppers, followed by marinated spareribs in black vinegar sauce, stir-fried clams with basil and chili, or stir-fried prawns with hot chili sauce on a sizzling platter. Chinese wines, sake, and cocktails are also available.

Another Heaven on Earth is on the other side of the harbor, at 6 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2367 8428**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), open Monday to Thursday 4pm to 2:30am, Friday and Saturday 4pm to 3:30am, and Sunday and holidays 4pm to 1am.

1–13 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ **852/2537 8083**. www.kingparrot.com. Main dishes HK\$68–HK\$168 (US\$8.85–US\$22/£4.40–£11). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–12:30am. MTR: Central.

Life ★ **Finds** VEGETARIAN Located beside the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator in SoHo, Life is a godsend to travelers seeking vegetarian and vegan alternatives, with dishes made from natural and organic ingredients and utilizing fresh vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, soy products, legumes, and other healthy fare. For guests with dietary restrictions, it will also prepare dishes that are free of yeast, gluten, garlic, onion, or wheat. Occupying the second story above a health-foods store in a simple, down-to-earth venue, with rooftop dining available in the evening, Life serves salads, whole-wheat pizzas, quiche, noodles, salads, and daily specials (like chargrilled portobello mushroom served with roasted new potatoes, shallots, and grilled seasonal vegetables), along with juices, power and protein shakes, teas, fair-trade coffee, and organic wine and beer. Fitting the restaurant's earth-friendly philosophy, it even uses biodegradable packaging and cleaning agents that don't harm either the environment or, well, life. Ten percent of its profits go to charities. Service, however, can be slow.

10 Shelley St., Central. ☎ **852/2810 9777**. Main dishes HK\$95–HK\$110 (US\$12–US\$14/£6.15–£7.15). AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–10pm. MTR: Central.

PizzaExpress PIZZA This glass-walled eatery, on a busy intersection where Lynhurst Terrace, Cochrane, and Gage streets all converge (and in the shadow of the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator), is a noisy place for a meal, mainly because there's nothing to break up the acoustics (the upper floor is better). The pizza is great, ranging from the ordinary (such as the American Pizza with pepperoni, mozzarella, jalapeño, and tomato) to the unusual (like the Peking Duck Pizza with duck, hoisin sauce, chili, spring onion, and mozzarella). It also offers pastas and salads.

Other branches are in Tsim Sha Tsui at 35 Ashley Rd. (☎ **852/2317 7432**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), Wan Chai at 10 Wing Fung St. (☎ **852/3528 0541**; MTR: Wan Chai),

and—my favorite location—on the waterfront in Stanley at 90 Stanley Main St. (☎ 852/2813 7363; bus: 6, 6A, 6X, 260, or 973).

21 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central (☎ 852/2850 7898. www.pizzaexpress.com.hk. Pizza HK\$95–HK\$120 (US\$12–US\$16/£6.15–£7.80). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. MTR: Central.

Pret A Manger SANDWICHES Located in the ifc mall at Hong Kong Station, this London import has met with resounding success, providing ready-made soups, salads, juices, cakes, wraps, and sandwiches to busy office workers. All food is made fresh daily without the use of chemicals, additives, and preservatives. What doesn't sell by the end of the day is given away to charities. Sandwiches include familiars like BLTs and clubs, as well as more exotic offerings like Thai chicken and tandoori fish. Although it's mainly for takeout, there are a few tables for dining in.

Other branches are located in the Central MTR Station (☎ 852/2537 9230); in the Admiralty MTR Station (☎ 852/2537 9230); the Lippo Center, 89 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2537 4200; MTR: Admiralty); Harbour Centre, 25 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2877 3686; MTR: Wan Chai); 22 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2529 0208; MTR: Wan Chai); and AIA Plaza, 18 Hysan Ave., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2808 4402; MTR: Causeway Bay).

Shop 1003B, Level 1, ifc mall, 1 Harbour View St., Central. (☎ 852/2295 0405. www.pret.com. Sandwiches and wraps HK\$20–HK\$36 (US\$2.60–US\$4.70/£1.30–£2.35). No credit cards. Mon–Thurs 7:30am–7:30pm; Fri–Sat 7:30am–8pm; Sun 8:30am–8pm. MTR: Central.

Three Sixty ★ Finds INTERNATIONAL What's not to like about this health-food store and cafeteria specializing in earth-friendly products and organic foods? Self-service counters offer a wide variety of dishes, including salads (you get to pick your own meat and ingredients), Indian curries (including both vegetarian and vegan choices), pasta (choose your sauce and pasta), pizza, sandwiches, wraps, burritos, stir-fries, noodles, and daily specials like chicken roast or lasagna, as well as desserts, gelato, and smoothies. There's ample seating (avoid the lunchtime rush), or order it to go and have a picnic in nearby Chater Garden.

The Landmark (3rd and 4th floors), 15 Queen's Rd., Central. (☎ 852/2111 4880. www.threesixtyhk.com. Main dishes HK\$25–HK\$78 (US\$3.25–US\$10/£1.60–£5.05). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8am–9pm. MTR: Central.

6 CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

VERY EXPENSIVE

Grissini ★★★ ITALIAN This stylish, airy Italian restaurant, offering some of the best Northern Italian fare in town, echoes the palatial setting of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, with a tall ceiling, parquet floors, slick black furniture, and ceiling-to-floor windows offering a spectacular view of the harbor—day and night. Dining is on two levels, giving everyone a ringside seat. The aroma of homemade Grissini breadsticks greets you as soon as you enter the restaurant, whetting your appetite, perhaps, for the *antipasto misto*, a selection of appetizers, followed by the homemade chestnut pasta with Ligurian basil pesto, potatoes, and green beans, or the scampi and bell pepper risotto with fresh Caprino cheese and olives. Main dishes on the changing menu have included grilled lobster with bell peppers, capers, garlic, and oregano, and roasted lamb rack with mustard, tangerine, and honey along with escarole with a black olive and wine sauce. The wine cellar, with 1,000 bottles, is exclusively Italian. Lunch features lighter fare and more

156 choices of pasta and risotto, but whether for lunch or a romantic dinner, you can't go wrong dining here.

In the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2584 7933**. www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$290–HK\$580 (US\$38–US\$75/£19–£38); fixed-price dinner HK\$980 (US\$127/£64); fixed-price lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK\$320 (US\$42/£21); Sun brunch HK\$455 (US\$59/£30). AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Fri noon–2:30pm; daily 7–11pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

EXPENSIVE

Fook Lam Moon (p. 166), famous for its exotic Cantonese fare and already covered in the earlier Kowloon section that includes Tsim Sha Tsui, also has a branch in Wan Chai.

One Harbour Road ★★ CANTONESE For elegant Chinese dining in Wan Chai, head to the lobby of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, where a glass bubble elevator will deliver you directly to this eighth-floor restaurant. Designed to resemble the terrace of an elegant 1930s taipan mansion, it's bright and airy, with split-level dining offering views of the harbor. A profusion of plants, a large lotus pond, and the sound of running water give the illusion of outdoor dining; tables spread far apart provide privacy. The extensive menu offers straightforward, traditional Cantonese fare, with no nouvelle nuances or foreign influences. Choose from the usual shark's-fin specialties, abalone, bird's nest, Peking duck (HK\$520/US\$68/£34; order in advance), and roast goose, all of which cost substantially more than the prices given below. Other specialties include crispy sesame chicken and simmered garoupa with hot chili and vegetables. The fixed-price lunch and dinner menus, unfortunately for lone diners, require a minimum order for two people, but dim sum is served at lunchtime, costing HK\$43 to HK\$49 (US\$5.60–US\$6.40/£2.80–£3.20).

In the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2584 7938**. www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK\$160–HK\$300 (US\$21–US\$39/£10–£19); fixed-price dinner HK\$770 (US\$100/£50); fixed-price lunches HK\$400–HK\$500 (US\$52–US\$65/£26–£32). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

Riva ★★ FRENCH Using its location high over Victoria Park to full advantage, this restaurant boasts sweeping views beyond the park to the harbor, though its bland decor, including big chandeliers that give it a passé 1950s feel, is in dire need of a makeover. Still, when they turn the lights down in the evening, this is a good place for a romantic dinner in this neck of the woods, with live piano music every night except Sunday. Monthly promotions (such as a guest chef or a special menu that spotlights regional or ethnic fare) are an interesting complement to the modern French cuisine, which always includes vegetarian choices along with dishes like Boston lobster or Kurobata pork chop with sautéed garlic and mushrooms.

In the Park Lane Hotel (27th floor), 310 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2839 3327**. www.parklane.com.hk. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$198–HK\$348 (US\$26–US\$45/£13–£23); fixed-price lunches HK\$210–HK\$240 (US\$27–US\$31/£14–£16). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:45pm and 6–10:45pm (last order). MTR: Causeway Bay.

ToTT's ★★★ INTERNATIONAL/FUSION ToTT's stands for Talk of The Town, and it certainly achieves that with its fabulous views of the harbor from its 34th-floor perch and eye-catching electric-blue decor. Sofas and plush seats give it a lounge-like atmosphere, especially after 10pm Monday to Saturday, when there's live music of everything from rhythm and blues to pop or jazz (the cover charge of HK\$168/US\$22/£11 Mon–Thurs and HK\$188/US\$24/£12 Fri–Sat is waived for hotel guests or those who dine here). Tables for two are placed mostly by the windows, making this a good choice

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6

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

158 for a fun, celebratory dinner. The contemporary cuisine is an East-meets-West culinary adventure, with spices, herbs, and ingredients from around the world brought together to create dishes like Hoisin rack of lamb with forest mushroom ragout, though classics, such as chargrilled lobster or Australian Wagyu steaks (available with a choice of sauces, from béarnaise or foie gras to shallots with red wine) are not overlooked. In short, this place is a good choice for those who want dining and entertainment in one spot, as well as for those entertaining first-time visitors to Hong Kong. Sunday brunch, featuring unlimited champagne, is so popular you should book at least 2 weeks in advance.

In the Excelsior Hotel, 281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2837 6786**. <http://mandarinoriental.com/excelsior>. Reservations recommended for dinner (request a window seat). Main courses HK\$248–HK\$418 (US\$32–US\$54/£16–£27); fixed-price lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK\$268 (US\$35/£17); Sat brunch HK\$318 (US\$41/£21); Sun brunch HK\$628 (US\$82/£41). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; Sun 11:30am–3pm; Mon–Sat 6:30–11pm; Sun 6:30–10pm. MTR: Causeway Bay.

MODERATE

Several restaurants already covered in the Kowloon dining section, earlier, have branches in Wan Chai or Causeway Bay: **Jade Garden** (p. 166), good for Cantonese food and dim sum; **Super Star Seafood Restaurant** (p. 167), serving Cantonese dishes, seafood, and dim sum; and **Wu Kong** (p. 137), which specializes in cuisine from Shanghai.

Ramas Greens ★ INTERNATIONAL It's hard to keep track of all the East-meets-West restaurants in Hong Kong. This one, open since 2002, has proven its staying power by continuing to attract a trendy crowd, who lounge on sofas and comfy chairs on an open deck, one of many open-air restaurants ringing an upper-floor terrace around the Sanlitun building in Wan Chai, not far from the convention center. The changing menu runs the gamut from pasta and grilled meats to seafood, sashimi, and Asian cuisine. You might, for example, select the grilled lemongrass baby pork rib with red curry or baked herb-crust-gratinated Chilean sea bass served with mashed potatoes and vegetables, while lunch adds items like burgers and pizza. Although Ramas Greens has a small indoor dining room, the large terrace, good for people-watching, is clearly where the action is. Happy hour runs from 5 to 9pm daily.

The Sunlitun, 28 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/3101 0656**. Main dishes HK\$178–HK\$368 (US\$23–US\$48/£12–£24). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. MTR: Wan Chai.

Red Pepper ★★ SICHUAN Open since 1970, the Red Pepper has a large following among the city's expatriates, many of whom seem to come so often that they know everyone in the place. It's a very relaxing, small restaurant, with a rather quaint decor of carved dragons on the ceiling and Chinese lanterns. Specialties include fried prawns with chili sauce on a sizzling platter, sour-pepper soup, fried garoupa with sweet-and-sour sauce, smoked duck marinated with oranges, and shredded chicken with hot garlic sauce and dry-fried string beans. Most dishes are available in two sizes, with the small dishes suitable for two people. Litchi tea is a good accompaniment.

7 Lan Fong Rd., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2577 3811**. Reservations recommended, especially at dinner. Small dishes HK\$90–HK\$230 (US\$12–US\$30/£5.85–£15). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11:15pm (last order). MTR: Causeway Bay.

The Viceroy ★★  FINDS INDIAN Under the same management as the long-popular Gaylord in Tsim Sha Tsui, this contemporary restaurant has something its sister establishment doesn't—outdoor seating on a terrace with good views of the harbor, Wan Chai waterfront, and Kowloon. In the evening, the experience is almost magical, making it a good choice for a romantic dinner. On days when the weather doesn't cooperate, the

indoor dining room offers the same view thanks to its large windows. Although the innovative menu changes often, tandoori dishes (from lamb and prawns to lobster), curries (the vindaloo dishes are as fiery hot as they should be), and dishes like roast chicken in yogurt and spices are always on the menu. A fair number of vegetarian dishes, from potatoes cooked with curry leaves to yellow lentils with spinach, are also available. The weekday lunch buffet is a steal. One caveat: Be sure to call beforehand for dinner, as this is a popular choice for private functions; though you can still dine on food from the Viceroy's kitchen, you'll be shunted to a neighboring sister Italian restaurant, making for a slightly surreal experience.

Sun Hung Kai Centre (2nd floor), 30 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2827 7777**. Main dishes HK\$72–HK\$178 (US\$9.35–US\$23/£4.65–£12); lunch buffet (Mon–Fri only) HK\$118 (US\$15/£7.65). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

Wasabisabi ★★ JAPANESE This stunning restaurant looks like it was airlifted straight out of Tokyo, and like that huge metropolis, it's easy to get lost here. Luckily, staff is on hand to lead diners past the mirrors and corridors that make this place a confusing maze to the dark and cozy dining room, where palm leaves and bare branches form a silhouetted backdrop behind the sushi bar. The menu lists all the usual raw seafood, flown in daily from Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market and offered as sashimi, sushi, and temaki (handrolled sushi), the latter of which includes the Japanese chef's own creations like the avocado and barbecued-eel temaki and the shredded crab wrapped in nori (seaweed) with crab paste. The extensive menu also offers grilled dishes (like grilled black cod marinated in a special miso paste from Kyoto), tempura, and rice and noodle dishes, but for a feast fit for an emperor, try the five-course tasting menu for HK\$588 (US\$76/£38), which changes every 2 weeks. The restaurant's bar, open until midnight weekdays and 2am on weekends, is a happening place for an after-dinner drink, but you don't have to move to enjoy it: The restaurant's C-shaped sofas can swivel to face the bar.

Times Square (13th floor), 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2506 0009**. www.aqua.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$108–HK\$268 (US\$14–US\$35/£7–£17); fixed-price lunches HK\$98–HK\$198 (US\$13–US\$26/£6.35–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight. MTR: Causeway Bay.

Watermargin ★★ Value NORTHERN CHINESE Sister restaurant to hip Hutong in Kowloon but without the latter's stunning views and slightly higher prices, this restaurant resembles a traditional teahouse with its reproduction antique screens and chairs and hanging lanterns. Sheer silk curtains partition the dining area into intimate niches, and jazz plays softly in the background. Artfully presented dishes include such delectable starters as clams steeped in Chinese rosé wine and chili paste, and mustard spinach with fresh scallops topped with fish roe. Main dishes include sautéed prawns with spicy sauce, whole crispy chicken infused with Chinese tea, and roasted prime beef ribs. About half the dishes are spicy, showing influences from Sichuan province. If spicy foods are your thing, you won't want to pass up the diced chicken in a sea of Sichuan red peppers, which is served with a huge mound of red peppers and is so spicy it burned my lips. For a real treat, order a 10-year-old bottle of Shao Xing wine for HK\$268 (US\$35/£17).

Times Square (12th floor), 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/3102 0088**. www.aqua.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$100–HK\$228 (US\$13–US\$30/£6.50–£15); fixed-price lunch HK\$168 (US\$22/£11). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight. MTR: Causeway Bay.

INEXPENSIVE

California Pizza Kitchen, Fat Angelo's, Genki Sushi, and Spaghetti House, reviewed in the Tsim Sha Tsui section, all have branches in Wan Chai and/or Causeway Bay. See

160 p. 138, 139, 139, and 141, respectively. **The Flying Pan, PizzaExpress, and Pret A Manger**, described in the Central section, also have branches here; see p. 153, 154, and 155.

In addition to the recommendations below, be sure to go through the moderate section above for inexpensive buffets and fixed-price lunches.

American Restaurant PEKINGESE Despite its name, the American Restaurant has served hearty Pekingese food since it opened right after World War II. Little changed over the decades and often filled with noisy, celebratory patrons, it has an English menu listing almost 200 dishes (the small-size dishes are good for two or three people), but the perennial favorites have always been barbecued Peking duck (HK\$295/US\$38/£19 and good for two or more people), beggar's chicken (which must be ordered a day in advance and costs HK\$398/US\$52/£26), sizzling prawns, and the sizzling beef hot plate. Otherwise, the staff is happy to make recommendations.

20 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2527 1000** or 852/2527 7277. Small dishes HK\$62–HK\$188 (US\$8.05–US\$24/£4–£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm (last order). MTR: Wan Chai.

Café O ★ SANDWICHES/PIZZA This informal eatery does a roaring business with area office workers on lunch break, late-night revelers, and everyone in between looking for healthy fast food free of additives and preservatives and prepared with virgin olive oil. It serves an all-day breakfast (from organic muesli to the heart-stopping Triple O, which comes with three eggs, toast, grilled tomatoes and mushrooms, bacon, and sausages); sandwiches (from the classic BLT but with melted mozzarella cheese to smoked salmon with pesto, capers, mint and sun-dried tomatoes, all served on house-made bread); pizzas, including create-your-own; pastas; salads; and freshly squeezed juices and smoothies. The food is available for takeout, but the dining area for those who wish to consume on the spot, is complete with free Wi-Fi.

Another Café O, 2 Arbuthnot Rd. in Central (☎ **852/2868 0450**; MTR: Central), is open the same hours.

18 Luard Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/3543 0224**. www.cafeo.hk. Main dishes HK\$48–HK\$98 (US\$6.25–US\$13/£3.10–£6.35). AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 7am–1am; Fri–Sat 24 hr. MTR: Wan Chai.

Chili Club **Value** THAI This simple upstairs restaurant wastes little money on decor, with the only nod to fine dining apparent in its white tablecloths. But the seafood, curries, and noodles, which include all the Thai favorites, are as spicy as this national cuisine should be. What's more, the price is right, making this one of Hong Kong's best dining values. Try to get a seat near the window, where you can watch the action on the street below, and, if possible, avoid the lunchtime rush.

88 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2527 2872**. Main dishes HK\$68–HK\$150 (US\$8.85–US\$19/£4.40–£9.75). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

Khana Khazana INDIAN/VEGETARIAN Head up to the first floor, where you'll find this modestly decorated restaurant packed with tables close together in order to satisfy Wan Chai's hungry crowd. Serving strictly vegetarian fare from North and South India, it offers a wide range of tandoori and curries, from Kashmiri Dum Aloo (stuffed potatoes in Mughalai-style gravy) and Paneer Makhani (cottage cheese cooked in a rich gravy of butter and tomato topped with fresh cream) to fresh minced vegetables oven-baked on skewers. Most people, however, opt for the Thali (set meal), which gives them a sampling of several dishes.

20 Luard Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2520 5308**. www.khanakhazana.hk. Main dishes HK\$58–HK\$78 (US\$7.55–US\$10/£3.75–£5.05); Thali HK\$138 (US\$18/£8.95); lunch buffet (Mon–Fri only) HK\$88 (US\$11/£5.70). AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 6–10:45pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

Simply Thai  **THAI** The fact that this restaurant is located in Times Square should be a tip-off that this is no simple eatery. Indeed, it's surprisingly elegant for its price range and offers diners a relaxed atmosphere in which to kick back, down a few Singha beers, and enjoy good Thai food. The usual Thai soups like *tom yum goong* and pad Thai noodles get the meal started, but otherwise the menu covers both classics and modern renditions, from chicken curry pan-fried with green curry, potatoes, eggplant, coconut milk and basil to baked Mandarin fish filet with prawn mousse in banana leaf.

Simply Thai has several far-flung branches, including one in the New Territories in the New Town Plaza in Sha Tin (☎ **852/3523 1638**).

Times Square (11th floor), 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2506 1212**. Main dishes HK\$65–HK\$155 (US\$8.45–US\$20/£4.20–£10); fixed-price lunches HK\$48–HK\$70 (US\$6.25–US\$9.10/£3.10–£4.55). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–10:30pm. MTR: Causeway Bay.

Sorabol ★ **KOREAN** This is the Hong Kong branch of a successful Korean chain. Popular with local Chinese and Koreans, it can be quite noisy and busy, but partitions between tables lend some privacy. My own personal favorites are the beef strips of *bulgogi* or the *kalbi* (beef strips marinated in a spicy sauce and then barbecued at your own grill). Barbecued fixed-price meals come with side dishes of kimchee (spicy cabbage) and vegetables. Another popular dish is the Genghis Khan hot pot with vegetables. You'll do your own barbecuing at smokeless grills at your table, which can be great fun, somewhat like an indoor cookout. The army of knowledgeable staff keeps things running smoothly and is happy to help the novice barbecuer.

Another branch is in Tsim Sha Tsui on the fourth floor of the Miramar Shopping Centre at 132 Nathan Rd. (☎ **852/2375 2882**), open the same hours.

Lee Theatre Plaza (17th floor), 99 Percival St. (across from Times Square), Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2881 6823**. www.sorabol.com.hk. Barbecued dishes HK\$95–HK\$220 (US\$12–US\$29/£6.15–£14); fixed-price meals for 2 persons HK\$420–HK\$560 (US\$55–US\$73/£27–£36); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Sat only) HK\$55–HK\$80 (US\$7.15–US\$10/£3.55–£5.20); Sun lunch buffet HK\$108 (US\$14/£7). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

7 AROUND HONG KONG ISLAND

VICTORIA PEAK

In addition to the choices here, see the “Dim Sum” section later in this chapter.

Expensive

Pearl on the Peak ★★ **AUSTRALIAN** This is probably the priciest restaurant on the Peak, and looks it. Boasting 270-degree views of the city through floor-to-ceiling windows and from a small outdoor terrace, it pulls in fashionable foodies with its cool design and modern Australian cuisine, created by award-winning Australian chef Goeff Lindsay. Using a wide variety of natural ingredients (including lots of raw or nearly raw veggies) in unusual combinations, Lindsay produces singular dishes that sound overwhelming but somehow work, sometimes spectacularly so. Pearl meat (the meat from pearl-producing oysters) is a signature dish, but steaks and seafood always appear on the constantly changing menu. Lunch gives a choice of soup (like heirloom tomato, with buffalo mozzarella, mint, sherry vinegar, and olive oil), main dish (like sea bass seared with fresh green peppercorns and sun salt, celery braised in Beaujolais cru, and caramelized onion mashed potato), and dessert (like upside-down banana tart with sesame biscuit, coconut ice cream and caramel

162 sauce). If you've come to the Peak for some hiking, this isn't the place for you (the dress is smart casual), but if you're coming for the night view and perhaps a romantic stroll, this is the top pick (be sure to reserve a window seat).

Peak Tower, Level 1, ☎ **852/2849 5123**. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$250–HK\$378 (US\$32–US\$49/£16–£25); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Fri only) HK\$220 (US\$29/£14). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6pm–midnight (to 1am Fri–Sat). Peak Tram.

Moderate

Cafe Deco ★ **Kids** INTERNATIONAL No expense was spared, it seems, in designing this chic, airy restaurant with its wood inlaid floor, authentic Art Deco trimmings (many imported from the U.S. and Europe), and open kitchen serving cuisines of China, Japan, Thailand, India, the U.S., and Italy. In the evening (except Sun), diners are treated to live jazz. All this is secondary, however, to the restaurant's real attraction—surreal views of Hong Kong. That alone is reason enough for dining here, though some of the view has been stolen by the Peak Tower. To assure a ringside window seat, make reservations for the second floor at least 2 weeks in advance, emphasizing that you don't want your view obstructed by the Peak Tower, or opt for one of the outdoor tables, which are often easier to get. The food, designed to appeal to visitors from around the world, is an eclectic mix of international dishes and ingredients, including tandoori kabobs and dishes, Asian noodles, sushi, grilled steaks, pizzas, create-your-own pastas, an oyster bar, soups, and salads. The salads are generous enough for two to share (the house salad is exceptionally good), but main dishes occasionally fall short of expectations. I suppose what you're really paying for here is the view. A children's play corner keeps the wee ones occupied.

Peak Galleria, Victoria Peak. ☎ **852/2849 5111**. www.cafedecogroup.com. Reservations recommended for dinner (request window seat with view). Pizzas and pastas HK\$126–HK\$158 (US\$16–US\$21/£8.20–£10); main courses HK\$126–HK\$292 (US\$16–US\$38/£8.20–£19); fixed-price lunches (Mon–Fri only) HK\$145–HK\$188 (US\$19–US\$24/£9.40–£12); Sun brunch HK\$328 (US\$43/£21). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm (last order); Fri–Sat 11:30am–11:30pm; Sun 9:30am–11:30pm. Peak Tram.

The Peak Lookout ★★ INTERNATIONAL Although it's on the Peak, located across the street from the Peak Tram terminus, the Peak Lookout's terrace has only limited views of the South China Sea. And yet, it has long been a Hong Kong favorite. A former tram station, it's a delightful, rustic place for a meal, with exposed stone walls, tall timber-trussed ceiling, open fireplace, wooden floor, and a greenhouse-like room that extends into the garden. You can also sit outdoors amid the lush growth where you can actually hear birds singing—one of the best outdoor dining opportunities in Hong Kong on a glorious day (be sure to request a table outdoors if that's what you want). Musicians entertain nightly with oldies but goldies. The menu is eclectic, offering soups (from minestrone to the classic Thai seafood soup Tom Yam Goong), sandwiches, great burgers, and a combination of American, Chinese, Indian, and Southeast Asian dishes, including tandoori chicken *tikka*, pad Thai noodles, penne with prawns, grilled steaks and salmon, and curries like Thai green chicken curry with coconut milk.

121 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak. ☎ **852/2849 1000**. www.peaklookout.com.hk. Reservations required for dinner and all weekend meals. Main courses HK\$136–HK\$288 (US\$18–US\$37/£8.85–£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 10:30am–midnight; Fri 10:30am–1am; Sat 8:30am–1am; Sun 8:30am–11:30pm. Peak Tram.

REPULSE BAY

Expensive

The Verandah ★★★ **Finds** CONTINENTAL Unless you're planning a trip to the beach, this wonderful, veranda-like restaurant is the only reason to venture to this

destination on Hong Kong Island's south side, though you do pass it by on your way to Stanley when coming from Central. A throwback to Hong Kong's colonial days in a setting reminiscent of an exclusive private club, the Verandah boasts a stylish yet relaxed atmosphere, with tall ceilings and whirling fans, starched tablecloths and flowers, and windows open to the sea. If you can, book a table more than a week in advance and arrive starving at its famous Sunday brunch, complete with a jazz band. Otherwise, from the regular menu, you might wish to start with the Verandah's famous Caesar salad (topped with a choice of grilled chicken breast, grilled prawns, or home-smoked salmon), followed by lobster bisque or wild mushroom ravioli. For a main course, you might choose a lobster dish or the filet of U.S. prime beef tenderloin with merlot-braised oxtail. With its excellent service, great food, and wonderful ambience, this is a very civilized place where you'll want to linger.

109 Repulse Bay Rd., Repulse Bay. ☎ **852/2292 2822**. www.therepulsebay.com. Reservations required. Main courses HK\$310–HK\$330 (US\$40–US\$43/£20–£21); fixed-price lunch HK\$268–HK\$298 (US\$35–US\$39/£17–£19); Sun brunch HK\$398 (US\$52/£26). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun 11am–2:30pm; Mon–Sat 7–10:30pm; Sun and holidays 6:30–10:30pm. Bus: 6, 6A, 6X, 260, or 973.

STANLEY

In addition to the restaurants described here, **PizzaExpress** (p. 154), already described in the Central District section, offers a dreamy view of the sea from its outside terrace on Stanley Main Street, where you'll also find a row of other restaurants. In addition, the **Murray House**, Stanley Plaza, has a few restaurants serving Spanish, Vietnamese, and German food.

Moderate

The Boathouse INTERNATIONAL What I like most about this restaurant is its quaint setting, in an older house right on the main seaside promenade. It offers good views of either the sea from its rooftop terrace or of the parade of people from its sidewalk tables. The lunch menu, however, is fairly basic and run-of-the-mill, listing soups, salads, sandwiches, pasta, and a few heavier dishes like barbecued baby back pork ribs, while dinner concentrates on seafood and steaks. Probably the best thing on the menu is the seafood platter, which comes heaped with crayfish, prawns, crab legs, scallops, and smoked salmon rolls for HK\$165 (US\$21/£11). Order that and a round of beers or chilled white wine, then kick back and enjoy the view.

88 Stanley Main St., Stanley. ☎ **852/2813 4467**. Reservations recommended. Main courses HK\$150–HK\$300 (US\$19–US\$39/£9.75–£19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–10:30pm; Sat–Sun 11am–10:30pm. Bus: 6, 6A, 6X, 260, or 973.

Lucy's ★ Finds INTERNATIONAL This tiny, cozy, casual restaurant, snuggled in the ground floor of an older building just off the front of Stanley market (look for the stairs to the right of the Delifrance bakery), is a friendly neighborhood restaurant, attracting expats who live in Stanley rather than hordes of tourists (maybe because it lacks a view of the sea). Its limited menu, which always includes some vegetarian options, changes often to reflect what's available and in season, with past entrees ranging from chargrilled beef fillet with turnips and horseradish gratin and shallot jus, to cod fillet with a cucumber and herb salad, coconut and tamarind sauce and rice. Most diners, however, opt for one of the daily specials, which are almost always right on, making sure to save room for the restaurant's famed desserts. Lunches feature lighter, less expensive fare, like salmon fish cakes or spinach and feta cheese soufflé with roast tomato sauce.

ABERDEEN

Moderate

Jumbo Kingdom ★ CANTONESE Maybe you've heard about Hong Kong's floating restaurant in Aberdeen, in operation for more than 30 years and claiming to be the largest floating restaurant in the world. Although Hong Kong certainly has more authentic and more affordable restaurants, if you've always wanted to eat in a floating restaurant, simply take the bus to Aberdeen and then board one of the Jumbo Kingdom's own free shuttle boats, with departures every few minutes from the waterfront Aberdeen Promenade (another option is to join one of the nighttime organized tours that stop here for dinner). Although the exterior of the restaurant is as ornate and—perhaps to some eyes—as gaudy as you could hope for (have your cameras ready as the boat approaches), the interior underwent a complete overhaul a few years back that rid it of its opulent golds and reds and transformed it into a contemporary venue. Specializing in fresh seafood, Jumbo Kingdom also offers roasted goose, Peking duck (HK\$320/US\$42/£21), and changing seasonal dishes, but my favorite meal here is dim sum, available from an English menu (from trolleys on Sun and holidays) until 4pm—certainly the least expensive way to enjoy the floating restaurant experience. Dragon Court, a smaller, more formal dining hall, offers the same fare, with dim sum served only off a menu; you might be able to get a table here immediately on Sunday, bypassing the first-come, first-served waiting list for the more popular—and more fun—main dining hall.

Aberdeen Harbour, Hong Kong Island. ☎ 852/2553 9111. www.jumbo.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$60–HK\$450 (US\$7.80–US\$58/£3.90–£29); dim sum HK\$16–HK\$45 (US\$2.10–US\$5.85/£1.05–£2.90). Table charge HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) per person. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–10:30pm; Sun 7am–10:30pm. Bus: 7 or 70 from Central, 72 or 77 from Causeway Bay, or 973 from Tsim Sha Tsui to Aberdeen, then the restaurant's free shuttle boat.

Top Deck, at the Jumbo ★★ **Kids** INTERNATIONAL/SEAFOOD If dim sum or Cantonese fare is not your cup of tea, this is an excellent alfresco alternative, located on the roof of Jumbo Kingdom and offering comfortable sofas and oversize chairs grouped under and around awnings and a flamboyantly ornate Chinese dining hall, where an open kitchen turns out mouthwatering seafood delights from around the world, as well as other dishes. The menu is so extensive it's hard to know where to start. Thai, Japanese, and Indian appetizer platters solve part of the dilemma by providing a sampler of goodies from those countries, while the seafood mountain comes with lobster, oysters, mussels, Alaskan King crab legs, prawns, and other seafood, along with dipping sauces. For a main course, choose from salmon, tiger king prawns, steak, and other options from the grill, fish and lamb chops from a tandoori oven, Asian curries, pastas, pizzas, and burgers. For those who feel cheated choosing only an item or two from the menu, try the Sunday seafood brunch buffet to 4:30pm instead, complete with a children's play corner to accommodate the many families who come here (the boat ride to the restaurant is a bonus, as is the children's menu). A great place to chill out.

Jumbo Kingdom (rooftop), Aberdeen Harbour, Hong Kong Island. ☎ 852/2553 3331. www.cafedeco-group.com. Main dishes HK\$138–HK\$360 (US\$18–US\$47/£8.95–£23); Sun brunch HK\$338 (US\$44/£22). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 6–11:30pm; Fri 6pm–1am; Sat 11:30am–1am; Sun and holidays 11:30am–11:30pm. Bus: 7 or 70 from Central, 72 or 77 from Causeway Bay, or 973 from Tsim Sha Tsui to Aberdeen, then Jumbo Kingdom's free shuttle boat.

WESTERN DISTRICT

Inexpensive

Sammy's Kitchen CONTINENTAL This simple and unpretentious place, recognizable by the sign in the shape of a cow outside its door, has been in business since 1970. Owner/chef Sammy Yip cooked at The Peninsula and Mandarin Oriental hotels before opening this restaurant, where he is now joined by his children in the family business. Although the reasonably priced meals are rather mediocre, the service is friendly and welcoming, and it's comforting to see a place that remains virtually unchanged over the decades in such a fast-changing environment. Two different menus are based on two different concepts. One is cheaper and quicker, available all day and offering rather plain dishes like spring chicken, lamb chops, and noodle and fried rice dishes; they're priced from HK\$55 to HK\$120 (US\$7.15–US\$16/£3.55–£7.80). In the evening, another, more expensive menu is also available (with entrees ranging from HK\$100/US\$13/£6.50 to HK\$280/US\$36/£18), served in the separate, more formal Grill Room. This menu includes fresh seafood, imported steaks, and such specialties as chicken with special pepper sauce flaming with cognac. You can bring your own bottle of wine for a HK\$70 (US\$9.10/£4.55) corkage fee.

204–206 Queen's Rd. W., Sheung Wan. ☎ **852/2548 8400**. Main courses HK\$55–HK\$280 (US\$7.15–US\$36/£3.55–£18); fixed-price dinner HK\$180 (US\$23/£12); fixed-price lunch HK\$55–HK\$110 (US\$7.15–US\$14/£3.55–£7.15). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 7:30am–11pm. MTR: Sheung Wan.

8 DIM SUM

Everyone should try a dim sum meal at least once, as much for the atmosphere as for the food. It's eaten primarily for breakfast or lunch, or as an afternoon snack with tea. On weekends, restaurants offering dim sum (mostly Cantonese restaurants) are packed with local families. On weekdays, they're popular with shoppers and businesspeople. Prices are low and you order only as much as you want. On weekends, a few restaurants bring out their trolleys, filled with steaming baskets and pushed throughout the restaurant, allowing you to choose what appeals to you. Otherwise, most restaurants nowadays offer dim sum from a menu, which may or may not be in English (hotel restaurants have English menus; otherwise, many Cantonese restaurants have at least one staff member who speaks English, or use the suggestions earlier in this chapter as a guide). In most restaurants that offer dim sum, one pays by the basket, and each basket usually contains two to four items of dim sum; the average price is about HK\$20 to HK\$40 (US\$2.60–US\$5.15/£1.30–£2.60), though at expensive restaurants they can go higher. The prices given below, unless otherwise specified, are per basket; expect to spend HK\$80 to HK\$120 (US\$10–US\$16/£5.20–£7.80) per person for a light meal. You'll be charged extra for tea, usually around HK\$8 to HK\$13 (US\$1.05–US\$1.70/50p–85p).

You'll find many of the restaurants below also described earlier in this chapter, so they obviously serve more than dim sum. However, since dim sum is such a special Chinese tradition, they are emphasized again below. You may also notice that a restaurant listed in this section may have a different number of stars than was given previously in an earlier listing. This is not a mistake: A restaurant that might be ho-hum in all-round meals can be a standout in dim sum.

However, since dim sum is fairly predictable, with the most common dishes covered in the cuisine section at the beginning of the chapter, I've only made specific food recommendations

166 below when the dishes are different and/or are standouts from the usual choices. The open hours below are for serving times for dim sum.

KOWLOON

City Chiuchow Restaurant CHIU CHOW Although it's a Chiu Chow restaurant, this place serves its own dim sum, which is not too surprising if you consider that Chiu Chow food has been greatly influenced by Cantonese food. About 10 varieties are available, including steamed shrimp ball and steamed dumpling Chiu Chow style, along with noodle dishes like the fried E-Fu noodles.

East Ocean Centre, 98 Granville Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2723 6226**. Dim sum HK\$13–HK\$21 (US\$1.65–US\$2.70/85p–£1.35). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–4pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Fook Lam Moon ★★★ CANTONESE This is a Hong Kong old-timer, with an atmosphere reminiscent of an earlier era except without trolleys. The English menu is limited, listing only the restaurant's top choices, including the highest-priced item—steamed shark's fin dumpling with superior soup. A branch at 35–45 Johnston Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2866 0663**), is open the same hours with the same menu.

53–59 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2366 0286**. www.fooklammoon-grp.com. Dim sum HK\$40–HK\$90 (US\$5.20–US\$12/£2.60–£5.85). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Jade Garden ★★ CANTONESE An easy place for the uninitiated, this Cantonese chain is tourist-friendly and conveniently situated across from the Star Ferry terminus, with views of the old KCR clock tower and Victoria Harbour. It has an extensive English menu for dim sum (try the deep-fried shrimp rolls with garlic), along with noodle and rice dishes, while desserts are offered from a trolley. Another branch at 1 Hysan Ave., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2577 9332**), serves dim sum Monday through Friday from 11am to 2:30pm, Saturday 11am to 5pm, and Sunday 10am to 5pm.

Star House (4th floor), 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2730 6888**. Dim sum HK\$18–HK\$38 (US\$2.35–US\$4.95/£1.15–£2.45). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–5pm; Sun and holidays 10am–5pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Serenade Chinese Restaurant ★★ **Finds** CANTONESE This is my top choice in Tsim Sha Tsui for moderately priced dim sum with a view. Located up on the first floor of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre next to the Star Ferry (you might have to look for its entrance, but it's worth it), it offers views of Victoria Harbour in a bright and cheerful setting. It has a comprehensive dim sum menu (only desserts are served from trolleys), including “figurine” dim sum, like the steamed shrimp dumpling in the shape of a fish. My favorite is the deep-fried spring rolls with crushed garlic, which is also beautifully presented and comes with a yummy dipping sauce. Bargain hunters take note: On weekdays (excluding public holidays) from 8am to noon and again from 2 to 4:30pm, dim sum prices are substantially cheaper than those below (HK\$13–HK\$20/US\$1.65–US\$2.55/85p–£1.30). Even more impressive is that the hostess told me so, recommending that I wait 10 minutes before being seated so I could dine at the cheaper prices.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre (1st floor), Restaurant Block, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2722 0932**. Dim sum HK\$18–HK\$38 (US\$2.35–US\$4.95/£1.15–£2.45). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8am–4:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Shang Palace ★★ CANTONESE One of Kowloon's most elaborate Chinese restaurants comes complete with red-lacquered walls and Chinese lanterns hanging from

the ceiling. Its dim sum is among the best in town—a bit more expensive, but worth it. Choose your dim sum from the English menu, which changes every month and always includes more than a dozen varieties. If it's available, go with the baked diced chicken and mushroom bun, though the seasonal steamed vegetarian dumpling or deep-fried spring roll is also a perennial favorite.

In the Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2733 8754**. www.shangri-la.com. Dim sum HK\$35–HK\$38 (US\$4.55–US\$4.95/£2.25–£2.45). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; Sun and holidays 10:30am–3pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Spring Moon ★★★ CANTONESE As you'd expect from a restaurant in The Peninsula, this is a very refined and civilized place for the humble dim sum, with an English menu that lists more than a dozen mouthwatering choices that change with the seasons. Dim sum connoisseurs believe the morsels served here are among the best in town, with past examples including steamed pork dumpling with shark's fin, and pan-fried minced beef and onion cakes. Spring Moon is also famous for its more than two dozen varieties of Chinese teas and even employs professionally trained tea masters. The restaurant is decorated in an Art Deco style reminiscent of how the restaurant would have looked in 1928, the year The Peninsula opened, with stained glass, wood paneling, and Frank Lloyd Wright–inspired highlights.

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2315 3160**. <http://hongkong.peninsula.com>. Dim sum HK\$46 (US\$5.95/£3); dim sum fixed-price lunch HK\$368 (US\$48/£24). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun 11am–2:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Super Star Seafood Restaurant (Finds) **CANTONESE/SEAFOOD** This lively and popular seafood restaurant, filled with locals, is one of Tsim Sha Tsui's best places for authentic dim sum in a typical Chinese setting. There's no English menu (and unfortunately, no more trolleys), so you'll just have to look at the pictures on the Chinese menu. See p. 136 for a list of alternate locations.

83–97 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2628 0339**. Dim sum HK\$13–HK\$38 (US\$1.70–US\$4.95/85p–£2.45). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 10:30am–4:30pm; Sat–Sun 9:30am–4:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

T'ang Court ★★ CANTONESE This fancy restaurant offers its own interpretations of classic Cantonese dim sum and even a complete dim sum lunch, perfect for those unfamiliar with dim sum or single diners who desire a variety of dishes.

In the Langham Hotel, 8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui ☎ **852/2375 1133**, ext. 2250. <http://hongkong.langhamhotels.com>. Dim sum HK\$33–HK\$45 (US\$4.30–US\$5.85/£2.15–£2.90); dim sum lunch HK\$248 (US\$32/£16). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 11am–3pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Tsui Hang Village Restaurant CANTONESE Tsui Hang Village, a modern restaurant located in a shopping complex across from the Miramar Hotel, offers inexpensive plates of dim sum, including traditional choices like steamed shrimp dumplings and its own creations like deep-fried shrimp in mashed taro or baked mini oyster tarts. A branch across the harbor is on the second floor of the New World Tower, 16–18 Queen's Rd., Central (☎ **852/2524 2012**; MTR: Central), serving dim sum Monday to Friday 11am to 3pm, Saturday from 11am to 5pm, and Sunday and holidays from 10am to 5pm.

Miramar Plaza, 1 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2376 2882**. www.miramar-group.com. Dim sum HK\$18–HK\$40 (US\$2.35–US\$5.20/£1.15–£2.60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–5pm; Sun and holidays 10am–5pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

168 Yan Toh Heen ★★★ CANTONESE One of Hong Kong's top Cantonese eateries, this elegant restaurant with large windows treats diners to views of the harbor. A daily changing menu lists about two dozen varieties of dim sum, with past offerings including steamed rice flour cannelloni with a choice of filling (prawn, beef, or barbecued or pork) and steamed diced garoupa, water chestnuts, pumpkin, and celery dumplings with shark's fin. It also offers an excellent selection of teas.

In the InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2721 1211**. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. Dim sum HK\$32–HK\$68 (US\$4.15–US\$8.85/£2.30–£4.85). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Yat Tung Heen ★ CANTONESE A good choice if you're in Yau Ma Tei (visiting the Jade Market, perhaps?), this is a large, elegant dining hall, with one of the most beautifully decorated open kitchens I've seen—tea pots and hot pots are displayed on shelves along the wall, making it look more like an art gallery than a kitchen. Still, it turns out more than 30 different kinds of dim sum, from steamed squid in XO chili sauce to baked crispy barbecued pork buns.

In the Eaton Hotel Hong Kong, 380 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei. ☎ **852/2782 1818**. <http://hongkong.eatonhotels.com>. Dim sum HK\$20–HK\$46 (US\$2.60–US\$5.95/£1.30–£3). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–4pm; Sun and holidays 10am–4pm, for dim sum. MTR: Jordan.

CENTRAL

City Hall Maxim's Palace CANTONESE There's no better place in Central for dim sum with a view than this enormously popular restaurant, located on the second floor of City Hall with good harbor views (don't confuse it with the pricier Maxim's Restaurant a floor lower). It's a lively, noisy, humungous place, with dim sum still offered from trolleys, plus an English menu with photos and prices. It doesn't get much easier than this, though you'd be wise to avoid the lunchtime crunch.

Low Block (2nd floor), City Hall, Connaught Rd. Central and Edinburgh Place. ☎ **852/2521 1303**. Dim sum HK\$25–HK\$44 (US\$3.25–US\$5.70/£1.60–£2.85). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–3pm; Sun and holidays 9am–3pm, for dim sum. MTR: Central.

Lin Heung Tea House ★ **Finds** CANTONESE This is a throwback to another era, opened more than 80 years ago and one of the few teahouses still selling dim sum from trolleys. Walk past the ground-floor pastry shop and up the stairs, where you'll find a very simple room that's packed no matter what the time of the day. You're supposed to find your own seat (though a waiter may take pity on you and help you find an empty chair), and most likely you'll share a table. There's no English menu, but the women manning the trolleys are more than willing to show you what's inside their baskets. The house specialty is *dai bao*, or big chicken buns (fluffy dough filled with chicken, dried mushroom, and salted yolk), but only 100 or so are baked each morning and they disappear almost as soon as they arrive from the kitchen. My table mates at one lunch, a couple of elderly gentlemen who meet up here every day, took me under their wing, made recommendations, and flagged down the trolley ladies to make sure I got what I wanted. In all, a vastly more enjoyable experience than I would have had sitting at a table by myself.

160–164 Wellington St., Central. ☎ **852/2544 4556**. Dim sum HK\$12–HK\$16 (US\$1.55–US\$2.10/80p–£1.05). No credit cards. Daily 6am–4:30pm and 5:30–11pm, for dim sum. MTR: Central.

Luk Yu Tea House ★★ CANTONESE Luk Yu, first opened in 1933, is the most famous dim sum teahouse remaining in Hong Kong. In fact, unless you have a time machine, you can't get any closer to old Hong Kong than this wonderful Art Deco-era

Cantonese restaurant, with its ceiling fans, spittoons, individual wooden booths for couples, marble tabletops, wood paneling, and stained-glass windows. It's also one of the best places to try a few Chinese teas, including *bo lai* (a fermented black tea, which is the most common tea in Hong Kong; also spelled bo lay), jasmine, *lung ching* (a green tea), and *sui sin* (narcissus or daffodil). But Luk Yu is most famous for its dim sum, offered from an English menu and including such items as steamed rice with assorted meat wrapped in fresh lotus leaves; Chinese herbs and chicken meat roll; and deep-fried garoupa pie.

24–26 Stanley St., Central. ☎ **852/2523 5464**. Dim sum HK\$28–HK\$60 (US\$3.65–US\$7.80/£1.80–£3.90). MC, V. Daily 7am–3pm, for dim sum. MTR: Central.

The Square CANTONESE This smartly decorated restaurant, next to Hong Kong Station and ifc mall, offers only a half-dozen or so dim sum choices on weekdays but a greatly expanded dim sum menu on weekends and holidays (reservations are a must). The restaurant is renowned for its steamed lobster dumplings and jumbo shrimp and asparagus spring rolls, but even the humble steamed barbecued pork buns here are among the best I've had.

Exchange Square II, Central. ☎ **852/2525 1163**. Dim sum HK\$17–HK\$58 (US\$2.10–US\$7.55/£1.05–£3.75). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–3pm, for dim sum. MTR: Central.

Zen CANTONESE Starkly modern and hip, this Cantonese restaurant offers dim sum daily from an English menu, with more varieties available on the weekend.

The Mall, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ☎ **852/2845 4555**. Dim sum HK\$38–HK\$58 (US\$4.95–US\$7.55/£2.45–£3.75). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3:30pm; Sun 10:30am–3:30pm, for dim sum. MTR: Admiralty.

VICTORIA PEAK

Tien Yi ★ CANTONESE For Hong Kong's best dim sum meal with a view, head to this multi-level contemporary restaurant on the Peak. Although most tables are beside the expansive windows, only a few overlook Victoria Harbour (be sure to reserve one of these), with the rest looking toward the South China Sea. More than two dozen varieties of dim sum are offered for lunch, from the ubiquitous barbecued pork buns and steamed shrimp dumplings to barbecued pork pastry with diced apple and crispy spring roll with Portuguese sauce.

Peak Tower, Level 2, Victoria Peak. ☎ **852/2907 3888**. Dim sum HK\$32–HK\$48 (US\$4.15–US\$6.25/£2.10–£3.10). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–5pm; Sun and holidays 10am–5pm, for dim sum. Peak Tram.

9 AFTERNOON TEA

Colonial days are over, but the tradition of afternoon tea lives on in many of Hong Kong's best hotels. These are two of my favorites for a civilized midafternoon snack.

The Lobby ★★★ TEAS/CAKES The ornate lobby of The Peninsula hotel, built in 1928, is the most famous lobby in Hong Kong. A popular place to see and be seen, the lobby features soaring columns topped with elaborate gilded ceilings and sculpted figures of gods and angels, palm trees, a Tai Ping carpet, and classically styled furniture. As late as the 1950s, the lobby was divided into east and west wings—one for the British and one for everyone else, including, as one pamphlet put it, women “seeking dalliance.” While the rules aren't as strict any more, you'll still want to look presentable (that means

About 1,000 scones are baked daily for The Peninsula's famous afternoon tea. But the most popular drink ordered via room service at this venerable hotel is—you'd never guess it—Diet Coke.

no shorts, and no flip-flops). The fixed-price tea includes finger sandwiches, French pastries, and scones with Devonshire clotted cream and strawberry preserve, and tea cake. Desserts are also available from an a la carte menu. No reservations are accepted, so you may have to wait for a table. A classical string quartet serenades you from an upstairs balcony (except Mon).

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2315 3146**. www.peninsula.com. Fixed-price afternoon tea HK\$258 (US\$34/£17) for 1 person, HK\$388 (US\$50/£25) for 2. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 2–7pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Lobby Lounge ★★ TEAS/CAKES The InterContinental takes the honors of having the most gorgeous lobby view—soaring windows provide an almost surreal panorama of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island. On weekends, you're serenaded by classic musicians. Feast your eyes on the view as you sip tea and indulge in finger sandwiches, scones with Devonshire clotted cream and preserves, and even dim sum (like a mini spring roll and barbecued pork puff). There's also a dessert menu.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2721 1211**. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. Fixed-price afternoon tea HK\$215 (US\$28/£14) for 1 person, HK\$368 (US\$48/£24) for 2. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 2:30–6pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Exploring Hong Kong

Hong Kong is perpetually revving up its sightseeing potential, opening new attractions and revamping older ones, expanding museums or developing new ones, and redesigning organized sightseeing tours to reflect the territory's changing demographics. On the other hand, if all you want to do is hike or lie on the beach, you can do that, too.

If you really want to do Hong Kong justice, plan on staying at least a week. However, since the city is so compact and its transportation is so efficient, you can see quite a bit of the city and its outlying islands in 3 to 5 days, especially if you're on the go from dawn until past dusk. In fact, some of Hong Kong's greatest sites

are seen from public transportation. To get the most out of your time, it makes sense to divide the city into sections when planning your sightseeing. Museums, parks, markets, and other attractions, therefore, are subdivided in this chapter according to area, making it easier to coordinate sightseeing and dining plans.

For specific ideas on how to spend your days in Hong Kong, be sure to read my recommended itineraries in chapter 4. In addition, you might find it useful to read over the suggested walking tours in chapter 8, since they include stops at several of Hong Kong's top attractions. For sightseeing information on the New Territories and outlying islands, see chapter 11.

1 HONG KONG'S TOP ATTRACTIONS

The four activities I would recommend to every visitor to the SAR are: Ride the Star Ferry across the harbor, take the Peak Tram to the top of Victoria Peak, ride one of the rickety old trams on Hong Kong Island, and take a ferry to one of the outlying islands (see chapter 11, "Side Trips from Hong Kong," for information on the islands). Nothing can beat the thrill of these four experiences, or give you a better insight into the essence of Hong Kong and its people. What's more, they're all incredibly inexpensive.

HONG KONG FERRIES

The stars of the Hong Kong stage, of course, are the Star Ferries, green-and-white vessels that have been carrying passengers back and forth between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island since 1898. At only HK\$1.70 (US\$20¢/10p) for the regular, lower-deck fare, it's one of the cheapest—and yet most dramatic—harbor rides in the world. The entire trip from pier to pier takes about 7 minutes in all, with approximately 400 crossings a day. (For tips on using the Star Ferry, see "Getting Around" in chapter 3, beginning on p. 39.)

Since a 5-minute ride isn't nearly enough time to soak up the ambience of Victoria Harbour, another great way to relax and view the skyline is on a ferry to an outlying island. While most of Hong Kong's 260 outlying islands are uninhabited, ferry trips to the most interesting ones are described in chapter 11. These ferries, which depart from the Central Ferry Piers, are by far the cheapest way to see Hong Kong's harbor, with most trips lasting less than an hour. Some even offer an outside deck, where you can watch Hong Kong float past. In fact, part of the fun in visiting an outlying island is the ferry ride there and back.

VICTORIA PEAK

At 392m (1,286 ft.), Victoria Peak is Hong Kong Island’s tallest hill, which naturally makes it the best place for spectacular views of the city and surrounding areas. Be sure to bring your camera. If possible, go on a crystal-clear day, since fog—and smog—can greatly curtail vistas. Victoria Peak has always been one of Hong Kong’s most exclusive



The Best Peek of the Peak

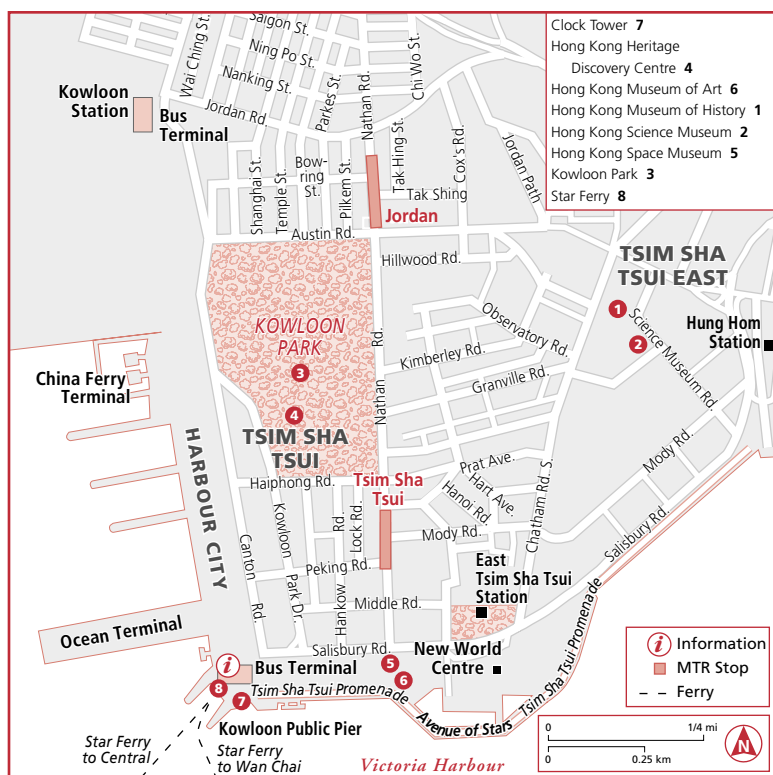
For the best view when riding the Peak Tram up to Victoria Peak, try to get a seat at the front, on the right side of the tram. From 1908 to 1949, the first two seats at the front were reserved—for the governor of Hong Kong.

places to live, since, in addition to the views, the Peak is typically cooler than the sweltering city below. More than 120 years ago, the rich reached the Peak after a 3-hour trip in sedan chairs, transported to the top by coolies. Then, in 1888, the **Peak Tram** began operations, cutting the journey from a grueling 3 hours to a mere 8 minutes. In 1989, the older, cast-iron green funicular cars with mahogany seats were replaced by new, modern cars imported from Switzerland, which increased the passenger load from 72 to 120 people.

The easiest way to reach the Peak Tram Station, located on Garden Road, is to take the no. 15C open-top shuttle bus that operates between the tram terminal and the Star Ferry in Central. Shuttle buses cost HK\$4 (US\$0.25) and run every 15 to 20 minutes between 10am and 11:45pm. Otherwise, it’s about a 10-minute walk from Central’s MTR Station to the tram terminus on Garden Road. Alternatively, you can take bus no. 15 from the Star Ferry terminal directly to the top of Victoria Peak for HK\$9.20 (US\$1.20/60p), but then you’d miss the tram unless you opt to take it down. Finally, you can eschew transportation altogether and walk. I have to admit I’ve never walked up the Peak, but the steep walk down, on shaded Old Peak Road and then Albany Road, is pleasant and brings you to the Zoological & Botanical Gardens in about 30 to 45 minutes; from there it’s another 15 minutes to the MTR Central station.

As for the trams, they depart every 10 to 15 minutes between 7am and midnight. The tram climbs almost vertically for 8 minutes before reaching the top of the Peak—don’t worry, there’s never been an accident in its entire 100-odd years of operation. If you’re interested in the Peak Tram’s history, stop by the Peak Tram Historical Gallery in the tram terminus on Garden Road before boarding the tram (admission is free). One-way tickets for the Peak Tram cost HK\$22 (US\$2.85/£1.45) for adults and HK\$8 (US\$1.05/50p) for seniors and children. Round-trip tickets cost HK\$33 (US\$4.30/£2.15) and HK\$15 (US\$1.95/£1), respectively, but there are also combination tickets for the tram and Peak attractions (see below). Or, you can use an Octopus card (p. 40).

Upon reaching the Peak, you’ll find yourself at the very modern **Peak Tower** (☎ 852/2849 0668; www.thepeak.com.hk), designed by British architect Terry Farrell, which looks like a Chinese cooking wok. Head straight for the rooftop **Sky Terrace** viewing deck, where you’ll be privileged to view one of the world’s most breathtaking 360-degree vistas, with sweeping panoramas of Hong Kong Island, the South China Sea, the skyscrapers of Central, boats plying Victoria Harbour, the ever-expanding construction on



Kowloon peninsula, and the many hills of the New Territories undulating in the background. It's open Monday to Friday 10am to 11pm and Saturday, Sunday and holidays 8am to 11pm. Admission is HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) for adults and HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) for seniors and children. Slightly more economical are combination tram and Sky Terrace tickets, with one-way journeys costing HK\$37 (US\$4.80/£2.40) for adults and HK\$16 (US\$2.10/£1.05) for seniors and children, and round-trip journeys costing HK\$48 (US\$6.25/£3.10) and HK\$23 (US\$3/£1.50), respectively.

Peak Tower is also home to a handful of Chinese, Western, and Japanese restaurants, as well as some fast-food outlets and a shopping arcade designed to evoke traditional Hong Kong street scenes. Also on the peak is **Madame Tussauds Hong Kong**, Level 3, Peak Tower, 128 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 6966; www.madame-tussauds.com.hk), with more than 100 life-size wax figures of national heroes, politicians, historical figures, Olympic medalists, movie stars, and musicians. In addition to the usual figures—Marilyn Monroe, the Beatles, Winston Churchill, victims in a medieval torture chamber—there are also local heroes like Jackie Chan, Michelle Yeoh, and Bruce Lee. It's open daily from 10am to 10pm and costs HK\$120 (US\$16/£7.80) for adults and HK\$70 (US\$9.10/£4.55) for seniors and children. Combination tickets for the Peak

174 Tram, Sky Terrace, and Madame Tussauds are also available. You'll probably spend about 30 minutes here. Kids of all ages will also want to make a stop at the **EA Experience**, an interactive arcade and store with virtual sporting games and other video games you can try out free of charge.

Across the street from Peak Tower is the **Peak Galleria**, a three-story complex with more shops, restaurants, an outdoor children's playground, and a viewing terrace.

But the best thing to do atop Victoria Peak is to take a walk. One of my favorite walks in all of Hong Kong is the hour-long **circular hike** ★★ on Lugard and Harlech roads, both located just a stone's throw from the Peak Tram terminus (turn right out of the terminus; both streets converge at the Peak Lookout restaurant). Mainly a footpath overhanging with banyan trees and passing lush vegetation, it snakes along the side of the cliff, offering great views of the Central District below, the harbor, Kowloon, and then Aberdeen and the outlying islands on the other side. Along the path are signboards identifying flora and fauna. You will also pass several of Victoria Peak's mansions, though you'll share the path with joggers, tourists, and locals out for a leisurely stroll. At night, the lighted path offers one of the world's most romantic views (I don't recommend walking it alone, however). Don't miss it.

RIDING A TRAM

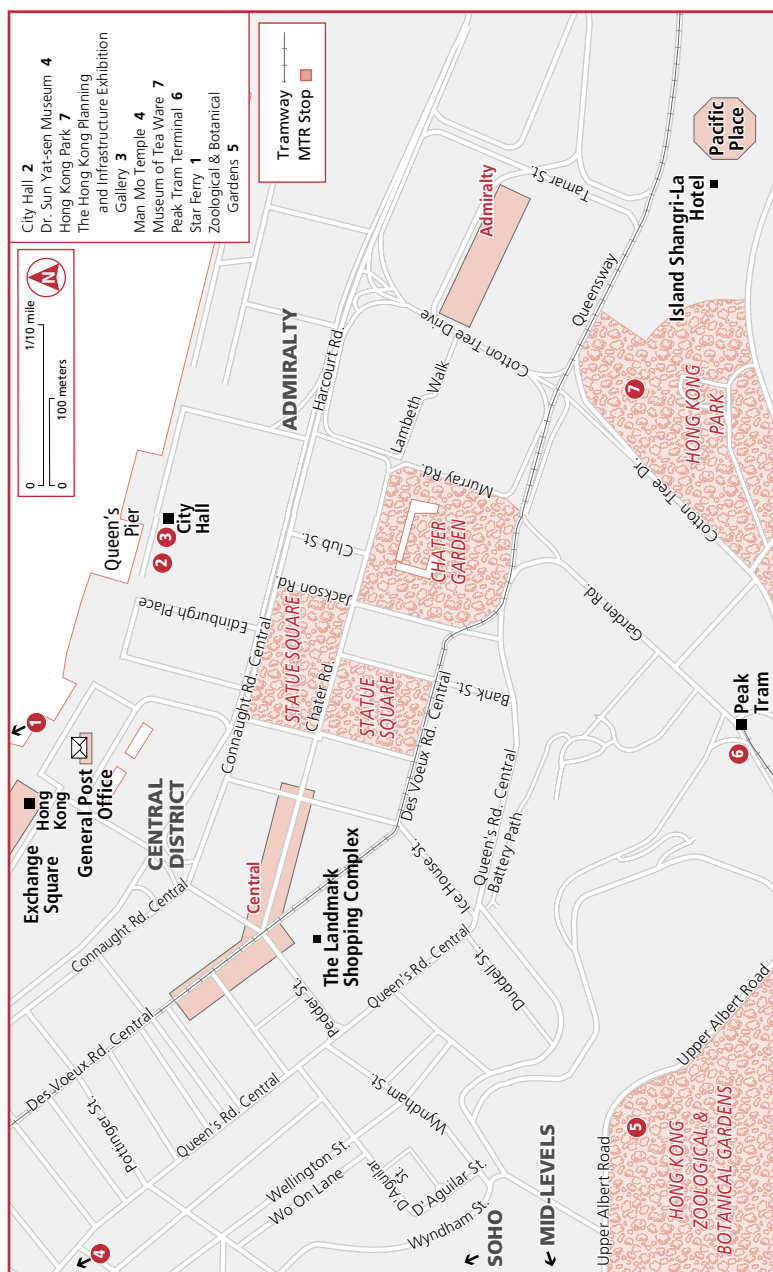
Just as the Star Ferry is the best way to see the harbor, the tram is the most colorful and cheapest way to see the northern end of Hong Kong Island, including the Central District, Western District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay. In fact, the tram is so much a part of Hong Kong life that it was chosen for Hong Kong's exhibit at the Vancouver 1986 Expo. Dating from 1904, the tramline follows what used to be the waterfront (before the days of land reclamation). Old, narrow, double-decker affairs, the trams cut through the heart of the city, from Kennedy Town in the west to Shau Kei Wan in the east. With only one detour—off to Happy Valley—it's impossible to get lost.

In any case, if you're in Central, you can board the tram on Des Voeux Road Central. Climb to the upper deck and try to get a seat in the front row. (For more information on the fare and how to ride the tram, see "Getting Around" in chapter 3, beginning on p. 39.) I especially like to ride the tram at night, when neon signs blaze overhead and the streets buzz with activity.

2 MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

If you plan to visit all seven of Hong Kong's main museums—the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong Space Museum (but not the Space Theatre), Hong Kong Science Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum, and Hong Kong Heritage Museum (located in Sha Tin in the New Territories; p. 257)—you can save money by purchasing the Museum Pass for HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95), valid for a week and available at any of the participating museums or Hong Kong Tourism Board Visitor Information and Services Centres. Note, however, that museum admissions are free on Wednesdays.

Keep in mind, too, that municipal museums are closed December 25 and 26, January 1, and the first 3 days of the Chinese New Year. Private museums are usually also closed on bank holidays.



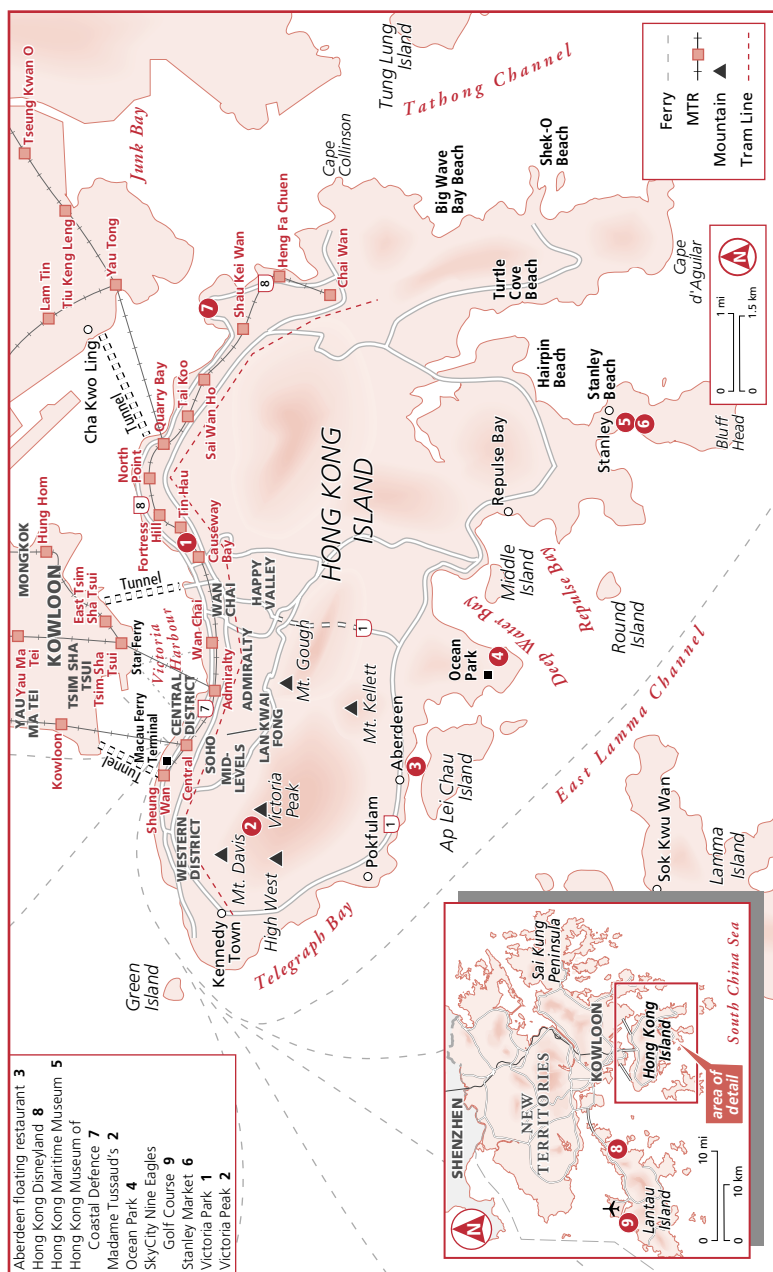
Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre This museum highlighting historic preservation efforts throughout Hong Kong is itself located in an historic renovated building, former barracks in Hong Kong Park built in 1910 and used to accommodate British troops until 1967. Models, photographs, and signboards outline the history of both Western and Chinese architectural sites that have been renovated and put to new use, like Tsang Tai Uk, a walled village in the New Territories that is now a museum (p. 257). Because so many of Hong Kong's historic buildings are in the New Territories, this is a good stop before venturing outside the city. Unfortunately, displays consist mostly of text and are a bit dry, making the museum of interest to architecture and history buffs. If you have a laptop, you can also get Wi-Fi access here for free.

Kowloon Park, Haiphong and Nathan rds., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2208 4400**. www.amo.gov.hk/en/discovery_center.php. Free admission. Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–7pm; Sun and holidays 10am–7pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (exit A1).

Hong Kong Museum of Art ★★★★★ **Finds** Because of its convenient location on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, just a 2-minute walk from the Star Ferry terminus, and its manageable size, this museum is the most worthwhile if your time is limited. I love popping in to see the special exhibits and the museum's vast collection of Chinese antiquities and fine art—shown on a rotating basis—that make this one of my top picks in Hong Kong. Feast your eyes on ceramics, bronzes, jade, cloisonné, lacquerware, bamboo carvings, and textiles, as well as paintings, wall hangings, scrolls, and calligraphy dating from the 16th century to the present. The works are arranged in five permanent galleries on three floors of exhibit space, plus two galleries devoted to changing exhibits. The Historical Pictures Gallery is especially insightful, with works in oils, watercolors, pencil drawings, and prints that provide a visual account of life in Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangzhou (Canton) in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Another gallery displays contemporary Hong Kong works by local artists. You'll want to spend at least an hour here, though art aficionados can devote more time by renting audio guides for HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p). A bonus is the beautiful backdrop of Victoria Harbour.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Complex, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2721 0116**. <http://hk.art.museum>. Admission HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults; HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) children, students, and seniors. Free admission Wed. Fri–Wed 10am–6pm (to 8pm Sat). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (exit E).

Hong Kong Museum of History ★★★★★ **Kids** If you visit only one museum in Hong Kong and you're prepared to spend at least 2 hours, this should be it. Make it one of your first priorities, so you'll have a better understanding of what you see during the rest of your trip. The permanent exhibit the Hong Kong Story is an ambitious attempt to chronicle the city's long and fascinating history, starting with the formation of its natural history and its beginnings as a Neolithic settlement and continuing through its development as a fishing village, subsequent transformation into a modern metropolis, and 1997 handover to China. Through displays that include dioramas, replicas of fishing boats, models, reconstructed traditional housing, furniture, clothing, and items from daily life, the museum introduces Hong Kong's ethnic groups and their traditional means of livelihood, customs, and beliefs. These include fishermen who lived their entire lives on boats, the Five Great Clans who settled in what is now the New Territories and built walled communities, the Hoklo (who worked the territories' salt fields), and the Hakka, primarily rice farmers.



Fun Facts Did You Know?

The 1,355m (4,446-ft.) Tsing Ma Bridge, the world's second-longest road/rail suspension bridge, which connects the new international airport with Kowloon, is 95m (312 ft.) longer than San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and can withstand typhoon wind speeds up to 300km (186 miles) per hour.

You can peer inside a fishing junk, see what Kowloon Walled City looked like before it became a park, see the backstage of a Chinese opera, read about the arrival of European traders and the Opium Wars, study a map showing land reclamation since the 1840s, see how Hong Kong changed under Japanese occupation during World War II, and view a model of a family's flat in a public housing estate. Ten small movie theaters are spread throughout the museum depicting everything from Hong Kong's beginnings and the Opium Wars to its movie industry, though showings in English are limited. One of my favorite parts of the museum is a re-created street of old Hong Kong, complete with a pawnshop, teahouse, and a Chinese herbal-medicine shop actually located in Central until 1980 and reconstructed here. Also on display are 19th- and early-20th-century photographs, poignantly showing how much Hong Kong has changed through the decades. Audio guides, providing commentaries on more than 100 exhibits, are available for HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p).

100 Chatham Rd. S., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2724 9042**. <http://hk.history.museum>. Admission HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults, HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) children and seniors. Free admission Wed. Mon and Wed–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun and holidays 10am–7pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (a 20-min. walk from exit B2). Bus: 5 or 5C from the Star Ferry bus terminus.

Hong Kong Science Museum ★★  The mysteries of science and technology come to life here, with plenty of hands-on exhibits sure to appeal to children and adults alike. More than 500 exhibits cover four floors, with sections devoted to the life sciences; light, sound, and motion; meteorology and geography; electricity and magnetism; computers and robotics; construction; transportation and communication; occupational safety and health; energy efficiency; and food science and home technology. Children ages 3 to 7 can have free reign of an area designed especially for them. Visitors can play with different optical illusions, enter a rotating room to learn physics in a noninertial frame, “freeze” their shadows on a wall, pick up remote voices with a large parabolic disc, play with bubbles, navigate a flight over Hong Kong Island or Kowloon at night, watch the mechanisms of an eight-cylinder gasoline engine, and learn about herbs used in traditional Chinese medicine. There are exhibits designed to test a visitor's fitness, such as lung capacity, endurance, and blood pressure. The computer section has more than 30 personal computers for guests to learn about computer software, including word processing for children and graphics production (to access the Internet, however, you'll have to go to the museum's Resource Center, where two computers are available for you to use for free until 6pm on weekdays and 7pm on weekends). This is a great place to bring kids on a rainy or humid day, when you'll want spend about 3 hours here. However, since this museum isn't unique to Hong Kong, I think childless adults can better spend their time elsewhere.

2 Science Museum Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ **852/2732 3232**. <http://hk.science.museum>. Admission HK\$25 (US\$3.25/£1.65) adults; HK\$13 (US\$1.60/80p) children, students, and seniors. Free admission Wed.

Mon–Wed and Fri 1–9pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 10am–9pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (a 15-min. walk from exit B2). Bus: 5 or 5C from the Star Ferry bus terminus.

Hong Kong Space Museum  Located in front of The Peninsula hotel on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, the Space Museum is easy to spot with its white-domed planetarium. It's divided into two parts: the Exhibition Halls with their Hall of Space Science and the Hall of Astronomy, and the Stanley Ho Space Theatre. The Hall of Space Science explores the human journey into space, with exhibits on ancient astronomical history, science fiction, early rockets, manned space flights, and future space programs. Several interactive rides and exhibits (most with weight and height restrictions) include a ride on a virtual paraglider, a harness that holds occupants aloft with the same approximate gravity they'd experience walking on the moon, and a multi-axis chair developed for astronaut training that gives the sensation of tumbling through space. The Hall of Astronomy presents information on the solar system, solar science, the stars, and the universe. However, I find the museum, which opened in 1980, rather dated. Come only if you have kids and extra time on your hands, in which case you'll spend about an hour here.

The Stanley Ho Space Theatre presents mostly OMNIMAX screenings with a projection system that produces an almost 360-degree panorama. Forty-minute to hour-long shows are presented several times daily. Only a few are narrated in English, but for the others, free headsets are available with simultaneous English translations. You can buy Space Theatre tickets in advance at the museum or at any URBITX outlet. In addition, telephone reservations are accepted at ☎ **852/2734 9009** until 1 hour before the show commences.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Complex, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2721 0226**. <http://hk.space.museum>. Admission to Exhibition Halls HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults; HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) children, students, and seniors. Free admission on Wed. Space Theatre HK\$24–HK\$32 (US\$3.10–US\$4.15/£1.55–£2.10) adults; HK\$12–HK\$16 (US\$1.55–US\$2.10/80p–£1.05) children, students, and seniors. Mon and Wed–Fri 1–9pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 10am–9pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (exit E).

ON HONG KONG ISLAND

Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum Born in 1866 in Guangdong Province and receiving his secondary and university education in Hong Kong, Dr. Sun Yat-sen is best known for his efforts to overthrow the corrupt Qing Dynasty, thereby helping to end more than 2,000 years of the ruling monarchy. Today he is still much revered as a leader of the Chinese revolution, and this museum, housed in a handsome Edwardian Classical building constructed in 1914 as a private residence, provides detailed information on his life. An 11-minute film serves as a good introduction to the Chinese revolutionary, and I also like

Fun Facts Did You Know?

Hong Kong boasts several of the world's longest escalators. The world's two longest covered outdoor escalator systems are the four-section, 221m (725-ft.) system at Ocean Park and the 780m (2,559-ft.) Central–Mid-Levels Escalator connecting Central to the Mid-Levels with a capacity of handling 210,600 passengers a day. The Hongkong Bank headquarters in Central boasts the two longest freely supported (no supporting walls along their lengths) escalators in the world.

Life on the Water in Aberdeen

Situated on the south side of Hong Kong Island, Aberdeen is nestled around a naturally protected harbor. Famous for its colorful floating seafood restaurant and boat people who live on junks in Aberdeen Harbour, the town has undergone massive changes over the past couple decades. Originally a typhoon shelter and land base for seafarers, it used to be a charming fishing village and boat-building port, supported primarily by several thousand junks and boat people. Many of the boat people, however, have since been moved to massive housing projects, and the waterfront surrounding Aberdeen is now crowded with high-rises. At anchor are almost as many yachts as fishing boats and junks.

Still, Aberdeen continues to be popular with the tourist crowd because of its remaining boat population and floating restaurant. Women operating sampans will vie for your dollars to tour you around the harbor, which is definitely worth the price since it's about the only thing to do here and is the best way to see the junks. Although the boat population is shrinking, you'll pass huge boats that house extended families; you'll see men repairing fishing nets, women hanging out their laundry, dogs barking, children playing, and families eating. I find the ride rather voyeuristic but fascinating just the same. There was a time when a boat person could be born, live, marry, and die onboard, hardly ever setting foot on shore. Nowadays, many young people move ashore to seek more stable employment.

A 20-minute tour from a licensed operator will cost approximately HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£3.90) per person and is offered daily between 9am and 5:30pm from the Aberdeen Centre waterfront promenade. You will also encounter old women with wide-brimmed straw hats who will try to persuade you to board their sampan, with the price open to bargaining and depending on the numbers of tourists around at the time. On one particularly slow day, for example, I was offered, and took, a sampan tour for HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.50), and I was the only one in the boat.

Other Aberdeen attractions include the largest floating restaurant in the world—**Jumbo Kingdom**, which offers both Cantonese restaurants and a rooftop seafood restaurant (p. 164), with free shuttle service from the Aberdeen Centre promenade—and a temple built in 1851. The temple is dedicated to Tin Hau, protectress of fishing folk, and is located at the junction of Aberdeen Main and Aberdeen Reservoir roads. A short taxi ride away is the huge Ocean Park amusement park with its thrill rides and aquarium (p. 189).

To get to Aberdeen, take bus no. 7 from the Central Ferry Piers; bus no. 70 from the Exchange Square Bus Terminal in the Central District; bus no. 72 or 77 from Causeway Bay; or bus no. 973 from Tsim Sha Tsui.

the many photographs of Dr. Sun Yat-sen with his family and revolutionary colleagues, but most interesting is the museum's portrayal of Hong Kong during Dr. Sun Yat-sen's years here. You'll spend about 30 minutes here, though you'll learn decidedly more if you opt for the 90-minute spiel offered by the audio guide, which costs HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) extra.

7 Castle Rd., Mid-Levels, Central. ☎ **852/2367 6373**. <http://hk.drsunyatzen.museum>. HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults; HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) children, students, and seniors. Free admission on Wed. Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun and holidays 10am–7pm. Bus: 3B, 12M, or 103 to Caine Rd. MTR: Central; then take the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator to Caine Rd.

Hong Kong Maritime Museum Shoppers in need of a break (or their companions in need of a break from fellow shoppers) might find respite in this museum near Stanley Market. It's located in the historic 1846 Murray House, which once stood in Central but was dismantled in the early 1980s and reassembled here on the Stanley waterfront. The museum is divided into two galleries: The Ancient Gallery follows the development of Chinese vessels, from war boats and trading ships to Chinese junks, while the Modern Gallery concentrates on the evolution of Hong Kong's shipping industry and how that industry has changed with the arrival of bulk carriers, tankers, and container ships. Visitors can steer a container ship in a bridge simulator, see memorabilia from the golden age of ocean steamers, and listen via headphones to a former waiter describe his life working on passenger cargo lines. I was particularly captivated by the 50-some boat models on display, all wonderfully crafted down to the minutest details. Depending on your interest, you'll spend 45 to 60 minutes here.

Murray House, Stanley. ☎ **852/2813 2322**. www.hkmaritimemuseum.org. Admission HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) adults; HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) students, seniors, and children. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Bus: 6, 6A, 6X, 260, or 973.

Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence ★ Located in Lei Yue Mun Fort, one of Hong Kong's oldest and best-preserved British coastal fortresses dating from the Victorian period, this museum explores 600 years of the territory's coastal defense. Exhibits begin with the Ming and Qing dynasties, when coastal defenses guarded southern China against the invasion of Japanese pirates and Western imperialists, and continue through the Opium Wars, Hong Kong's role as a major base for the British navy, the Japanese 1941 invasion, and the handover to the People's Liberation Army. On display are naval costumes, models of war junks, weaponry, photographs, and memorabilia. The fort itself, built by the British in 1887 to defend the eastern approaches to the harbor against possible attacks by Russia or France, retains its batteries, underground magazines, protective ditch, caponiers, and torpedo station. With its strategic location on the coast, it provides a panoramic view of the eastern approach to Victoria Harbour. You'll probably spend at least 1½ hours here.

175 Tung Hei Rd., Shau Kei Wan. ☎ **852/2569 1500**. www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Coastal. Admission HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults; HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) students, seniors, and children. Free admission Wed. Fri–Wed 10am–5pm. MTR: Shau Kei Wan (exit B2, then a 15-min. walk).

Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences ★ **Find** This museum charts the historical development of medical science in Hong Kong. It's located in the century-old, Edwardian-style former Pathological Institute, which was founded to combat the colony's most horrific outbreak of bubonic plague, in 1894. Back then, British patients were treated upstairs, while the Chinese were relegated to the basement rooms. Several rooms remain almost exactly as they were, including an autopsy room and a laboratory filled

182 with old equipment, while others serve as exhibition rooms devoted to such areas as the development of dentistry and radiology (note the X-ray of the bound foot) and the appalling living conditions in Tai Ping Shan, where the 1894 outbreak occurred (the cause of the plague was identified in Hong Kong shortly thereafter). But what makes the museum particularly fascinating is its unique comparison of traditional Chinese and Western medicine, and its funding of research into Chinese medicine. Included is a display on traditional Chinese herbs. You can easily spend 30 minutes here.

2 Caine Lane, Mid-Levels. ☎ **852/2549 5123**. www.hkmm.org.hk. Admission HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults; HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) children, students, and seniors. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Bus: 3B, 12M, or 103 to Caine Rd., or Minibus 8 or 22 to Ladder St. (pronounced Lau Tai Kai in Chinese).

The Hong Kong Planning and Infrastructure Exhibition Gallery ★ (Finds) Its name is dry and unpromising, but anyone who has witnessed the SAR's changes over the past few decades will find this museum fascinating—Hong Kong is a never-ending work in progress and this museum gives visitors a firsthand look at the government plans for Hong Kong. Over the next few decades, the city will continue to develop its tourism, transportation, and urban infrastructure at what seems like breakneck speed. I am consistently amazed at how quickly buildings and developments get approval here—a highway through wetlands has been years in litigation in my hometown. The purpose of this museum is to help visitors visualize those changes through interactive displays, sophisticated computer simulation, and high-tech models that project Hong Kong's new look 10, 20, and even 30 years from now. Future and current projects include West Kowloon, which will become one of the city's foremost cultural and entertainment centers when completed around 2012; a pedestrian promenade on Hong Kong Island stretching along the waterfront from Central to Causeway Bay; and a new cruise ship terminal where Kai Tak Airport once stood. Fun, interactive exhibits include a 3-D flight over Sha Tin in the New Territories, virtual "walks" of the Lung Yeuk Tau and Ping Shan Heritage Trails, numerous touch-screen displays, and a photo booth that takes your picture with a selected Hong Kong backdrop (like the giant Buddha on Lantau Island) and then lets you e-mail it to friends for free. The museum is located on the north side of City Hall and can be toured in about 30 minutes.

3 Edinburgh Place, Central. ☎ **852/3101 1242**. www.infrastructuregallery.gov.hk. Free admission. Wed–Mon 10am–6pm. MTR: Central.

Museum of Tea Ware ★★ (Finds) Flagstaff House, located in Hong Kong Park, is the oldest colonial building in Hong Kong—the best place to go if you want to see typical Hong Kong architecture of 160 years ago. The house was completed in 1846 in Greek Revival style for the commander of the British forces. Now a museum devoted to the subject of tea culture in China, its collection includes about 600 pieces of tea ware ranging from earthenware to porcelain, primarily of Chinese origin, dating from the 7th century to the present day. However, only 150 or so pieces are on display at any one time, with exhibitions changed two or three times a year. I always find them fascinating, especially the exhibits describing the various kinds of tea and tea-making methods favored by the major dynasties. Don't miss the museum shop, which sells beautifully crafted teapots as well as teas. You can see everything here in about 30 minutes.

Flagstaff House, Hong Kong Park, 10 Cotton Tree Dr., Central. ☎ **852/2869 0690**. www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkma. Free admission. Wed–Mon 10am–5pm. MTR: Admiralty (exit C1); then follow the signs through Pacific Place to Island Shangri-La Hotel/Hong Kong Park via 2 escalators.

3 TEMPLES

For information on Po Lin Monastery and its adjacent Giant Tian Tan Buddha, see the section on Lantau Island in “The Outlying Islands,” chapter 11, p. 262.

Chi Lin Buddhist Nunnery Just one subway stop away from Wong Tai Sin (see below) is the Chi Lin Buddhist Nunnery, founded in the 1930s to provide religious, cultural, educational, and elderly care services to the Hong Kong community. Reconstructed in the 1990s in the style of Tang dynasty monastic architecture (A.D. 618–907), the nunnery is a successful union of ancient building techniques and modern technology. Imported yellow cedar from Canada was carved in China by skilled artisans and craftsmen and then reconstructed here like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle; no nails were used, but rather a system of wooden doweling and brackets. The main hall was modeled after the Foguang Monastery in Shanxi Province, while the double-eaved Hall of Celestial Kings is designed after the 11th-century Phoenix Hall outside Kyoto, Japan. On nunnery grounds are a lotus pond, sculpted bushes and bonsai, and statues of the Goddess of Mercy, God of Medicine, and others. A better garden, however, the Nan Lian Garden, awaits across the street, connected to the nunnery by a bridge and styled in imitation of a famous classical garden of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907), with ponds, a waterfall, a hexagonal-shaped pavilion, and a variety of trees and shrubbery. Otherwise, there isn’t much to see; this stopover will appeal mostly to architects, East Asian scholars, and gardeners.

Chi Lin Rd., Diamond Hill. ☎ **852/2354 1604**. Free admission. Daily 9am–4:30pm. MTR: Diamond Hill (exit C2) and then a 15-min. walk.

Man Mo Temple ★ Hong Kong Island’s oldest and most important temple (Taoist) was built in the 1840s as one of the new colony’s first traditional-style temples. It’s named after its two principal deities: Man, the god of literature, who is dressed in red and holds a calligraphy brush; and Mo, the god of war, wearing a green robe and holding a sword. Ironically, Mo finds patronage in both the police force (shrines in his honor can be found in all Hong Kong police stations today) and the infamous triad secret societies. Two ornate sedan chairs, carved in 1862, were once used during festivals to carry the statues of the gods around the neighborhood. But what makes this evocative temple particularly memorable are the giant incense coils hanging from the ceiling, imparting a fragrant, smoky haze—these are purchased by patrons seeking fulfillment of their wishes, such as good health or a successful business deal, and may burn as long as 3 weeks. No flash photography is allowed inside the temple.

Hollywood Rd. and Ladder St., Western District. ☎ **852/2803 2916**. Free admission. Daily 8am–6pm. Bus: 26 from Des Voeux Rd. Central (in front of the HSBC headquarters) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., across from the temple. Or take the Central—Mid-Levels Escalator to Hollywood Rd. and turn right.

Wong Tai Sin ★★ Located six subway stops northeast of Yau Ma Tei in the far north end of Kowloon, Wong Tai Sin is Hong Kong’s most popular Taoist temple and attracts worshippers of all three traditional Chinese religions: Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Although the temple itself is less than 100 years old, it adheres to traditional Chinese architectural principles with its red pillars, two-tiered golden roof, blue friezes, yellow latticework, and multicolored carvings. Its construction also displays the six elements dictated by geomancy, namely bronze (the pavilion), metal (the archives hall), wood, water (a fountain), fire (Yue Heung Shrine, dedicated to the Buddha of Lighting

Religion, Myth & Folklore

Most Hong Kong Chinese worship both Buddhist and Taoist deities, something they do not find at all incongruous. They also worship their family ancestors. Ancestral altars are commonplace in homes, and certain days are set aside for visiting ancestral graves. Many temples have large tablet halls, where Hong Kong families can worship the memorialized photographs of their dead. About 360 temples are scattered throughout Hong Kong; some embody a mixture of both Buddhist and Taoist principles.

While Buddhism is concerned with the afterlife, **Taoism** is a folk faith whose devotees believe in luck and in currying its favor. Fortune-tellers, therefore, are usually found only at Taoist temples. Tao, essentially, is the way of the universe, the spirit of all things, and cannot be perceived. However, Taoist gods must be worshipped and Taoist spirits appeased. Most popular in Hong Kong is Tin Hau, goddess of the sea and protectress of fishermen. Hong Kong has at least 24 temples that were erected in her honor. But each profession or trade has its own god—ironically, policemen and gangsters have the same one.

If you look for them, you'll find shrines dedicated to the earth god, Tou Ti, at the entrance to almost every store or restaurant in Hong Kong. They're usually below knee level, so that everyone pays homage upon entering and departing. Restaurants also have shrines dedicated to the kitchen god, Kwan Kung, to protect workers from knives and other sharp objects.

Although not a religion as such, another guiding principle in Chinese thought is **Confucianism**. Confucius, who lived in the 5th century B.C., devised a strict set of rules designed to create the perfect human being. Kindness, selflessness, obedience, and courtesy were preached, with carefully prescribed rules of how people should interact with one another. Since the masses were largely illiterate, Confucius communicated by means of easy-to-remember proverbs.

Despite the fact that many Hong Kong Chinese are both Buddhist and Taoist, they are not a particularly religious people in the Western sense of the word. There is no special day for worship, so devotees simply visit a temple whenever they want to pay their respects or feel the need for spiritual guidance. Otherwise,

Lamp), and earth (an earthen wall). The very popular temple attracts those seeking information about their fortunes—from advice about business or horse racing to determining which day is most auspicious for a wedding. Most worshippers make use of a bamboo container holding numbered sticks. After lighting a joss stick and kneeling before the main altar, the worshipper gently shakes the container until one of the sticks falls out. The number corresponds to a certain fortune, which is then interpreted by one of the temple's many soothsayers.

You can wander around the temple grounds, and visit the halls dedicated to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy and to Confucius; the Good Wish Garden with ponds, an artificial waterfall, a replica of the famous Nine Dragons relief (the original is in Beijing's Imperial Palace), and circular, square, octagonal, and fan-shaped pavilions; and a clinic with both Western medical services and traditional Chinese herbal treatments. Sik Sik

religion in Hong Kong plays a subtle role and is evident more in philosophy and action than in pious ceremony. To the Chinese, religion is a way of life and thus affects everyday living.

Almost every home has a small shrine, where lighted joss sticks are thought to bring good luck. In New Year celebrations, door gods are placed on the front door for good luck, and all lights are switched on to discourage monster spirits. On New Year's Day, homes are not swept for fear of whisking away good luck. And during a full moon or major festival, housewives will often set fire to paper creations of homes, cars, or fake money to bring good luck.

But no one can ever have too much good luck; superstitions abound in Hong Kong. Certain numbers, for example, have positive or negative connotations. The most auspicious number is 8, because its pronunciation (*baht*) is similar to the word for wealth (*faht*). Likewise, the most inauspicious number is 4, since it sounds almost exactly like the Cantonese word for death. Thirteen is also an unlucky number, so many Hong Kong buildings simply skip it in their floor-numbering scheme. License plates with lucky numbers have sold for high prices in Hong Kong. In 2007, a man paid HK\$7.1 million (US\$920,000) for a license plate with the number 12, which sounds like "certainly easy" in Cantonese. The most expensive so far was in 1994 for a license plate with number 9 (which sounds like "everlasting" in Cantonese)—HK\$13 million (US\$1.7 million). Certain foods, too, are considered auspicious. For New Year's, noodles are considered good for longevity, while fish is eaten for success. A half-eaten fish is never turned over to get to the other side, however, in the belief that doing so means a fishing boat will capsize (you're supposed to lift the spine or remove it to get to the other side). Red is considered a lucky color, making it popular for weddings and New Year celebrations. Sharp objects, such as scissors, should not be used during New Year's, because they will cut away good luck.

To be on the safe side, Hong Kong Chinese will also visit fortune-tellers. Some read palms, while others study facial features, consult astrological birth charts, or let a little bird select a fortune card from a deck.

Yuen, the religious charity organization that oversees Wong Tai Sin, also runs homes for the elderly. Wong Tai Sin takes its name, in fact, from a legendary shepherd who learned the art of healing and pledged his life to help others. A visit to this temple, surrounded by vast, government housing estates, provides insight into Chinese religious practices of today and is well worth a stop despite its out-of-the-way location. **Note:** Wong Tai Sin is undergoing expansion to enlarge the main altar and add a new hall, with an expected completion in early 2010; until then, the main altar is closed, but another hall is open for worship.

2 Chuk Yuen, Wong Tai Sin Estate. © 852/2327 8141. www.siksikyuen.org.hk. Free admission to temple, though donations of about HK\$1 (US15¢/5p) are expected at the temple's entrance, with an additional HK\$2 (US25¢/15p) donation at the Good Wish Garden. Temple daily 7am–5:30pm; garden daily 9am–4:30pm. MTR: Wong Tai Sin (exit B2) and then a 3-min. walk (follow the signs).

Chinese Gods

The Chinese world has many gods, each with different functions and abilities: For example, the kitchen god reigns in the household, various occupations have their own patron gods, and gods protect worshippers through certain stages of their lives; there is an earth god, a goddess of pregnant women, 60 gods representing each year of the 60-year Chinese calendar, a god of riches popular with shopkeepers, and a scholar god whose favor is curried by students—to highlight a few.

Most popular in Hong Kong is **Tin Hau**, goddess of the sea and protector of seafarers (in Macau she is known as **A-Ma**). As the patron goddess of fisher folk, Tin Hau is honored by fishing communities throughout Hong Kong with more than two dozen Tin Hau temples, including those at Yau Ma Tei, Causeway Bay, Stanley, and Cheung Chau. According to popular lore, Tin Hau is the deification of a real girl who lived in Fujian Province around A.D. 900 or 1000 and who saved a group of fishermen during a storm. Her birthday is celebrated annually with gaily decorated junks and lion dances. Another popular goddess is **Kuan Yin** (called Kun lam in Macau), the goddess of mercy, capable of delivering people from suffering or misery.

Several temples in Hong Kong are devoted to **Man** (the god of literature and the patron of civil servants) and **Mo** (the god of war). Mo was a great warrior of the Han dynasty, deified not only for his integrity but also his ability to protect from the misfortunes of war. Ironically, for this reason Mo is worshipped not only by soldiers and the Hong Kong police force but also by gang members of the underworld. Hong Kong's most famous Man Mo Temple is in the Western District on Hollywood Road (p. 183).

One of the most popular gods in Hong Kong is **Wong Tai Sin**, believed to generously grant the wishes of his followers, cure sickness, and—best of all—dispense horse-racing tips. The Wong Tai Sin Temple, located in a district by the same name, is always crowded with worshippers, as well as fortune-tellers, making this one of the most interesting temple destinations in Hong Kong (p. 183).

4 PARKS & GARDENS

IN KOWLOON

Kowloon Park  Occupying the site of an old military encampment first established in the 1860s, Kowloon Park ( 852/2724 3344; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/kp) is Tsim Sha Tsui's largest recreational and sports facility (13.4 hectares/33 acres), boasting an indoor heated Olympic-size swimming pool, three outdoor leisure pools linked by a series of waterfalls, an open-air sculpture garden featuring works by local and overseas sculptors, a Chinese garden, a fitness trail, an aviary, a hedge maze, two children's playgrounds, and a bird lake with flamingos and other waterfowl. Located in old army

barracks is the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, with free admission to its displays relating to the historic preservation of Hong Kong's oldest structures (p. 176) and with free Wi-Fi for those with laptops. On Sundays free kung fu demonstrations take place at the Sculpture Walk from 2:30 to 4:30pm and a small arts fair from 1 to 7pm at the Loggia.

Not far from the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station (take the A1 exit for Kowloon Park), it's easily accessible from Nathan, Haiphong, and Austin roads and is open daily from 5am to midnight, with free admission. The swimming pools (☎ 852/2724 4522) are open daily from 6:30am to noon, 1 to 5pm, and 6 to 9pm, and charge HK\$19 (US\$2.45/£1.25) for adults and HK\$9 (US\$1.15/60p) for children.

Kowloon Walled City Park ★★ **Find** This park is one of Hong Kong's finest. Although it doesn't boast the varied attractions of the city's other parks, the Kowloon Walled City Park, on Tung Tau Tsuen Road (☎ 852/2716 9962; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/kwcp), was designed to re-create the style of a classical Southern Chinese garden and is the largest such garden outside China. Beautifully landscaped with man-made hills, ponds, streams, pines, boulders, bonsai, bamboo, and shrubs, it features winding paths through a Chinese zodiac sculpture garden, flower gardens, and pavilions.

Even more fascinating is the site's history, described through photographs in a former almshouse. More than 160 years ago, the site was on the seashore, making it perfect in 1847 for the construction of a Chinese fort to defend Kowloon after the British takeover of Hong Kong Island. After 1898, when the British took over the New Territories, the 500 soldiers occupying the fort were expelled. But China did not consider the site part of the leased territories, and for most of the next century, the Kowloon Walled City remained in sovereign limbo, ignored by British authorities and home to a growing number of squatters. It developed a lifestyle of its own, with its own set of laws. An enclave of tenements and secret societies that flouted Hong Kong's building regulations and health standards, it served as a haven for refugees, criminals, prostitutes, drug addicts, and the poor. Densely packed and infested with rats, many parts of the warren-like slum never saw the light of day. Hong Kong police ventured inside only in pairs. Following a special Sino-British agreement and years of lengthy negotiations over new housing for Walled City residents, the enclave was demolished only in 1994. In addition to the almshouse, a few other historic structures remain, including the Old South Gate entrance, wall foundations, and flagstone paths.

To reach the park, take the MTR to Lok Fu station (exit B) and then walk 15 minutes on Junction Road to Tung Tau Tsuen Road; or take bus no. 1 from the Star Ferry in Tsim Sha Tsui to the stop opposite the park. It's open daily from 6:30am to 11pm, and admission is free.

Yuen Po Street Bird Garden ★★★ While in Hong Kong, you may notice wooden bird cages hanging outside shops or from apartment balconies, or perhaps even see someone walking down the street with a cage. Birds are favorite pets in Chinese households, and the price of a bird is determined not by its plumage but by its singing talents. To see more of these prized songbirds, visit the fascinating Yuen Po Street Bird Garden (☎ 852/2302 1762; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/ypsbg), Prince Edward Road West, which consists of a series of Chinese-style moon gates and courtyards lined with stalls selling songbirds, beautifully crafted wood and bamboo cages, live crickets and mealworms, and tiny porcelain food bowls. Nothing, it seems, is too expensive for these tiny creatures. In addition to people buying and selling birds, you will also notice people just taking their birds for an outing. This garden is very Chinese and a lot of fun to see. (**Note:** Because of concerns about avian flu, signs warning against touching bird droppings are

188 posted at the garden, along with hand sanitizers.) Incidentally, next door is **Flower Market Road**, lined with flower shops, while on nearby Tung Choi Street is the **Goldfish Market** with exotic fish.

To reach the Bird Garden, open daily from 7am to 8pm, take the MTR to Prince Edward Road station (exit B1) and walk 10 minutes east on Prince Edward Road West, turning left at the overhead railway onto Yuen Po Street. Or take bus no. 1 from the Star Ferry in Tsim Sha Tsui. Admission is free.

ON HONG KONG ISLAND

Hong Kong Park ★★  Opened in 1991 and stretching 8 hectares (20 acres) along Supreme Court Road and Cotton Tree Drive in Central, Hong Kong Park (☎ 852/2521 5041; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/hkp) features a dancing fountain at its entrance; one of Southeast Asia's largest greenhouses with more than 2,000 rare plant species, including desert and tropical jungle varieties; an aviary housing 600 exotic birds in a tropical rainforest setting with an elevated walkway; various gardens with ponds, streams, and waterfalls; a large children's playground; and a viewing platform reached by climbing 105 stairs. The most famous building on park grounds is the Museum of Tea Ware housed in the historic Flagstaff House (p. 182). Since the marriage registry is located on an edge of the park, the gardens are a favorite venue for wedding photographs, especially on weekends and auspicious days of the Chinese calendar.

The park is open daily from 6am to 11pm, the greenhouse and aviary are open daily 9am to 5pm, and the Museum of Tea Ware is open Wednesday through Monday from 10am to 5pm. Admission to all is free. To reach the park, take the MTR to Admiralty Station (exit C1), and then follow the signs through Pacific Place and up the set of escalators.

Victoria Park The 19-hectare (46-acre) Victoria Park (☎ 852/2890 5824; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/vp) is Hong Kong Island's largest, located on Causeway and Gloucester roads in Causeway Bay and serving as the green lungs of the city. Constructed on reclaimed land formerly used for a typhoon shelter, it has tennis and squash courts, a 50m (164-ft.) outdoor swimming pool and a wading pool, soccer fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, a roller skating rink, a jogging and fitness trail, and—my favorite—a pebble path for massaging the bottom of your feet. It is also popular in early morning for those practicing tai chi, a disciplined physical routine of more than 200 individual movements, designed to exercise every muscle of the body and bring a sense of peace and balance to its practitioners. The Mid-Autumn Festival is held here, as well as a flower market a few days around Chinese New Year. The park is open 24 hours and is free. To reach it, take the MTR or tram to Causeway Bay.

Zoological and Botanical Gardens ★  Established in 1864, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, Upper Albert Road, Central (☎ 852/2530 0154; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/hkzbg), are spread on the slope of Victoria Peak, making it a popular respite for Hong Kong residents. Come here early, around 7am, and you'll see Chinese residents going through the slow motions of tai chi. In the gardens themselves, which retain some of their Victorian charm, flowers are almost always in bloom, from azaleas in the spring to wisteria and bauhinia in the summer and fall. More than 1,000 species of plants, most of them indigenous to tropical and subtropical regions and planted throughout the grounds, include Burmese rosewood trees, varieties of bamboo, Indian rubber trees, camphor trees, a variety of camellia, herbs, and, in a greenhouse, orchids (Hong Kong is home to about 120 native orchids). The small zoo houses 600 birds, 90 mammals, and 20 reptiles, including jaguars, orangutans, tamarins, kangaroos, flamingos, a Burmese

python, Palawan peacocks, birds of paradise from Papua New Guinea, cranes, and Mandarin ducks. The zoo is well known for its success in breeding birds on the verge of extinction and for supplying zoos around the world with new stock.

If you're tired of Central and its traffic, this is a pleasant place to regain your perspective. On site is also a good children's playground. Admission is free. The eastern part of the park, called Fountain Terrace and containing most of the botanical gardens and the aviaries, is open daily from 6am to 10pm, while the western half, with its reptiles and mammals, is open daily from 6am to 7pm. To reach it, take the MTR to Central and then walk 15 minutes up Garden Road to the corner of Upper Albert Road. Or take bus no. 3B or 12 from Queen's Road Central in front of the HSBC bank building in Central.

5 AMUSEMENT PARKS

Hong Kong Disneyland ★★  Opened in 2005 on Lantau Island, just a 10-minute ride from the airport, this Disney venture was Asia's second (the first was Tokyo Disneyland). Recreating many of the exact features of the original Disneyland in California but on a smaller scale, the 126-hectare (311-acre) theme park contains the usual four Disney themed lands—namely, Main Street U.S.A., Fantasyland, Adventureland, and Tomorrowland—along with such classic rides and attractions as Space Mountain, Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters, Tarzan's Treehouse, and the Jungle River Cruise, as well as high-caliber performances and shows, parades, and an evening fireworks extravaganza. Unique to the park is the world's only Fantasy Gardens, where Disney characters hang out to meet their fans. Note that admission is higher during peak times, including weekends, public holidays, summer school vacation (July/Aug), and the so-called Golden Week holidays for mainlander Chinese (May and Oct). You can purchase tickets at the gate, in advance online, or at the Hong Kong Disneyland Ticket Express counter at Hong Kong Station in Central, open daily 9am to 9pm.

Lantau Island. © **852/1 830 830**. www.hongkongdisneyland.com. Regular admission HK\$295 (US\$38/£19) adults, HK\$170 (US\$22/£11) seniors, HK\$210 (US\$27/£14) children. Peak admission HK\$350 (US\$45/£23), HK\$200 (US\$26/£13), and HK\$250 (US\$32/£16), respectively. Hours vary; in summer, usually 10am–8pm daily. MTR: From the Tung Chung Line, transfer at Sunny Bay for the Disneyland Resort Line.

Ocean Park ★★★  If you're a kid or a kid at heart, you'll love Ocean Park, a combination marine park and amusement center. Situated along a dramatic rocky coastline on the island's southern shore, the park is divided into two areas: a "lowland" and a "headland," connected by cable car (and, in 2012—after a massive redevelopment that will double the number of its attractions—an underground funicular). Because of the wide range of attractions, Ocean Park is interesting for children and adults alike. Facilities are first class, and Ocean Park is Asia's first accredited member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

The lowland is subdivided into several areas and attractions. The most popular residents of Ocean Park are An An and Jia Jia, a pair of pandas presented as gifts from China. Kids' World has kiddie rides, playgrounds, remote-control cars and boats, shows geared toward children, and shooting-games arcade. Swimming with the dolphins is available at Dolphin University (applications must be made at least 5 days in advance).

From the lowland, visitors board cable cars for a spectacular 8-minute ride over a hill to the headland, while being treated to great views of the coastline and the South China Sea along the way. The headland area, situated on a peninsula that juts into the sea, is

190 also subdivided into several areas and attractions. The marine life section includes an artificial wave cove that is home to sea lions; an aquarium housing more than 1,000 jellyfish and complete with theatrical lighting, multimedia sound, and visual special effects; and a tank with more than 200 sharks and rays representing more than 30 species, viewed from an underwater tunnel. Ocean Theatre features shows by talented dolphins, sea lions, and a killer whale. But my favorite is the Atoll Reef, one of the world's largest aquariums, with 2,600 fish of 200 different species. The observation passageway circles the aquarium on four levels, enabling you to view the sea life—everything from giant octopi to schools of tropical fish—from various depths and from different angles. Thrill rides include a Ferris wheel, a roller coaster that turns upside down three times, a rather wet ride on a “raging river,” and a ride in a giant helium balloon that goes 100m (328 ft.) in the air. Other exhibits include a Japanese Garden; a 69m-high (226-ft.) Ocean Park Tower offering revolving, panoramic views of Aberdeen and outlying islands; and an aviary with 750 birds.

After touring the headland, you can take the long escalator down to the Tai Shue Wan Entrance, from which it's a short taxi ride to Aberdeen with its sampan rides and floating restaurant. At any rate, to do Ocean Park justice, plan on spending a minimum of 4 hours here, but with kids you'll probably stay the whole day.

Aberdeen, Hong Kong Island. ☎ **852/2552 0291**. www.oceanpark.com.hk. Admission HK\$208 (US\$27/£16) adults, HK\$103 (US\$13/£6.70) children. Daily 10am–6pm. Bus: Ocean Park Citybus 629 from the Central Ferry Piers or Admiralty MTR station every 10 to 20 min.; you can buy round-trip tickets that include park admission. Or take 70 from Exchange Square in Central or 72 from Causeway Bay (get off at the 1st stop after the tunnel and then walk 20 min.).

6 ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

On the Kowloon side, the **Space Museum** (p. 179) is very much oriented to children, with buttons to push, telescopes to look through, and computer quizzes to test what they've learned, not to mention the films featured in the Stanley Ho Space Theatre. In the **Science Museum** (p. 178), approximately 70% of its 500-some displays are hands-on, and there's also a special play area for children between the ages of 3 and 7. Across the Plaza is the **Museum of History** (p. 176), with life-size replicas and models that bring the history of Hong Kong to life. And don't forget **Kowloon Park** (p. 186), right on Nathan Road, which has two playgrounds for children (including one with restored fortifications and cannon emplacements), a pond with flamingos and other waterfowl, an aviary, swimming pools, and lots of space to run.

On Hong Kong Island, the biggest draw for kids of all ages is **Ocean Park** (see above), which boasts a wide mix of things to do and see, including thrill rides; a shark aquarium; animal performances; and a children's section with kiddie rides, a playground, shows geared to children, and lots more. Of all the things unique to Hong Kong, this is probably the one kids will enjoy most. For free entertainment, visit the **Zoological and Botanical Gardens** (p. 188) with its jaguars, monkeys, birds, and other animals, and **Hong Kong Park** (p. 188) with its greenhouse, aviary, children's playground, and climbing tower. Older kids will like **Victoria Peak** (p. 188), not only for the fantastic views but also Madame Tussauds with its wax replicas of movie stars, musicians, athletes, and historical figures, and the EA Experience with virtual games you can try out for free.

Farther afield, in the New Territories, are the **Hong Kong Wetland Park** with its visitor center and boardwalks through wetland habitats (p. 262) and the **Hong Kong**

Heritage Museum with its cultural displays, including a hands-on children's discovery gallery (p. 257) **191**

The SAR's most famous attraction, however, is **Hong Kong Disneyland** on Lantau Island (p. 189), which duplicates the Disney experience with the usual rides, attractions, shows, and fireworks.

7 ORGANIZED TOURS & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Hong Kong offers lots of organized tours, so if you're pressed for time, this may be the best way to go. The vast majority of hotels have a tour desk where you can make bookings for city tours. In addition, I heartily recommend participating in one or more of the Hong Kong Tourism Board's Meet the People cultural activities, which are free, 1-hour tours, classes, or lectures given by local specialists covering everything from Chinese antiques to tai chi.

LAND TOURS

For general sightseeing, **Gray Line** offers a variety of tours, with bookings available through most Hong Kong hotels or by calling ☎ **852/2368 7111** or searching www.grayline.com.hk. The Deluxe Hong Kong Island Tour is a 5-hour trip offered both morning and afternoon and includes stops at Man Mo Temple, Victoria Peak, Aberdeen, and Stanley. It costs HK\$320 (US\$42/£21) for adults and HK\$215 (US\$28/£14) for children.

Other Gray Line tours take in the Po Lin Monastery, Giant Buddha, and cable-car ride from Ngong Ping Village on Lantau Island or the New Territories; there are also sunset cruises (for information about organized evening tours, see the "Night Tours" section of chapter 10, "Hong Kong After Dark," beginning on p. 257). Most useful, in my opinion, are Gray Line's tours to the New Territories, since they cover large areas that would be very difficult, if not impossible, to reach in 1 day on your own. The "Land Between Tour" is a 6½-hour excursion that enables visitors to see how much this once-rural region has changed in the past couple decades, with traditional villages now overshadowed by huge government housing estates that house half of Hong Kong's population. Passing satellite towns with high-rise apartment buildings, farms, and villages, the bus stops at the Yuen Yuen Institute (a religious institute with Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucianist influences), a lookout point on Hong Kong's tallest mountain, a walled village, and a fishing village to see how fisher folk breed fish in submerged cages, and a Cantonese restaurant for lunch. The price of this tour, with departures daily, is HK\$420 (US\$55/£27) for adults and HK\$370 (US\$48/£24) for children and seniors.

Gray Line's "Heritage Tour" also takes in the New Territories but emphasizes Hong Kong's past rather than the present and makes stops at historic Chinese sites that even Hong Kong residents seldom see. It's a must for those who are interested in local historic architecture; it also gives insight into clan life in the New Territories long before the region became part of colonial Hong Kong. Lasting approximately 5 hours, tours make stops at Tai Fu Tai, a Chinese-style ornate mansion built in 1865 by a high-ranking official, fascinating for its insight into how the rich lived; Tang Chung Ling, an ancestral hall belonging to one of the Five Great Clans; Lo Wai, a walled village built by the Tang clan; and the Man Mo Temple in Tai Po with its fascinating street market. Tours depart

192 every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (except some public holidays), and cost HK\$320 (US\$42/£21) for adults and HK\$270 (US\$35/£18) for children and seniors.

Splendid Tours & Travel (☎ 852/2316 2151; www.splendidtours.com) is another company offering tours, which can also be booked through Hong Kong hotels.

WALKING & HIKING TOURS

For those who prefer to see Hong Kong via their own two feet but under the guidance of an expert, **Walk Hong Kong** (☎ 852/9187 8641; www.walkhongkong.com) offers two 3-hour walking tours of city sights: The Kowloon Markets tour takes in the Temple Street Market, Jade Market, Ladies' Market, and Yuen Po Bird Garden, while the Hong Kong Heritage walk covers some of Central's historic buildings like St. John's Cathedral and the Flagstaff House. Cost of either tour is HK\$400 (US\$52/£26). Personally, I think you can see the sights of these two tours easily on your own (many are included in my walking tours in chapter 8), but the company also offers treks in rural areas that come highly recommended, especially if you're traveling alone. These include two hikes on Hong Kong Island, from Victoria Peak to Aberdeen, and along the Dragon's Back trail, both of which cost HK\$450 (US\$58/£29). Hikes are also offered on Lantau and Lamma islands, and to East Sai Kung Country Park in the New Territories.

BOAT TOURS

Since so many of Hong Kong's attractions are on or near the water, a variety of boat tours are available, including those given by Gray Line (see above). Although the cheapest way to see some of the harbor is on a ferry to an outlying island (see chapter 11 for information on Hong Kong's most popular destinations), one advantage of a boat tour is that it usually covers a different part of the harbor, toward Causeway Bay and beyond.

One of the most popular boat tours is the 1-hour **Star Ferry's Harbour Tour** (☎ 852/2118 6201; www.starferry.com.hk/harbourtour), with boarding available at Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, Wan Chai, and Hung Hom ferry piers. Cost of the daily cruises, which have on-board commentary, is HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) for adults and HK\$45 (US\$5.85/£2.90) for children and seniors. One-hour Star Ferry evening cruises, which include refreshments, cost HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) and HK\$90 (US\$12/£5.85), respectively, while 2-hour cruises that include views of the nightly Symphony of Lights multimedia show cost HK\$140 (US\$18/£9.10) and HK\$126 (US\$16/£8.20), respectively.

Watertours (☎ 852/2926 3868; www.watertours.com.hk), Hong Kong's largest tour operator of boat cruises, offers a 2-hour cruise that includes a trip to a typhoon shelter and its junks and the firing of the Noon Day Gun in Causeway Bay (a holdover from colonial days that you can see if you're there, but don't go out of your way to see it) by Jardine Matheson & Co., Hong Kong's oldest trading company. The cost of this tour, which departs at 10:15am from the Kowloon public pier and 10:30am from Central Ferry Pier no. 9 and includes refreshments, is HK\$230 (US\$30/£15) for adults and HK\$140 (US\$18/£9.10) for children. Watertours also offers evening cruises, including a cruise to Lei Yue Mun for a seafood dinner and cruises that take in the Symphony of Lights (for evening cruises, see the "Night Tours" section of chapter 10, "Hong Kong After Dark," beginning on p. 252). You can pick up a Watertours pamphlet at HKTB Visitor Information and Services Centres and in many hotels.

Hong Kong Dolphinwatch (☎ 852/2984 1414; www.hkdolphinwatch.com) offers 4-hour trips several mornings a week that include a bus ride to the new satellite town of Tung Chung followed by a luxury cruise to the natural habitat of the endangered Chinese pink dolphins (Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphins), which live off Lantau Island within sight of



A Junk Cruise

The most unique cruise in town is aboard the **Duk Ling**, an authentic Chinese junk built in Macau a half-century ago as a fishing boat. One-hour cruises, costing HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25), are offered 2 days a week (Thurs and Sat, though days are subject to change; call ahead). I find the cruise interesting not only because Duk Ling is powered by the wind, but also because it sails in the opposite direction from ferries to the outlying islands, providing different vistas of the Hong Kong skyline as it cruises toward North Point and Kai Tak. Pre-registration is required beforehand at the Hong Kong Tourism Board Visitor Information and Services Centre in either Tsim Sha Tsui or Causeway Bay. For more information or the latest sailing schedule, contact HKTb at ☎ **852/2508 1234** or go to www.discoverhongkong.com.

power plants, factories, Tung Chung, and the airport. Advance booking is necessary, and the cost is HK\$360 (US\$47/£23) for adults and HK\$180 (US\$23/£12) for children.

SPECIAL-INTEREST TOURS & CLASSES

“Meet the People” **(M)oments** Through this unique program of free 1-hour tours, lectures, classes, and seminars, visitors can meet local specialists and gain in-depth knowledge of Hong Kong’s traditions. Programs are updated and revised annually; past offerings have included such subjects as Chinese antiques, Cantonese opera, pearls, jade, feng shui (geomancy), Chinese tea, Chinese medicine, and tai chi, with something going on every day of the week. Reservations are not necessary (except for the junk cruise on the Duk Ling, above). For details on what, when, and where, pick up a *Cultural Kaleidoscope* brochure at an HKTb Visitor Information and Services Centre or go to HKTb’s website, www.discoverhongkong.com, and click on “Heritage” and then “Cultural Kaleidoscope.”

“Come Horse Racing” Tour This tour, offered by Gray Line (see “Land Tours,” above), allows visitors to experience the excitement of the races, at either Happy Valley or Sha Tin (where the 2008 Summer Olympic Games dressage and jumping events were held), an excitement that grows proportionally according to how much you bet. Tours are naturally scheduled only during the horse-racing season—September to mid-June—usually on Wednesday evenings and on Saturday and/or Sunday afternoons. The tour includes transportation; a pre-race international buffet; beer, wine, or soft drinks; personal entry badge to the Visitors’ Box in the Hong Kong Jockey Club’s Members’ Enclosure; a HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95) betting voucher; guide services; and even hints to help you place your bets. Tours cost HK\$620 (US\$81/£40), except during special races, when they cost more. Tours are limited to tourists 18 years of age and older (be sure to bring your passport with you when booking and participating in this tour) whose stay in Hong Kong is no more than 21 days.

8 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Despite the fact that the SAR is densely populated, there’s enough open space to pursue everything from golf to hiking to windsurfing. For the hardworking Chinese and

194 expatriates, recreation and leisure are essential for relaxing and winding down. With that in mind, try to schedule your golfing, swimming, or hiking trips on weekdays unless you enjoy jostling elbows with the crowds.

GOLF

Golf courses can be crowded, so it's recommended you call clubs beforehand to check whether they're open and the available tee-off times. It's best to book a tee-time in advance. For more information on courses in Hong Kong, contact the Hong Kong Golf Association (☎ 852/2504 8659; www.hkga.com).

The **Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Public Golf Course** (☎ 852/2791 3388; www.kscgolf.org.hk), carved out of an island formerly used by the British army for shelling practice, offers great panoramic vistas of Sai Kung Peninsula and one of the world's finest public golfing facilities. There are one 9-hole and two 18-hole courses. Green fees for 18 holes start at HK\$680 (US\$88/£44) on weekdays and HK\$1,010 (US\$131/£66) weekends and holidays (Hong Kong residents receive a discount). The 9-hole course costs HK\$400 (US\$52/£26) and HK\$585 (US\$76/£38), respectively. Note, however, that overseas visitors cannot make advance bookings for weekends and holidays unless accompanied by a Hong Kong resident. To reach it, take the MTR to Choi Hung and then board bus no. 92 or green minibus no. 1A to Sai Kung Bus Terminus, followed by the special 15-minute "golfer's ferry" to Kau Sai Chau (ferry fee: HK\$60/US\$7.80/£3.90).

The **SkyCity Nine Eagles Golf Course** (☎ 852/3760 6688; www.nine-eagles.com), located on Lantau Island near Terminal 2 of Hong Kong International Airport, is a 9-hole course open only to airport employees and airport passengers within 7 days of their arrival or departure dates, as well as members of frequent-flier clubs. Tee-times are available daily from 7am to 10pm, with greens fees costing HK\$400 (US\$52/£26) on weekdays and HK\$550 (US\$71/£36) weekends and holidays; tee-times from 7 to 10pm cost more. A shuttle service to the golf course operates from both Terminal 2 (Coach Station, Gate 16-20) and from Exit D of MTR Tung Chung Station.

Hong Kong has several private golf clubs that admit nonmembers on weekdays only. Most charge HK\$1,400 (US\$182/£91) to HK\$2,000 (US\$260/£130) for greens fees on 18-hole courses. The **Hong Kong Golf Club** (www.hkgolfclub.org) maintains three 18-hole courses in **Fanling** (☎ 852/2670 1211) and a 9-hole course in **Deep Water Bay** (☎ 852/2812 7070). To reach Fanling, take the KCR railway to Sheung Shui, followed by a 5-minute taxi ride. To reach Deep Water Bay, take bus no. 6A, 6X, or 260 from Exchange Square in Central.

The **Discovery Bay Golf Club**, on Lantau Island (☎ 852/2987 7273), has a beautiful 18-hole course developed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr., offering great views of Hong Kong and the harbor. To reach it, take the 20-minute ferry ride from Central to Discovery Bay, followed by a ride in a special shuttle bus. Another scenic 18-hole course and a 9-hole course, operated by the **Clearwater Bay Golf and Country Club** (☎ 852/2335 3888; www.cwbgolf.org), is located in Sai Kung in the New Territories, on a picturesque headland overlooking the South China Sea. To reach it, take the KCR railway to Sheung Shui, and then take a taxi.

HIKING

Hong Kong's 23 country parks—amounting to more than 40% of Hong Kong's space—are laced with trails of varying levels of difficulty, including hiking trails, nature trails, and family trails. Serious hikers, for example, may want to consider the famous **MacLehose Trail** in the New Territories, which stretches about 100km (62 miles) through eight

country parks, from the Sai Kung Peninsula in the east to Tuen Mun in the west. The strenuous **Lantau Trail** is a 70km (43-mile) circular trail on Lantau Island that begins and ends at Mui Wo (also called Silvermine Bay), passing several popular scenic spots and campsites along the way and including a 2½-hour trek to the top of Lantau Peak. Both the MacLehose and Lantau trails are divided into smaller sections of varying difficulty,

Fun Facts Did You Know?

Hong Kong won its first gold medal ever at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996—in women's windsurfing.

which means that you can tailor your hike to suit your own abilities and time constraints. I also like the short Heritage Trails in the New Territories which take in historic architectural gems along the way (see “The New Territories” in chapter 11). Easier to reach is the 50km (31-mile)

Hong Kong Trail, which spans Hong Kong Island's five country parks, from Victoria Peak to Big Wave Bay. Another

favorite trail on Hong Kong Island is the scenic **Dragon's Back**, a 3-hour hike along the spine of a ridge on D'Aguilar Peninsula, located in the southeastern end of the island.

Hikers are advised not to hike alone and to check weather reports before departing; from May to October, irregular thunderstorms, typhoons, and heavy showers can cause flooding and landslides. The best hiking season is considered November through February. The Hong Kong Tourism Board has some trail maps and a hiking and wildlife guidebook called *Exploring Hong Kong's Countryside: A Visitor's Companion*, which provides suggested day hikes throughout the territory. HKTB also lists recommended hikes on its website, www.discoverhongkong.com, and in a booklet called *Discover Hong Kong Nature*.

JOGGING

The best places to jog on Hong Kong Island without dodging traffic are **Victoria Park's jogging track** in Causeway Bay (p. 188), **Harlech Road** on Victoria Peak (p. 174), and **Bowen Road**, which stretches 2.5km (1½ miles) from Stubbs Road to Magazine Gap Road in the Mid-Levels and offers great views over the harbor. In addition, an inside track at the Happy Valley racecourse is open for runners when the horses aren't using the field. On the other side of the harbor is **Kowloon Park**, as well as the waterfront promenade along Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East.

Remember that it can be quite hot and humid during the summer months, so try to jog in the early morning or in the evening.

SWIMMING

In addition to the many outdoor and indoor swimming pools at Hong Kong's hotels that are available for hotel guests, the city has numerous public swimming pools, including those at **Kowloon Park** (p. 186), with both indoor and outdoor pools, and **Victoria Park** (p. 188), only with outdoor pools. Outdoor pools are open April through October. Prices are HK\$19 (US\$2.45/£1.25) for adults and HK\$9 (US\$1.15/60p) for children and seniors (you can also use your Octopus transportation card to gain admission). Avoid hot weekends, when the pools can become quite crowded.

The SAR has about 40 free public **beaches**; most of them have lifeguards on duty April through October, changing rooms, and snack stands or restaurants. Even on Hong Kong Island itself you can find a number of beaches, including Big Wave Bay and Shek O on the east coast, and Stanley, Deep Water Bay, South Beach (popular with the gay

196 crowd), and Repulse Bay on the southern coast. Repulse Bay, by far the most popular beach in Hong Kong, becomes unbelievably crowded on summer weekends.

The outlying islands have prettier beaches, including Hung Shing Ye and Lo So Shing on Lamma, Tung Wan on Cheung Chau, and Cheung Sha on Lantau. It is, however, advisable to check on water pollution before plunging in, especially on the islands. Check the website of the Hong Kong Environmental Protection Department (www.epd.gov.hk) for updates on water quality. Furthermore, I wouldn't recommend the waters around Sai Kung Peninsula. There seem to be fatal shark attacks here every couple of years, due to fish migration, though most of the public beaches have shark nets and guards patrolling the water.

TAI CHI

Tai chi is an ancient Chinese regimen designed to balance body and soul and thereby release energy from within. Originally a martial art developed about 1,000 years ago, tai chi today is a form of exercise that restores harmony in the body through 200 individual movements designed to use every muscle in the body. By strengthening both the mind and the body through seemingly fluid, slow movements that mask the strength and control required to perform the balletlike exercise, tai chi fosters a sense of well-being and nurtures self-discipline. It also helps develop balance, improves muscle tone and breathing, and aids in digestion. In Hong Kong, both young and old practitioners gather every morning in downtown parks and open public spaces to perform tai chi. Good places to observe the art include Kowloon Park in Tsim Sha Tsui as well as Victoria Park, Hong Kong Park, and the Zoological and Botanical Gardens on Hong Kong Island. Visitors can join complimentary 1-hour **lessons** in English, offered by the Hong Kong Tourism Board's Meet the People Cultural Kaleidoscope program. They're held every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at 8am in front of the Hong Kong Museum of Art in the Sculpture Court near the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront promenade (MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui, Exit E), and on Saturday at 8am in Harcourt Garden in Admiralty (MTR: Admiralty, Exit E1). No registration is necessary. Simply show up; you'll be led through the exercises by a tai chi master. Participants are advised to wear casual clothing and comfortable sports shoes with rubber soles. For information, contact the **Hong Kong Tourism Board** (☎ 852/2508 1234) or check its website at www.discoverhongkong.com.

9 SPECTATOR SPORTS

A popular sporting event is the **Hong Kong Sevens** (www.hksevens.com; p. 34), an international rugby tournament held in March or April. During the cooler winter months, there's the **Hong Kong Marathon** (www.hkmarathon.com), held in February. Other annual sporting highlights include the **Tennis Classic** and the **Hong Kong Open Golf Championships**.

If you're here anytime from September to mid-June, join the rest of Hong Kong at the **horse races**. Horse racing got its start in the colony in Happy Valley more than 165 years ago, when British settlers introduced the sport, making the Happy Valley track the oldest racecourse in Asia outside China. A newer, modern track is in Sha Tin (the New Territories), which can accommodate 90,000 spectators.

Without a doubt, horse racing is by far the most popular sporting event in Hong Kong. It's not, perhaps, the sport itself that draws so much enthusiasm, but rather the

fact that, aside from the local lottery, racing is the only legal form of gambling in Hong Kong—there are more than 100 off-course betting centers throughout Hong Kong—and winnings are tax-free.

Races are held Wednesday evenings and some Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Both tracks feature giant color screens that show close-ups of the race in progress, photographs of jockeys and trainers, and videos of previous races. It's fun and easy to get in on the betting action, and you don't have to bet much—the minimum wager of HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) per race is enough.

The lowest admission price is HK\$10 (US\$1.30/70p), which is for the general Public Enclosure and is standing-room only. If you want to watch from the more exclusive Hong Kong Jockey Club (www.hkjc.com) members' enclosure (with benches so you can sit down), are at least 18 years old, and are a bona fide tourist, you can purchase a temporary member's badge for HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) on regular race days and HK\$150 (US\$19/£9.75) on rare special race days. Show your passport at either the Badge Enquiry Office at the main entrance to the members' private enclosure (at either track) or at designated off-course betting centers up to 10 days before the race, including those at 10–12 Stanley St. in Central and 4 Prat Ave. in Tsim Sha Tsui. Tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

To reach Happy Valley Racecourse, take the tram to Happy Valley or the MTR to Causeway Bay (take the Times Square exit and walk toward Wong Nai Chung Rd.). To reach Sha Tin Racecourse, take the MTR to the Sha Tin Racecourse Station.

On the other hand, an easy way to see the races is to take a guided tour to the tracks, described in “Organized Tours & Cultural Activities,” earlier in this chapter. For information on current sporting events and future dates, contact the Hong Kong Tourism Board (☎ 852/2508 1234) or check its website at www.discoverhongkong.com.

Hong Kong Strolls

Surprisingly compact, Hong Kong is an easy city to explore on foot. If it weren't for the harbor, you could walk everywhere. If, for example, you're in the Central District and want to have dinner in Causeway Bay, you can walk there in less than an hour, passing through colorful Wan Chai on the way. Causeway Bay is good for exploring, since it's full of little sidewalk markets, a Japanese department store, restaurants, and shops patronized by the locals. Another great place for walking is the Western District just west of Central, fascinating because it encompasses a wide spectrum of traditional Chinese shops, from chop makers to ginseng wholesalers. If you like panoramic views, nothing can beat the hour-long circular walk on Victoria Peak.

On the other side of the harbor, a walk up Nathan Road from the harbor to the Yau Ma Tei subway station takes less than 30 minutes, although you might want to browse in some of the shops and department stores along the way. And Yau Ma Tei itself is

another good place for wandering about since it also offers insight into the Chinese way of life with its markets and traditional shops. For easy strolling with great views of the harbor, walk along the waterfront promenade that stretches from the Star Ferry all the way through Tsim Sha Tsui East.

Be forewarned that sidewalks and streets can be crowded at the end of the work day as people rush to buses and subway stations for trips back to the suburbs.

What follows are three recommended strolls. If you're interested in additional self-guided walks throughout Hong Kong, be sure to pick up the free HKTb pamphlet called *Hong Kong Walks*, which covers points of interest in Central, the Western District, Shau Kei Wan (location of the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence), Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, and Sha Tin in the New Territories. For more information, contact the Hong Kong Tourism Board (☎ 852/2508 1234).

WALKING TOUR 1

THE CENTRAL DISTRICT

START:	Statue Square, Chater Road, Central District.
FINISH:	Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central.
TIME:	About 2 hours; add 1 to 2 hours if you include Victoria Peak.
BEST TIMES:	Weekdays, when shops and restaurants are in full swing.
WORST TIMES:	Tuesday, when the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware is closed; Sunday and public holidays, when some stores in the Central District are closed.

The birthplace of modern Hong Kong, the Central District used to be called "Victoria," after Queen Victoria. It boasted elegant colonial-style buildings with sweeping verandas and narrow streets filled with pigtailed men pulling rickshaws. That's hard to imagine nowadays. With Central's gleaming glass-and-steel skyscrapers, little is left of its colonial beginnings. Still, this is the logical starting place for a tour of Hong Kong. The handful of historic buildings scattered among towering monoliths symbolize both the past and the future of this ever-changing city. Yet, surprisingly, Central has several city parks, good for relaxation and sightseeing. If you have time and the weather is clear, you might also consider taking a trip to Victoria Peak during this walk, from the tram terminus in Central.

Take the MTR or Star Ferry to Central, where, between Connaught Road Central and Des Voeux Road Central, lies:

1 Statue Square

Divided by Chater Road, this historic square once held a statue of Queen Victoria, which has since been moved to the park in Causeway Bay that bears her name. On weekends, Statue Square and surrounding Central become the domain of Filipino housemaids, nannies, and waitresses, thousands of whom work in the SAR and send most of what they earn back home to their families. On their day off, they meet friends here, sitting on blankets spread on the concrete and sharing food, photographs, letters from home, and laughter, infusing the staid business district with a certain vitality and festivity. The only statue remaining in Statue Square today is of a banker, Sir Thomas Jackson, former manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (HSBC). He stands facing the:

2 Legislative Council Building

Formerly the Supreme Court and looking curiously out of place in modern Central, the Legislative Council Building was built in the early 1900s by architect Aston Webb, who later redesigned Buckingham Palace, and now houses Hong Kong's law-making body, popularly known as "Legco." With its local pink-and-gray granite, Ionic columns, and Chinese roof, this neoclassical structure is typical of late-Victorian colonial architecture and boasts a carved-stone figure above the main portico of the Goddess of Justice holding scales. The building has two flags, one with the red star emblem of China and the other with the bauhinia flower of Hong Kong. In 2011, Legco will move to new government headquarters at Tamar in nearby Admiralty; no word yet of what will become of the present historic building.



TAKE A BREAK

The most convenient place for a meal in this area is **Dot Cod**

Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Bar, in the Prince's Building with an entrance right on Statue Square (☎ **852/2810 6988**; p. 147). It's owned by the Hong Kong Cricket Club but is open to anyone.

On the other side of the Legco building, to the east, is:

3 Chater Garden

This was the site of the Hong Kong Cricket Club until the 1960s. Today, this is the only spot of green in the very heart of Central and is popular with those who practice tai chi in the early morning and among office workers on lunch break.

Running alongside the south edge of the garden is:

4 Des Voeux Road Central

This road is easily recognizable by the tramlines snaking along it. What a contrast these quaint double-decker trams make when viewed against the high-rise banks on the other side of the street. Established in 1904 and now the city's oldest form of land transportation, trams are the most colorful way to travel from the Western and Central districts to Causeway Bay, especially at night when Hong Kong is afire in neon. Des Voeux Road itself was constructed as part of an early 1800s land reclamation project; before that the waterfront was situated farther inland, at Queen's Road. Land reclamation has proceeded continuously throughout Hong Kong's history, slowly encroaching on the harbor itself. A resident once joked with me that so much land was being reclaimed it wouldn't be long before you could walk across the harbor. With Central's most recent reclamation project—which extended the ferry piers for outlying islands and a relocated Star Ferry far into the water—the joke no longer seems quite so funny.

5 Bank of China Tower

This tower rises like a glass finger pointing into the sky. Designed by I. M. Pei, this 70-story futuristic building, with its criss-cross pattern reminiscent of bamboo, also observes the principles of feng shui, as do all modern structures in Hong Kong in an effort to maintain harmony with their natural environment. Otherwise, disaster would surely strike—something no builder in Hong Kong wants to risk (see the “Feng Shui: Restoring a Balance with Nature” box on p. 23 for more information about this).

The most conspicuous building on Des Voeux Road Central, however, is farther west (to the right if facing the banks). It's SAR headquarters of:

6 HSBC

This company, at 1 Queen's Rd. Central, formerly known as the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, is Hong Kong's largest bank and maintains offices around the world. Hong Kong's first city hall once stood on this site. The Hongkong Bank, located here since 1865, issued the colony's first bank notes in 1881. The present building, designed in the mid-1980s by renowned British architect Sir Norman Foster and reputedly one of the most expensive buildings in the world at the time (almost US\$1 billion), attracts visiting architects the world over for its innovative external structure, rather than a central core. It was constructed from prefabricated components manufactured all over the world; the glass, aluminum cladding, and flooring came from the United States. Internal walls are removable, allowing for office reconfiguration. Walk underneath the bank's open ground plaza, where the world's longest freely supported escalators takes customers to and from the first floor, for a look up into this unique structure. Much care was given to the angle of these escalators, as well as to many other aspects of construction, in order not to disturb the spirits who reside here (altogether the building has 62 escalators, more than in any other office building in the world).

Note, too, the two bronze lions you see at the entrance, which have been “guarding” the bank since 1935. You can rub their paws for good luck.

Take HSBC's escalator up to the cavernous first floor, then turn around, and head to the opposite end of the huge hall, where you'll see the entrance to the Standard Chartered Bank. Turn left after the entrance and follow the sign for Battery Path, where you should turn left again. If HSBC is closed, you'll have to cross Queen's Road Central at the crosswalk and then take the stone steps leading up to the tree-shaded Battery Path, where you should turn left. Straight ahead is a handsome brick building, the:

7 Court of Final Appeal

This building, which houses Hong Kong's highest court, dates from 1917 and was formerly the French Mission Building. Just beyond it is the cream-and-white-colored, Gothic-style:

8 St. John's Cathedral

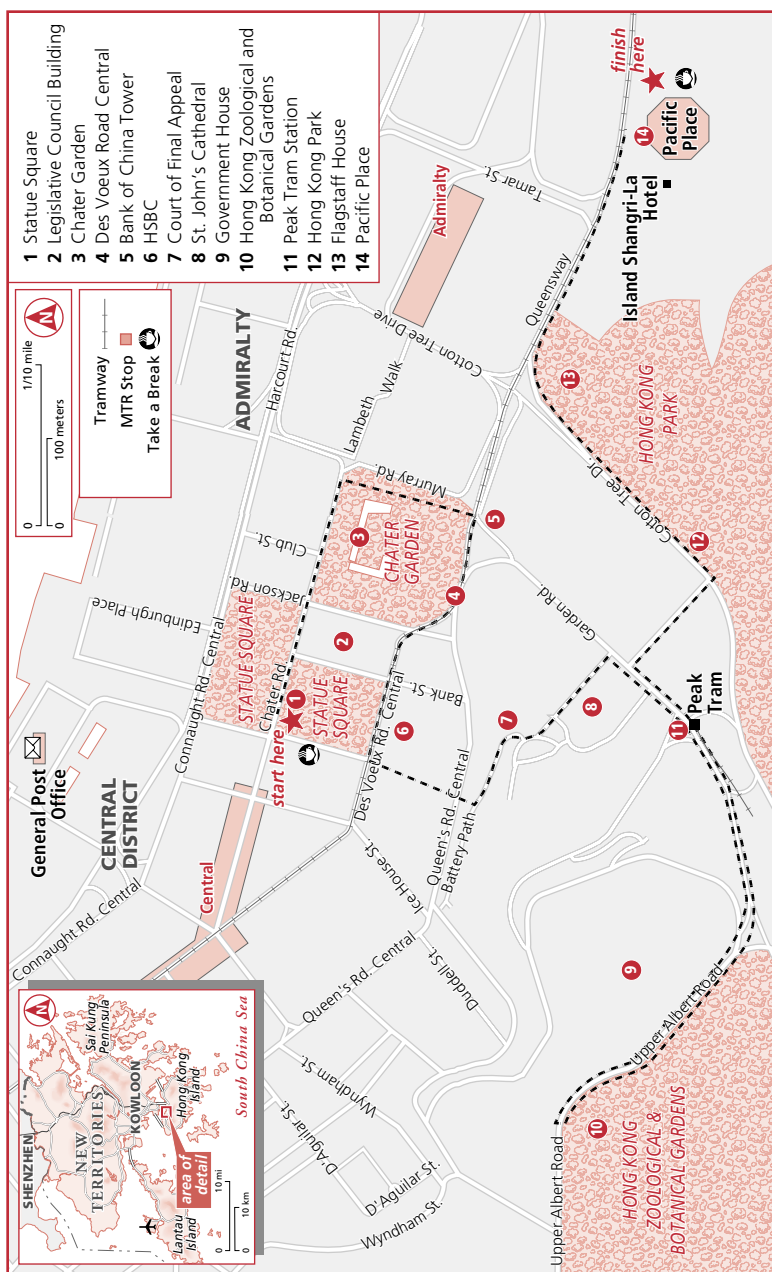
Inaugurated in 1849 and thought to be the oldest Anglican church in the Far East, this church was used for Japanese social functions during the Japanese occupation. You can enter the small church and take a look inside. It underwent extensive renovations following World War II but still retains quaint tropical characteristics like the ceiling fans. It's open daily from 7am to 6pm.

Behind the church is busy Garden Road, where you should turn right and walk uphill. After passing the U.S. Consulate, you'll come to Upper Albert Road, where you should turn right. You'll soon see, on your right, the:

9 Government House

Completed in 1855, this building served as the official residence of 25 British governors until 1997. During the World War II Japanese occupation, it also served as the headquarters of Lieutenant General Isogai, who ordered some extensive building renovations, a curious mix of Asian and Western architecture, including ceramic tile roofs and a tower reminiscent of Shinto shrines. Since the 1997 handover, the grand, whitewashed edifice has been used for official functions and is now the residence of Hong Kong's Chief Executive, the head of the Hong Kong government.

Walking Tour 1: The Central District 201



202 **Across the street, on the corner of Upper Albert Road and Garden Road, is a staircase leading up to the main entrance of the:**

10 Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens

This wonderful oasis of plants and animals was established in 1864. It still imparts a Victorian atmosphere with its wrought-iron bandstand and greenhouse. Entrance is free, and the grounds are not too extensive, so it's worth taking the time to wander through to see its tropical botanical gardens, trees and plants, aviaries and birds, reptiles, and mammals such as apes. It opens daily at 6am, with the eastern half closing at 7pm and the western part at 10pm.

Exiting the same way you came in, cross to the other side of Garden Road and walk downhill, taking a right after passing the modern St. John's Building. Here, to your right, is the:

11 Peak Tram Station

When this station opened in 1888, the travel time to the top of Victoria Peak was reduced from 3 hours (by sedan chair) to 8 minutes. Today the tram is the steepest funicular railway in the world (for you funicular buffs, it rises from 28m/92 ft. to 396m/1,299 ft. on a 1.4km track, with a gradient of between 4 to 27 degrees), and the view from the Peak is the best in Hong Kong. I suggest you visit the Peak twice during your stay: during the day for the great panoramic view of the city, and again at night for its romantic atmosphere. At the top is a great, 1-hour circular walk around the Peak, as well as attractions for children. In all, you'll probably want to spend at least an hour or two on the Peak, so if time is limited or the weather is foggy or hazy, save it for another day.

On the other side of the tram station, on Cotton Tree Drive, is:

12 Hong Kong Park

Before opening as a park in 1991, this was once the grounds of Victoria Barracks, a housing area for soldiers. In the park is the pink Rawlinson House, formerly the private residence of the Deputy General and now serving as a marriage registry. If it's a

weekend or an auspicious day in the Chinese calendar, you'll find many newlyweds posing for pictures in the park. You'll also find a greenhouse, a great aviary with 600 birds, and a playground. Signs will direct you to the park's most important building and Hong Kong's oldest surviving colonial-style structure, the:

13 Flagstaff House

Built in 1846, the historic building now houses the Museum of Tea Ware (☎ **852/2869 0690**), with a small collection of tea utensils and descriptions of tea making through the various Chinese dynasties. It's open Wednesday through Monday from 10am to 5pm. Like everything else in the park, it's free. From here, walk past the fountain (a favorite backdrop for picture taking) to the escalators downhill to:

14 Pacific Place

This large complex is filled with department stores, clothing boutiques, restaurants, and hotels. The nearest subway station from here is Admiralty Station, which you can reach without having to venture outside; just follow the signs via the air-conditioned walkway.

WINDING DOWN

Pacific Place has many eating and drinking establishments. **Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill** (☎ **852/2845 4600**; p. 133) is a casual bar and grill that remains open throughout the day for drinks, burgers, and other American favorites. **Zen** (☎ **852/2845 4555**; p. 152) is the ultimate in Chinese hip dining, with a Zen-like decor and specialties that border on Cantonese nouvelle. **Grappa's** (☎ **852/2868 0086**; p. 147) is a moderately priced trattoria with an open kitchen and good food. But for all-you-can eat dining, **café TOO** (p. 147), in the Island Shangri-La Hotel at Pacific Place (☎ **852/2820-8571**, ext. 8571), is an upscale buffet restaurant offering views of Hong Kong Park's greenery and beautifully presented international lunches and dinners.

START:	Pedder Street, Central District.
FINISH:	Lan Kwai Fong, Central.
TIME:	About 4 to 5 hours.
BEST TIMES:	Monday through Friday mornings, when markets are in full swing.
WORST TIMES:	Sunday, when some antiques shops and Man Wa Lane are closed; Monday, when the Museum of Medical Sciences is closed.

Whereas the Central District was developed as the colonial financial center of Hong Kong and is dominated by Western-style architecture, the Western District has always served as the commercial center for Chinese businesses. Today it remains a fascinating neighborhood of family-owned shops and businesses, including those dealing in traditional herbs, ginseng, antiques, preserved fish, name chops, coffins, and funeral items. Hong Kong's oldest temple, a market dealing in curios, fakes and antiques, and an interesting museum comparing traditional Chinese and Western medicine are just some of the things you'll see in my favorite area of Hong Kong.

Named after Lieutenant William Pedder, Hong Kong's first harbor master, Pedder Street connects two of Central's major thoroughfares: Des Voeux Road Central (with its tram tracks) and Queen's Road Central. It is most well known to visitors, however, for its shopping, including:

① The Landmark

This high-end shopping complex has brand-name boutiques, including Gucci, Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, and Manolo Blahnik, and a Harvey Nichols department store.

Across Pedder Street is a nondescript building, the:

② Pedder Building

At 12 Pedder St., the Pedder Building has been a shopping center since 1926. It is now famous for its dozens of small factory outlets and clothing boutiques; look for the elevator that services the first to seventh floors. I usually take the elevator up to the sixth floor (there are no shops on the seventh floor) and then work my way down. Be aware, however, that just a handful of shops here are true factory outlets. The rest are simply taking advantage of the location to set up boutiques to sell their usual goods at regular prices; some secondhand shops sell used designer-wear. If you have the time, you might want to hunt for some bargains here.

Also located in the Pedder Building, but with its own entrance to the right of the one leading to the factory outlets, is the not-to-be-missed (yet easily overlooked due to its modest size):

③ Shanghai Tang

This small, chic shop (☎ 852/2525 7333; p. 227) is a reproduction of a Shanghai clothing department store as it might have looked in the 1930s. It offers two floors of clothing, home decor, and accessories, including traditional Chinese clothing with a contemporary twist, jewelry, pillowcases, photo albums, beach towels, stationery, and more. The store also employs Shanghaiese tailors who offer made-to-measure clothing.

Exit Shanghai Tang from its lowest level, where you'll find yourself on a narrow lane with makeshift stalls offering the services of locksmiths and shoe repairmen. Turn left here and then the next right (at Theatre Lane) to reach Des Voeux Road Central (the one with the tram tracks), where you should turn left. In about 2 minutes you will come to:

④ Li Yuen Street East and Li Yuen Street West

These two parallel pedestrian lanes, which rise steeply to your left, are packed with stalls that sell clothing and accessories, including costume jewelry, Chinese jackets, handbags, belts, and even bras. If you see something you like, be sure to bargain for it. Walk up Li

204 Yuen Street East, take a right, and then head back down Li Yuen Street West.

After walking down Li Yuen Street West, turn left onto Des Voeux Road Central and continue walking west, keeping your eyes peeled for the:

5 Tak Wing Pawn Shop

Located at 72 Des Voeux Rd. Central, this is one of Hong Kong's many pawnshops, but it's easy to overlook and walk on by. Unlike pawnshops in other parts of the world, which double as stores selling unclaimed personal belongings after a prescribed length of time, in Hong Kong pawnshops simply hold items in storage, selling them to another store if the owner is unable to pay. Hong Kong pawnshops, therefore, look like secretive affairs, with walls shielding customers from casual and curious street observers.

One block farther west on Des Voeux Road Central you'll see the entrance to the:

6 Central–Mid-Levels Escalator

Opened in 1994 as the world's longest covered escalator, it stretches 780m (2,600 ft.) from Central to the Mid-Levels on Victoria Peak. Contrary to its name, however, it is not one long continuous escalator but rather a series of escalators and moving sidewalks, with 29 entrances and exits. Designed to accommodate commuters who live in the Mid-Levels but work in Central and beyond, the escalators operate downhill from 6 to 10am and then reverse their direction and go uphill from 10:20am to midnight (after this time, you have to walk down the hill—stairs are set beside the escalators). It takes about 20 minutes to go from one end to the other. Because of the foot traffic, the escalator has spawned a number of easily accessible new restaurants and bars along its length, most in an area dubbed SoHo (more on this later).

Continue walking west on Des Voeux Road Central a couple minutes and then turn left onto:

7 Wing Kut Street

This is another small lane with stalls that sell clothing, handbags, and other accessories for

women. More interesting, however, are the small shops behind the stalls, which specialize in costume jewelry in a wide range of styles and prices. Some shops sell only wholesale, but others will sell to individual shoppers as well.

After walking through Wing Kut Street, take a right onto Queen's Road Central.



TAKE A BREAK

Instead of turning right onto Queen's Road Central, cross it and continue straight. You will soon come to Wellington Street, where you'll see **Lin Heung Tea House**, 160–164 Wellington St. (☎ **852/2544 4556**; p. 168). This old-fashioned dim sum restaurant, open more than 80 years, still sells dim sum from trolleys and is packed with locals. With no English menu, you make your selection from the steaming baskets.

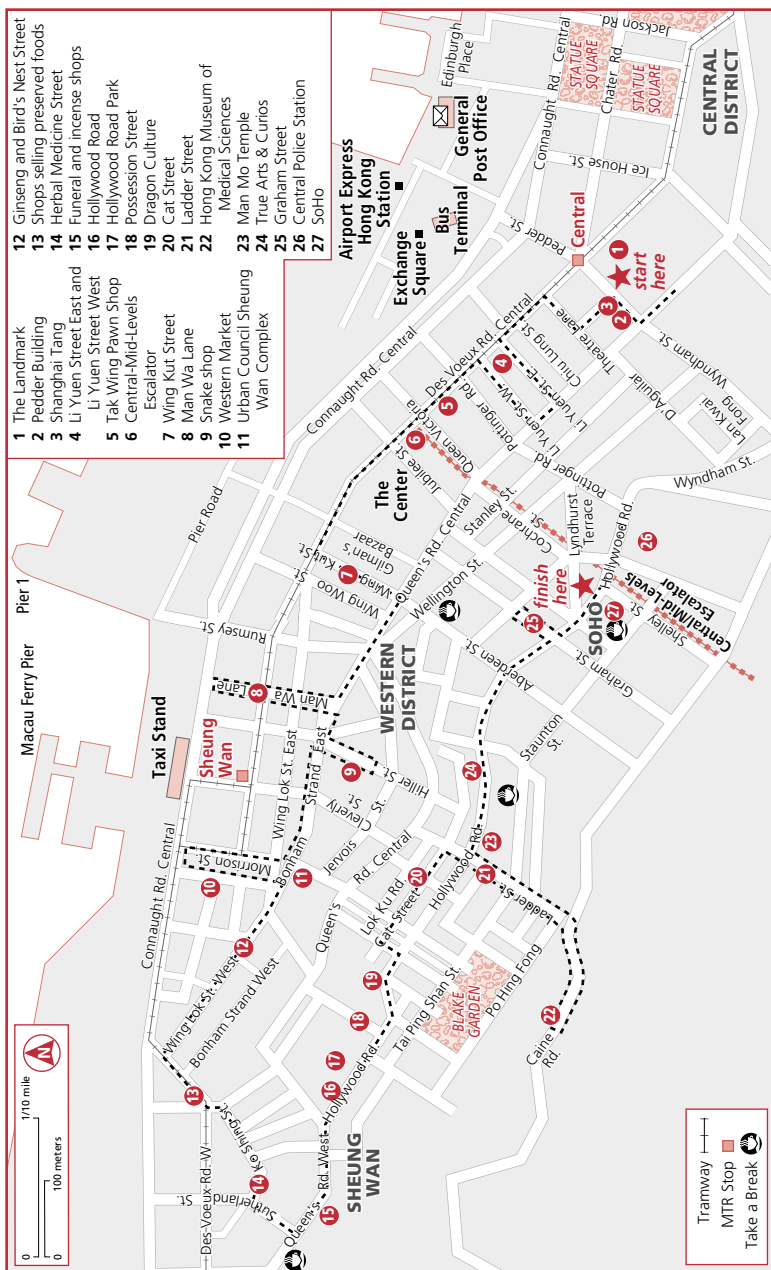
Located in the palatial-looking Grand Millennium Plaza, the upscale **Gaia Ristorante**, 181 Queen's Rd. Central (☎ **852/2167 8200**; p. 144), has a wonderful garden terrace, a contemporary interior, and very good Italian fare for both lunch and dinner.

Queen's Road Central will soon curve off to the left, but you'll want to keep walking straight westward onto Bonham Strand. Soon, to your right, just after the Hongkong Bank and Treasure Lake Seafood Restaurant, you'll see an interesting street:

8 Man Wa Lane

Since the 1920s this street has been the home of one of China's oldest trades—"chop" or carved-seal making. Sadly, the recent construction of many high-rises makes the stalls look out of place. Made from stone, ivory, jade, clay, marble, bronze, porcelain, bamboo, wood, soapstone, and even plastic, these seals or stamps can be carved with a name and are used by the Chinese much like a written signature.

You can have your own chop made at one of the several booths here, with your name translated into Chinese characters. It takes about an hour for a chop to be completed, so



stop by again later after you've finished your walk. Calligraphy brushes are also for sale, and you can even have business cards made here with both English and Chinese characters; orders for that take about a day. Most stalls are open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

Back on Bonham Strand, continue west for 2 blocks. Just a few years ago, this area was known for its many snake shops, which did a roaring business from October to February, when snake was in high demand to combat the cold. Now only a few remain, easily identifiable by cages of pythons, cobras, and banded kraits piled on the sidewalk, or by the wooden drawers lining the walls of the shop. Just past Mercer Street is Hillier Street (which is unmarked; it's the second street after Man Wa Lane, just past the corner fruit shop), where you should turn left for the:

9 Snake shop

You can recognize this open-fronted shop, at 13 Hillier St., by the many drawers lining its wall. Eaten as protection against the winter cold, snakes are often served in soup. They are also favored for their gallbladders, which are mixed with Chinese wine as cures for rheumatism. Who knows, you might see a shopkeeper fill a customer's order by deftly grabbing a snake out of one of the drawers, extracting the gallbladder, and mixing it in yellow wine. The snake survives the operation, but who knows what other fate it awaits. The more poisonous the snake, so they say, the better the cure. The mixture is also believed to be an aphrodisiac.

Backtrack to Bonham Strand and turn left, where you'll pass medicinal shops selling dried organic products such as mushrooms and roots; a tea merchant's shop; and, on the corner of Morrison Street, a rattan shop with handmade wares spilling out onto the sidewalks and hanging from hooks outside the shop. It takes an apprentice 3 years to learn the skills necessary to become a master rattan maker; the rattan itself comes from a climbing vine found throughout Asia. As a sign of the times, the shop has branched into plastic housewares. Take a right here onto Morrison Street and walk to the end where, on the left, you'll find the handsome, red brick:

10 Western Market

At 323 Des Voeux Rd., this market was built in 1906 as the waterfront Harbour Office and was then used as a public market until

1988; it escaped demolition when the decision was made to renovate the imposing Edwardian/Victorian landmark into a bazaar for shops and artisans. On the ground floor are souvenir and gift shops that sell everything from Chinese seals to jade jewelry, with most shops open daily from 10am to 7pm. Up on the first floor, retailers sell bolts of colorful cloth, buttons, clasps, and other sewing accessories. On the top floor is the Grand Stage, noted for its afternoon ballroom dancing daily from 2:30 to 6pm. Stop for a peek at Chinese couples as they glide dreamily across the floor.

From Western Market, backtrack on Morrison Street to Bonham Strand, where across the street you'll see the large:

11 Urban Council Sheung Wan Complex

One of Hong Kong's largest neighborhood markets, this complex, also called the Sheung Wan Civic Centre, open from 6am to 8pm Monday to Saturday, features fish and poultry on the ground floor, meats and vegetables on the first floor, and a large dining hall with stalls selling cheap, cooked meals on the second floor. Early morning is the best time to come, when women buy the day's food for their families and chefs purchase ingredients for their daily specials. Until recently, the Chinese penchant for freshness called for chickens to be killed on the spot, boiled, and then thrown into machines that plucked them, but live chickens were banned from Hong Kong's wet markets beginning in 2009. Still, this is not a stop for the fainthearted, as every part of every animal is for sale, including the liver, heart, and intestines.

Exit the market building back onto Bonham Strand, turn left, and continue straight ahead on Wing Lok Street. This street is nicknamed:

12 Ginseng and Bird's Nest Street

Shops here specialize in ginseng and bird's nest, both valued for their aid in longevity, energy, and a fair complexion. The kings

of trade in this wholesale trading area are clearly ginseng, with more than 30 varieties on offer. The most prized are the red ginseng from North Korea, white ginseng from North America, and a very rare ginseng that grows wild in the mountains of northeastern China. Red ginseng is supposed to aid male virility, while the white variety helps cure hangovers.

By the way, this area has long had an exotic atmosphere—150 years ago it buzzed with activity as merchants from Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), Fujian, and other Chinese provinces and cities set up shop here, selling products from their native regions.

At the end of Wing Lok Street, turn left on Des Voeux Road West. Along this road you'll see:

13 Shops selling preserved foods

Dried and salted fish, flattened squid, oysters, scallops, abalone, sea slugs, fish bladders, starfish, shrimp, and many other kinds of seafood have been dried and preserved for sale here. You can buy bird's nest here, as well as shark's fin, and in winter pressed duck and Chinese sausages made from pork and liver are also for sale.

Continue west on Des Voeux Road, keeping your eyes peeled for a Park'n'Shop convenience store and Princeton Tower apartments on your left. Just past it is Sutherland Street, where you should turn left. Almost immediately you will come to a somewhat larger street, Ko Shing Street. This street is nicknamed:

14 Herbal Medicine Street

Based on the Asian concept of maintaining a healthy balance between the yin and yang forces in the body, the range of medicinal herbs in the shops along this street is startling: roots, twigs, bark, dried leaves, seeds, pods, flowers, grasses, insects (such as discarded cicada shells), deer antlers, dried sea horses, dried fish bladders, snake gall bladders, and rhinoceros horns are just the beginning. The herbalist, after learning about the customer's symptoms and checking the pulses in both wrists, will prescribe an appropriate remedy, using perhaps a bit of bark here and a seed there, based on wisdom passed down over thousands of

years. A typical prescription might include up to 20 ingredients, which are often boiled to produce a medicinal tea. Since most herbalists are not likely to speak English, you'll mainly be window shopping here.

Continue on Sutherland heading south (toward the playground). A few years back, this neighborhood was renovated and the Li Sing Street Playground was built in its midst, displacing some of the narrow alleys favored by one of Hong Kong's oldest professions—street-side barbers. Once plentiful, street-side barbers are now going the way of the rickshaw, but just past the playground and basketball court, to the left, is the area's only remaining makeshift barber-shop. At the top of Sutherland Street, on busy Queen's Road West, I used to see an elderly woman who set up shop on the sidewalk, using only a couple of stools and a string. She used the string to pull out the facial hairs of her customers, an ancient method that some salons still perform. But like much of old Hong Kong, she and her sidewalk business have vanished.



TAKE A BREAK

There's no better place for Western food in this immediate vicinity than **Sammy's Kitchen**, 204–206 Queen's Rd. W. (reached from Sutherland St. by turning right and walking about 2 min.; ☎ 852/2548 8400; p. 164). A landmark for almost 4 decades, it's owned by the gregarious and friendly Sammy Yip and his family, who treat foreign guests like royalty. It's a good place for inexpensive lunchtime fare, an afternoon snack, a soda or ice-cream sundae, or, in the evenings, fresh seafood, steaks, chicken, and house-invented specialties.

At the top of Sutherland Street, cross Queen's Road West and turn left, heading east. Here you'll pass several open-fronted:

15 Funeral and incense shops

Note the paper replicas of household goods and other items (such as houses, cars, running shoes, handbags, and even

computers and cellphones) hanging from the shops' eaves and ceilings. At funerals, these paper effigies are burned to accompany the deceased into the afterlife.

After the funeral shops, follow the sidewalk up and down a small hill. Shortly thereafter you will see a road leading uphill to the right. It's the famous:

16 Hollywood Road

This long road, which runs all the way to Central, is a strange mixture of shops selling coffins, funeral items, furniture, antiques, and artwork. In fact, more antiques shops are concentrated along this rather long road than anywhere else in Hong Kong. You'll find everything from woodblock prints and rosewood tables to Neolithic pots, Ming dynasty ceramic figures, silk carpets, snuff bottles, porcelain, round-bellied smiling Buddhas, and plenty of fakes and replicas. Built in 1844 to accommodate stationed British troops, the road takes its name from the woods of holly that used to adorn the area.

Before hitting all the stores just mentioned, to your left will be:

17 Hollywood Road Park

A pleasant garden oasis with a children's playground, a pond with goldfish, and Chinese pagodas, this park makes a nice stop for a few moments of relaxation before continuing on.

Just past the playground, to your left, you'll soon pass a historic landmark:

18 Possession Street

You need not enter, but you might be interested to know that the British first landed in 1841 and planted the Union Jack to claim the island for Britain here. At the time, of course, this was part of the waterfront. Continue along Hollywood Road, past Possession Street. One of the first antiques shops you'll come to is:

19 Dragon Culture

One of Hong Kong's largest and most respected shops, Dragon Culture is owned by Victor Choi, who has given lectures on Chinese antiques for the HKTB's Meet

the People program. Browse his shop, at 231 Hollywood Rd. (☎ 852/2545 8098), for everything from Tang pottery to Ming porcelain. If you want to learn more about antiques, pick up Choi's book *Collecting Chinese Antiques in Hong Kong*, which answers frequently asked questions about antiques, including important information on how to ship them home.

After Dragon Culture, turn left at Lok Ku Road and then right onto Upper Lascar Row, better known as:

20 Cat Street

For almost a century, Cat Street was famous for its antiques, which could be bought for a pittance; with a growing global interest in Chinese antiques and the pricey antiques shops on Hollywood Road, Cat Street vendors now offer a fantastic mix of curios and junk. Pleasantly dotted with potted palms, this pedestrian lane is worth a browse for jade, snuff bottles, watches, pictures, copper and brass kettles, old eyeglasses, birdcages, replica Mao souvenirs, and odds and ends. You should bargain with the vendors who have laid their wares on the sidewalk; most of them do business Monday through Saturday from 11am to about 5pm. You can also bargain at the surrounding antiques shops, where prices are rather high to begin with. If you're not an expert, be wary of purchasing anything of value. During a recent visit, it seemed that every shop was offering fossilized "dinosaur eggs" for sale. How many can there be?

At the end of Cat Street, turn right and go up the stairs. Across the street you'll see unmistakable:

21 Ladder Street

This extremely steep flight of stairs was once a common sight on precipitous Hong Kong Island. Now, of course, Hong Kong Island has escalators and the Peak Tram, but you're going to find out exactly how steep and tiring these stairs are by taking them almost to the top before turning right and following the sign down the short flight of steps to the:

22 Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences

This museum is housed in a stately, 1905 Edwardian-style brick building, at 2 Caine Lane (☎ 852/2549 5123), that once served as the Pathological Institute, founded to combat Hong Kong's worst outbreak of bubonic plague, which eventually claimed 20,000 lives. With most rooms left intact and devoted to various aspects of early medicine practiced in colonial Hong Kong, it is the only museum in the world to compare traditional Chinese and Western medicines. You'll see acupuncture needles, an autopsy room, an X-ray of a bound foot (once considered a sign of beauty for Chinese women), Chinese medicinal herbs, and the Halvo Pelvic Distraction Apparatus, a Hong Kong invention for treating humped backs. Very fascinating. It's open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm and Sunday from 1 to 5pm.

Head back down Ladder Street and turn right onto Hollywood Road, where you'll immediately see the:

23 Man Mo Temple

This is Hong Kong Island's oldest and most well-known temple. *The World of Suzie Wong* was filmed in the surrounding neighborhood. The temple, which dates back to the 1840s, is open daily from 8am to 6pm, and is dedicated to two deities: the god of literature (Man) and the god of war (Mo). Mo is popular with the police force and members of the underworld. From the ceiling hang huge incense coils, which burn as long as 3 weeks, purchased by patrons seeking the fulfillment of their wishes; the aromatic smoke is said to carry prayers to the spirit world. In a room to the right of the main hall is a small souvenir shop and an English-speaking fortune-teller.

Return to Hollywood Road and turn right to continue walking toward its eastern end. Here you'll find more chic and upscale antiques shops, selling furniture, blue-and-white porcelain, and goods from other countries, including Korean chests and Japanese hibachi. One of my favorites is:

24 True Arts & Curios

Located at 89–91 Hollywood Rd. (☎ 852/2559 1485), this is a tiny shop packed with all kinds of surprises, from antique children's pointed shoes to porcelain, jewelry, and snuff bottles. It also carries about 2,000 temple woodcarvings, most of which are about 100 years old and small enough to carry with you on the plane.



TAKE A BREAK

Just a stone's throw from Man Mo Temple, the **Press Room**, 108 Hollywood Rd. (☎ 852/2525 3444; p. 150), is a bustling brasserie offering French cuisine, Italian bistro food, burgers, and, from its adjacent gourmet shop, wine and artisanal cheeses.

Farther along Hollywood Road, turn left onto:

25 Graham Street

This is part of the Central Street Market, with sidewalk hawkers selling fruit, vegetables, slabs of meat hanging from hooks, and flowers. It's been in operation since 1841, but the city has plans to raze it for high-rise development, setting off local protests (www.savethestreetmarket.com). This is a great slice of old Hong Kong and deserves protection; too much of the Western District has suffered mindless redevelopment.

Return to Hollywood Road. Farther down, just before the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator, are a couple of ancient-looking hole-in-the-wall shops selling brick-a-brac, old photographs and postcards of Hong Kong (including portraits of women engaged in that ageless profession), snuff bottles, and other interesting stuff. Walk under the elevated people-mover, and just a bit beyond, to the right, on Old Bailey and Hollywood Road, is the former:

26 Central Police Station

Originally built in 1864 and expanded in 1919 and 1925, this is one of Hong Kong's largest clusters of Victorian-era buildings, built in the classical style. Plans call for the building's renovation into a new heritage center.

210 Return to the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator. Here, on the steep lanes flanking the escalator and on narrow side alleys, is Hong Kong's newest nightlife and dining district:

27 SoHo

Though SoHo stands for “south of Hollywood,” the popularity of this area has made it blossom into side streets on both sides of Hollywood Road, including NoHo to the north. Most establishments are tiny affairs, serving a great variety of ethnic cuisines at reasonable prices.

If you wish to return to Central, walk downhill on Cochrane Street (which runs underneath the escalator) to Queen's Road Central, where you should turn right.

WINDING DOWN

Since establishments are opening up in SoHo literally overnight, I suggest you simply walk along Shelley and Elgin streets and their side streets until something catches your fancy. Otherwise, at 10 Shelley St., is **Life** (☎ 852/2810 9777; p. 154), a vegetarian restaurant with a relaxed, casual atmosphere. Uphill from Hollywood Road, on the corner of Shelley and Staunton streets, is **Staunton Bar & Cafe** (☎ 852/2973 6611; p. 250), one of the first venues to open in SoHo. For Mexican food, head up Shelley Street to **Carambal**, 26–30 Elgin St. (☎ 852/2530 9963; p. 153), in SoHo, reached by going uphill on Shelley Street and turning right on Elgin Street.

WALKING TOUR 3 KOWLOON

START: Star Ferry Terminus, Tsim Sha Tsui.

FINISH: Temple Street Night Market.

TIME: About 5 hours.

BEST TIMES: Sunday afternoon, when there are free kung fu performances in Kowloon Park and the Jade Market is likely to stay open as late as 6pm, allowing you to see nearby Temple Street Night Market as well.

WORST TIME: Thursday, when the Hong Kong Museum of Art is closed.

A stroll up Nathan Road through Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei will take you through the heart of Kowloon, past its famous hotels, restaurants, and shops, and on to the fascinating Chinese shops and markets in Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok. You do, however, have to make some decisions before embarking on this tour. The Jade Market generally closes around 4pm and the nearby Temple Street Night Market isn't in full swing until 7pm. Because the MTR is so efficient, you can easily return to the night market later in the evening. Alternatively, because more and more Temple Street vendors are setting up shop early, from about 4pm, you can hit both the Jade Market and Temple Street Night Market if you time your walk just right and don't mind walking through Temple Street when it's not at its liveliest. In any case, nearby Ladies' Market, which is all afternoon into the night, is very similar to the Temple Street market. Another possibility is to walk this tour on Sunday, when the Jade Market stays open later because of increased crowds. Finally, because this walk is such a long one, you might wish to either break it up into a 2-day stroll or cover only part of it, concentrating on those sights that interest you the most. Whatever you choose, a logical tour of Tsim Sha Tsui begins with the Star Ferry since, for more than a century, it served as the only link with Hong Kong Island.

Within the Star Ferry terminus itself is a Hong Kong Tourism Board's Visitor Information & Services Centre, where you can pick up free pamphlets, brochures, and maps of Hong Kong. In front of the Star Ferry concourse is Kowloon's main bus terminal. Straight ahead to the left is Ocean Terminal, the port of call for cruise liners docking in Hong Kong. It's probably no accident that it is immediately adjacent to:

1 Harbour City

This is Hong Kong's largest interconnected shopping mall and one of the largest shopping complexes in the world. Stretching more than .8km (1/2 mile) along Canton Road, it contains more than 700 shops and receives up to 200,000 shoppers on a weekend. Enter it and you might not escape during this lifetime; better save shopping here for another day. Instead, for one-stop shopping for high-quality (but pricey) Chinese products and gifts, head to the large, nondescript building to the right of Ocean Terminal, Star House, which contains mostly offices but also some restaurants and shops, including:

2 Chinese Arts & Crafts

Located on the ground floor of Star House, 3 Salisbury Rd. (☎ 852/2735 4061), this two-story store is open daily from 10am to 9:30pm and is the most upscale emporium specializing in Chinese products, including embroidered tablecloths, jewelry, ceramics, furniture, carpets, arts and crafts, and beautifully tailored clothing. It's also one of the most reliable places to buy jade.

Cross the street in front of Chinese Arts & Crafts back toward the harbor, where in front of you is the hard-to-miss:

3 Clock tower

Completed in 1921 and now dwarfed by the buildings around it, this is the only structure remaining from Hong Kong's old train station, once the final stop for those traveling overland from London on the Orient Express. In 1975, the Kowloon-Canton Railway terminus moved to Hung Hom. Occupying the train station's former site is the modern, salmon-colored:

4 Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Opened in 1989 as the city's largest arena for the performing arts, this saddle-shaped structure, in my opinion, is terribly misplaced. After all, why situate concert and theater halls that have no windows on waterfront property with one of the world's most stunning views? Still, the Cultural Centre does offer first-rate concerts of both Western and Chinese music, as well as free shows and events on Thursdays from 6 to 7pm and Saturdays from 3 to 5pm.

Enter the Cultural Centre's ground floor and stop at the Enquiries counter to pick up a brochure detailing concerts and free events (there are also public toilets here). Exit the other side, where to the east you will soon come upon one of my favorite museums in Hong Kong, the:

5 Hong Kong Museum of Art

Located at 10 Salisbury Rd. (☎ 852/2721 0116), this museum contains an excellent collection of Chinese porcelain, bronzes, jade, lacquerware, bamboo carvings, and paintings of old Hong Kong and Macau, as well as works by contemporary Hong Kong artists. It even has windows overlooking the harbor. Don't miss it. The museum is open Friday through Wednesday from 10am to 6pm.

Circle around behind the art museum, to the:

6 Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade

Hugging the shoreline all the way from the Star Ferry to Hung Hom, the promenade offers a great vantage point of the harbor with its boat traffic, Hong Kong Island, and the Peak. It's also a good place for a romantic stroll at night, when the dazzling lights of Hong Kong Island burn bright across the harbor. Nightly from 8 to 8:18pm, Hong Kong stages its "Symphony of Lights," an impressive laser-and-light show projected from more than 40 buildings on both sides of the harbor. Just a couple of minutes' stroll along the waterfront will bring you to the promenade's Avenue of Stars, with embedded plaques and handprints and a few statues honor Hong Kong's most famous movie personalities, including Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee.

212 At the end of Avenue of Stars, turn left into the New World Centre, a shopping mall, and walk straight through to its front entrance, beyond which is a pedestrian subway. Follow signs through the pedestrian subway to Tsim Sha Tsui's most famous landmark, the venerable:

7 The Peninsula Hotel

Built in 1928 to serve guests disembarking at the old train station and guarded by one of the largest all-Rolls-Royce fleets in the world, The Peninsula is Hong Kong's grandest old hotel, with a newer tower that offers great harbor views from its front-facing rooms and top-floor restaurant. Its lobby, reminiscent of a Parisian palace, with high gilded ceilings, pillars, and ferns, has long been a favorite spot for a cup of coffee and people-watching.



TAKE A BREAK

Many visitors feel that their Hong Kong stay would not be complete without dropping by the lobby of **The Peninsula hotel** (☎ **852/2315 3146**). Classical music serenades guests throughout the afternoon and evening, but the best time to stop by is between 2 and 7pm daily, when an English-style afternoon tea is served for HK\$258 (US\$43/£17) for one person and HK\$388 (US\$50/£25) for two.

Another great place for afternoon tea is the **Lobby Lounge** of the Hotel Inter-Continental, 18 Salisbury Rd. (☎ **852/2721 1211**), which offers fantastic views of the harbor and Hong Kong Island, along with its delicate finger sandwiches and tea daily from 2:30 to 6pm. See the "Afternoon Tea" section of chapter 6, on p. 169, for more information.

Walk to the busy road running alongside the east side of The Peninsula hotel:

8 Nathan Road

This is Kowloon's most famous street. It is also one of Hong Kong's widest and runs almost 4km (2½ miles) straight up the spine of Kowloon all the way to Boundary Road, the official border of the New Territories. Nathan Road is named after Sir Matthew Nathan, who served as governor

at the time the road was constructed. After it was completed, it was nicknamed "Nathan's Folly." After all, why build such a wide road, seemingly leading to nowhere? Kowloon had very few people back then and even less traffic. Now, of course, Nathan Road is known as the "golden mile of shopping" because of all the boutiques and shops lining both sides.

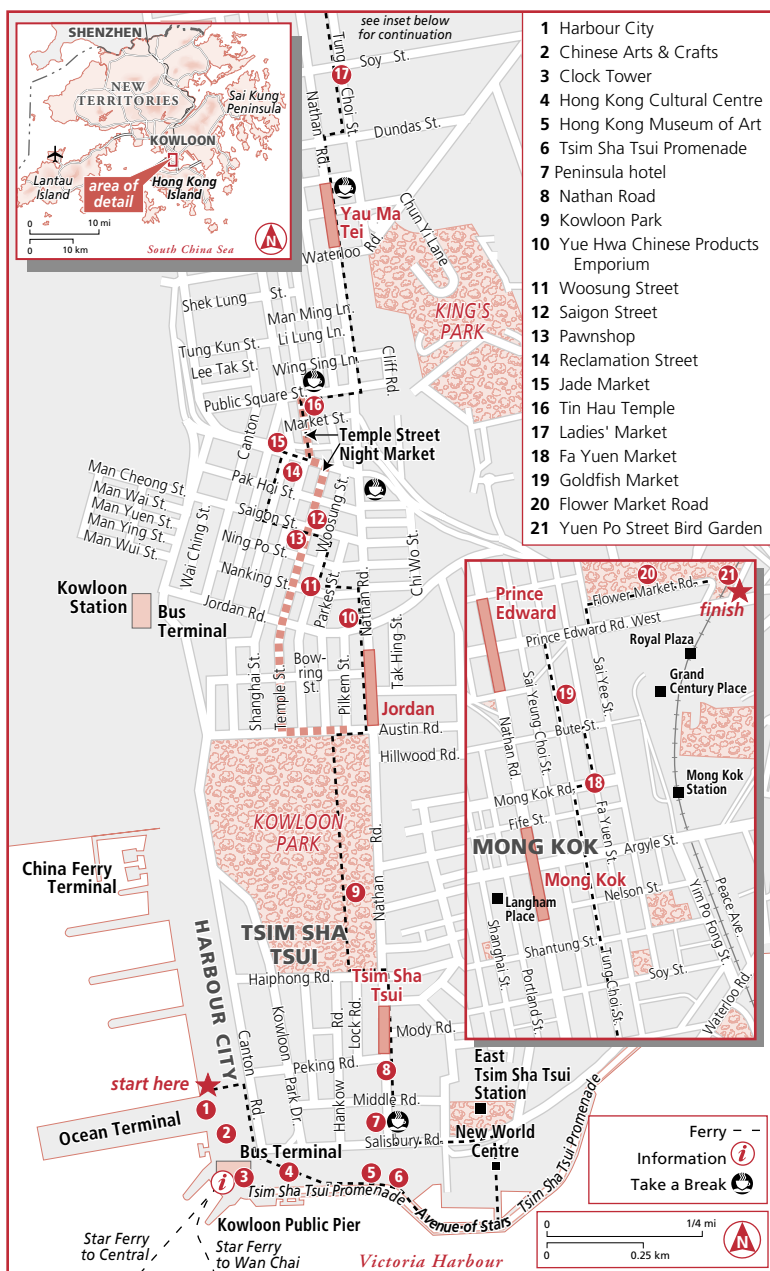
You'll pass jewelry stores, electronics shops, optical shops, clothing boutiques, and many other establishments as you head north on Nathan Road. The side streets are also good hunting grounds for inexpensive casual wear, especially Granville Road for its trendy, fun fashions for the young and young at heart. You'll want to return here to explore this area at leisure; shops are open until 9 or 10pm or later. After about 10 minutes (assuming you don't stop to shop along the way), you'll see a mosque on your left, built in 1984 to replace an older mosque built in the late 19th century for Muslim Indian troops belonging to the British army. Today, about 80,000 Muslims live in Hong Kong; the mosque is not open to the public.

Just past the mosque, take the first steps you see on the left, leading up to:

9 Kowloon Park

Kowloon Park is a good place to bring children for a romp through playgrounds and open spaces. The park features a water garden, Chinese garden, sculpture garden (with Scotland's Sir Eduardo Paolozzi's bronze version of William Blake's *Concept of Newton*), aviary, woodland trail, maze made of foliage, the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre with displays of Hong Kong's historic buildings and ongoing preservation efforts, and both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. Best for visitors, however, are the free kung fu Chinese martial arts performances held every Sunday from 2:30 to 4:30pm featuring children and adult practitioners. Follow the signs "Kung Fu Corner" to the Sculpture Walk.

Walking Tour 3: Kowloon 213



214 Walk through the park northward, past the indoor/outdoor public swimming pools, to Austin Road, where you should turn right until you hit Nathan Road again, where you should turn left. Be on the lookout to the left for:

10 Yue Hwa Chinese Products Emporium

On the corner of Jordan Road at 301–309 Nathan Rd. (☎ 852/3511 2222), this emporium caters primarily to the local Chinese with traditional Chinese products. Items from China include silk, porcelain, jade, clothing, furniture, medicinal herbs, and everyday household goods. Hours here are 10am to 10pm daily.

Yue Hwa marks the beginning of the Yau Ma Tei District. Its name translates roughly as “the place for growing sesame plants,” but you won’t see any such cultivation today. Rather, like the Western District on Hong Kong Island, Yau Ma Tei offers a look at traditional Chinese life, with shops that sell tea, chopping blocks, baked goods, embroidery, herbs, and dried seafood.

Just past the Yue Hwa store, take the first left onto Nanking Street and the second right onto:

11 Woosung Street

Here you’ll pass restaurants with live seafood in tanks and glazed ducks hanging from windows, an herbalist shop, a mah-jongg parlor, and other family-owned businesses. After 2 blocks (with a 7-Eleven on the corner), take a left on:

12 Saigon Street

Here, on the left side of the street on the corner of Saigon and Temple streets, is a shop for herbal teas. Temple Street is the site of the famous Night Market—if it’s past 4pm, some vendors may have already set up shop (but more on that later).

A block farther along Saigon, on the corner of Saigon and Shanghai streets to the left, is a:

13 Pawnshop

It looks unremarkable from the outside, with only a door and then a wall blocking views of the inside from pedestrians walking past, but this is a Chinese pawnshop,

where customers leave their valuables for a loan. Unlike pawnshops in other parts of the world, which double as stores selling unclaimed belongings, Hong Kong pawnshops simply hold items in storage, selling them to another store if left unclaimed.

After walking 1 block farther west on Saigon, turn right onto:

14 Reclamation Street

This street, along with the nearby Yau Ma Tei Market, is an interesting stroll if you haven’t yet visited a city market. You’ll pass butcher shops and stores selling fish, fruits, and vegetables.

At the end of Reclamation Street, straight ahead past the elevated highway, is a small red building with “Welcome” written in many languages. It’s the:

15 Jade Market

This fascinating covered market consists of some 400 stalls selling jade, pearls, and collectibles and is open daily from about 10am to approximately 4pm, though vendors stay open until 6pm or so if business warrants it (especially Sun). The jade on sale here comes in a bewildering range of quality. The highest quality should be cold to the touch and translucent, but it’s possible to infuse jade with color so that inferior stones acquire the brightness and translucence associated with more expensive stones. Therefore, unless you know your jade, you’re better off just coming here for a look or limiting your purchases to pendants or bangles that cost only a few dollars. Chinese believe that jade helps protect against evil spirits. Freshwater pearls are also good buys. Although the Chinese used to bargain secretly here by using hand signals concealed underneath a newspaper so that none of the onlookers would know the final price, it appears that calculators have gained more popularity these days.

From the Jade Market, go east 1 block to Shanghai Street, where you will soon see the:

16 Tin Hau Temple

Shaded by banyan trees, this is one of many temples in Hong Kong dedicated to Tin

Hau, the Goddess of the Sea. It's hard to imagine now, but this temple, with sections dating back more than a century, used to be on the waterfront; land reclamation has left it high and dry. No one seems to mind, however, as this popular community temple bustles with activity. Its park is popular with retirees resting on benches and people playing mah-jongg, while the inner recesses are filled with people asking favors or giving thanks. The temple is open daily from 8am to 5pm.

Depending on when you started this tour, at this point you may want to go back to your hotel room to rest and then take a taxi back to visit Yau Ma Tei's most famous attraction, the **Temple Street Night Market** (see the "Temple Street Night Market" box, below). The market is in full swing after 7pm, though more and more vendors now start setting up stalls at around 4pm.



TAKE A BREAK

Mido Cafe, 63 Temple St. (p. 852/2384 6402; p. 140), across from the Tin Hau Temple to the north, has changed little since it opened in 1950 and was one of the first cafes to add soy sauce to its Western dishes. Head upstairs for the best views.

Nearby, in the basement of the **Eaton Hotel**, 380 Nathan Rd. (☎ 852/2782 1818), is a Cantonese restaurant, **Yat Tung Heen** (p. 168), good for dim sum daily until 4pm. Near the Ladies' Market is a branch of **California Pizza Kitchen**, 56 Dundas St. (☎ 852/2374 0032; p. 138), with soups, salads, and pastas in addition to pizza.

Otherwise, if it's early, you like markets, and you're still feeling energetic, walk north on Nathan Road about 10 minutes, taking a right on Dundas Street and then a left onto Tung Choi, home of the so-called:

17 Ladies' Market

This is where street vendors sell women's clothing and accessories, including handbags, Chinese jackets, sunglasses, watches, and shoes, as well as men's and children's

clothing and toys at low prices, from about 12:30 to 10:30pm daily. Although this market used to be geared to local tastes (with smaller sizes), an increasing number of tourists have turned it into a thriving market rivaling Temple Street Night Market. The Ladies' Market, in the heart of Mong Kok, extends from Dundas Street north to Argyle Street.

Continue north on Tung Choi to Mong Kok Rd., which you should cross at the crosswalk or overpass to the right and then walk one block farther east and turn left onto:

18 Fa Yuen Street

This is a local market with stalls selling more clothing, cheap toys, and produce, at very inexpensive prices. There aren't as many tourists here, and you may pick up some bargains to boot.

Turn left at Bute Street and then take the next right back onto Tung Choi, the heart of the:

19 Goldfish Market

You'll recognize the Goldfish Market from the shop after shop selling exotic fish as well as other pets; most are open daily from 10am to 9pm. Aquariums are considered to bring good luck and are excellent for feng shui.

At the end of Tung Choi, turn right to cross Prince Edward Road West at the pedestrian light, turn left onto Sai Yee Street, and then take the first right for:

20 Flower Market Road

Open-fronted shops here sell orchids, roses, and other wonderfully aromatic flowers, at prices so inexpensive you'll wish you could take some home (a nice bouquet for your hotel room will set you back about HK\$10/US\$1.30/65p). More transportable but not nearly as appealing are the fake flowers. Shops are open daily from around 7am to 7pm.

At the end of the road is the:

21 Yuen Po Street Bird Garden

This is an attractive series of Chinese-style open courtyards lined with shops selling songbirds, intricately fashioned birdcages, live crickets, and tiny porcelain water

Temple Street Night Market

The Temple Street Night Market, with more and more stalls now open from 4pm but busiest from 7 to 10pm, is an entertaining place to spend an evening. Countless stalls sell clothing, watches, lighters, imitation designer handbags, sunglasses, sweaters, Chinese souvenirs, CDs, and more. The name of the game is bargaining. Be sure to follow Temple Street to its northern end past the overpass and around the carpark; in the vicinity of the Tin Hau Temple, you'll find palm readers, musicians, and street singers (who favor Cantonese operas and pop songs). Several of the palm readers speak English.

The edge of the market is also famous for its *dai pai dong* (Cantonese for "big rows of food stalls") that specialize in seafood. Fifty years ago, *dai pai dong* were where most Hong Kong families dined on an evening out, and they were found almost everywhere. Now the government has moved most food stalls into covered markets. The *dai pai dong* at this market are among the few that retain their original ambience. You'll find several under one roof at the Temple Street Food Store at the intersection of Temple Street and Public Square Street, where you can dine inexpensively on clams, shrimp, mussels, and crab, sitting at simple tables in the middle of the action.

bowls. Note, too, the men who bring their pet birds here for an outing. This place is very Chinese and makes for some great photographs. It's open daily from 7am until 8pm.

After exploring this area of Mong Kok, walk west on Prince Edward Road West to Nathan Road and the Prince Edward MTR station.

Shopping

No doubt about it: One of the main reasons people come to Hong Kong is to shop. According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), visitors here spend more than 50% of their money on shopping. In fact, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is such a popular shopping destination that many luxury cruise ships dock here longer than

they do anywhere else on their tours. I doubt that there's ever been a visitor to Hong Kong who left empty-handed.

Of course, Hongkongers love to shop, too, but because most homes are small, they spend much of their dispensable income on clothing. In fact, Hongkongers now spend more on name-brand designer clothing and accessories per capita than the Japanese.

1 THE SHOPPING SCENE

BEST BUYS

Hong Kong is a duty-free port, which means that imported goods are not taxed in the SAR with the exception of only a few luxury goods like tobacco and alcohol. What's more, Hong Kong has no sales tax. Thus, you can buy some goods in the SAR at a cheaper price than in the country where they were made. It's less expensive, for example, to buy Japanese products such as designer clothing, cameras, electronic goods, and pearls in Hong Kong than in Japan itself. In fact, all my friends who live in Japan try to visit the SAR at least once or twice a year to buy their business clothes, cosmetics, and other accessories.

Although not as cheap as it once was, clothing is probably one of the best buys in Hong Kong, simply because of the sheer quantity and variety. It should come as no surprise that when you look at the labels of clothes sold in your own local shops, many say **MADE IN HONG KONG** or **MADE IN CHINA**. While international designer garments and custom-made clothing are comparable to what you'd pay in high-end shops around the world (except in mainland China, where designer goods cost about 20% more than in Hong Kong), cheaper options abound, including factory outlets, discount shops that sell season's end merchandise, street markets, and small stores where you can pick up inexpensive fashions for a song. But even when you end up paying about as much for an outfit as you would back home, you know you've purchased unique clothing in Hong Kong that's impossible to find in homogenized shopping malls.

Hong Kong is also a great place to shop for other Chinese products, including porcelain (from vases to darling tea cups with lids), tableware, jade, cloisonné, silk, handicrafts, embroidery, Chinese herbs, chopsticks, Chinese traditional dresses (the cheongsam) and jackets, exotic teas from China's many provinces, snuff bottles, antiques, and artwork. While Hong Kong prices are higher than what you'd pay in mainland China, the quality and quantity are quite good.

Other good buys include shoes, gold jewelry, pearls, opals, furniture, carpets, leather goods, luggage (you'll probably need a new bag just to lug your purchases home), handbags, briefcases, cosmetics, and eyeglasses. Hong Kong is also one of the world's largest

218 exporters of watches and toys. As for electronic goods and cameras, they are not the bargains they once were. Make sure, therefore, to check prices on goods at home before you come to the SAR so that you can accurately assess a bargain. The best deals are on recently discontinued models.

If you're interested in fake name-brand watches, handbags, or clothing to impress the folks back home, you've come to the right place. Although illegal, fake name-brand goods can still be found at Hong Kong's night markets, sold by vendors ready to flee at the first sight of an official (even cheaper prices are offered for fake designer handbags and watches just across the border in mainland China; see chapter 11, "Side Trips from Hong Kong"). Of course, if Customs officials spot these fake goods in your bags when you return home, they'll be confiscated and you could be fined. Approximately half the fake goods seized by U.S. Customs agents come from mainland China. Note, too, that goods containing tortoise shell, ivory, and precious coral are also prohibited in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

WHEN TO SHOP

Because shopping is such big business in Hong Kong, most stores are open 7 days a week, closing only for 2 or 3 days during the Chinese New Year. Most stores open at 10am and remain open until about 6:30 or 7:30pm in Central (some stores are closed on Sun; stores in malls stay open later), 9 or 10pm or even later in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei, and 9:30pm in Causeway Bay. Street markets are open every day.

The biggest and best seasonal sale takes place around the Chinese New Year, generally in February. All the major department stores as well as shops in many of the huge shopping complexes hold sales at this time, with prices discounted about 40%. Look also for a summer sale, usually in June or July, as well as end-of-season sales in the early spring and early autumn.

GUARANTEES & RECEIPTS

It's always a good idea to obtain a receipt from the shopkeeper for your purchases, if for no other reason than as proof of value when going through Customs upon returning home. You'll also need a receipt if the product you've purchased is defective. A receipt should give a description of your purchase, including the brand name, model number, serial number, and price for electronic and photographic equipment; for jewelry and gold watches, there should be a description of the precious stones and the metal content. If you're making a purchase using a credit card, ask for the customer's copy of the credit card slip, and make sure "HK\$" appears before the monetary total.

If you're interested in a camera, electronic goods, watch, or any other expensive product, be sure to inspect the product carefully and make sure its voltage is compatible with that of your home country. Before purchasing, make sure that all parts, pieces, and the warranty card of your purchase are included in the box. Ask the shopkeeper for a manufacturer's guarantee, which should include the name and/or symbol of the sole agent in the SAR, a description of the model and serial number, date of purchase, name and address of the shop where you bought it, and the shop's official chop or stamp. Different products and models of the same brand may carry different warranties—some valid worldwide, others only in Hong Kong. Worldwide guarantees (which is what you'll want) must carry the name and/or symbol of the sole agent in Hong Kong for the given product. Be aware of parallel imports, items brought into Hong Kong by someone other than the official import agent and which may be cheaper but offer a restricted guarantee and after-sale services. If you're in doubt, check with the relevant Hong Kong sole agent



Caveat Emptor

Hong Kong is a buyer-beware market. Name brands are sometimes fakes; that cheap jade you bought may actually be glass; and electronic goods may not work. To make things worse, the general practice is that goods are usually not returnable, and deposits paid are not refundable.

On a personal note, I decided to buy a digital Sony camcorder and checked approximately 10 electronics stores, where I received price quotes ranging from HK\$3,500 to HK\$12,000 (US\$455–US\$1,560/£250–£857) for the exact same model. When I returned to the cheapest stores and asked to see the camcorder, however, I was told it was suddenly “out of stock,” but the salesmen said they would be happy to show me a similar model for a slightly higher price. The problem is that there are so *many* models—including many that never make it to Western markets—that it’s difficult to know exactly what you’re getting and what constitutes a fair price. In the end, I fell for the old bait-and-switch and bought a discontinued Sony camcorder at a higher price than what I would have paid for a newer model at home in the United States. I didn’t do my homework *before* departing home (even checking the Sony website while in Hong Kong would have been a smart move), and I ended up paying for my mistake.

To be on the safe side, try to make your major purchases at HKTB member stores, which display the HKTB logo (a gold circle with black Chinese calligraphy in the middle and the words “Quality Tourism Services,” QTS) on their storefronts. All of the hundreds of stores are listed at www.discoverhongkong.com/qts, where you can also download the list to a PDA. The website provides the names, addresses, and phone numbers of shops that sell everything from audio-video equipment to jewelry, clothing, optical goods, antiques, and custom-made clothing. QTS-accredited shops must pass stringent assessments each year, are required to give accurate information on the products they sell, and should respond promptly to justified complaints. Some member stores also provide discounts to bonafide visitors who show the QTS leaflet (available at HKTB tourist offices) or a passport (check the website above for a list of participating stores). Of course, prices are often higher than at nonmember stores, but the payoff should be peace of mind and reassurance that you are paying a fair price. If you do have a complaint against a member store, make sure you have the receipt and then contact either the **Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong** (☎ 852/2807 0707) or the **Consumer Council Hotline** (☎ 852/2929 2222). In case of a serious dispute you can also call the **Hong Kong Police** (☎ 999) 24 hours a day.

(information on sole agents for Sony, Rolex, and others can be obtained by calling the **Consumer Council Hotline** at ☎ 852/2929 2222).

COMPARISON SHOPPING & BARGAINING

The cardinal rule of shopping in Hong Kong is to shop around. Unless you’re planning to buy antiques or art, you’ll probably see the same items in many different shops on both sides of the harbor. If you’ve decided to buy a washable silk blouse for that favorite niece,

220 for example, check a few stores to get an idea of quality, color, and style. With the exception of department stores and designer boutiques, you may be able to bargain for your purchase, though I've noticed that some shopkeepers are less willing to bargain than they once were. Still, at some of the smaller, family-owned stores, a good strategy is to ask what the "best" price might be. You should also ask for a discount if you're buying several items from the same store, and generally speaking, you can get a better price if you pay with cash rather than by credit card. How much you pay will depend on your bargaining skills and how many items you intend to purchase. As for street markets, you most certainly must bargain, though nowadays some vendors will just shake their heads and say their prices are fixed. If vendors are willing to bargain, sometimes just saying the item is too expensive and walking away will suddenly get you that "special price."

In any case, begin your comparison shopping as soon as you arrive in Hong Kong, so that you can get an idea of the differences in prices. Or, if you already know what you want to buy in Hong Kong, check local prices before departing home. I checked two stores in Hong Kong for the price of a 4.2-ounce jar of my favorite moisturizer and found a price difference of HK\$39 (US\$5.05/£2.55) for the same product; yet even the cheaper price was US\$10 (£5) more than what I'd pay for the exact same moisturizer back home.

SHIPPING

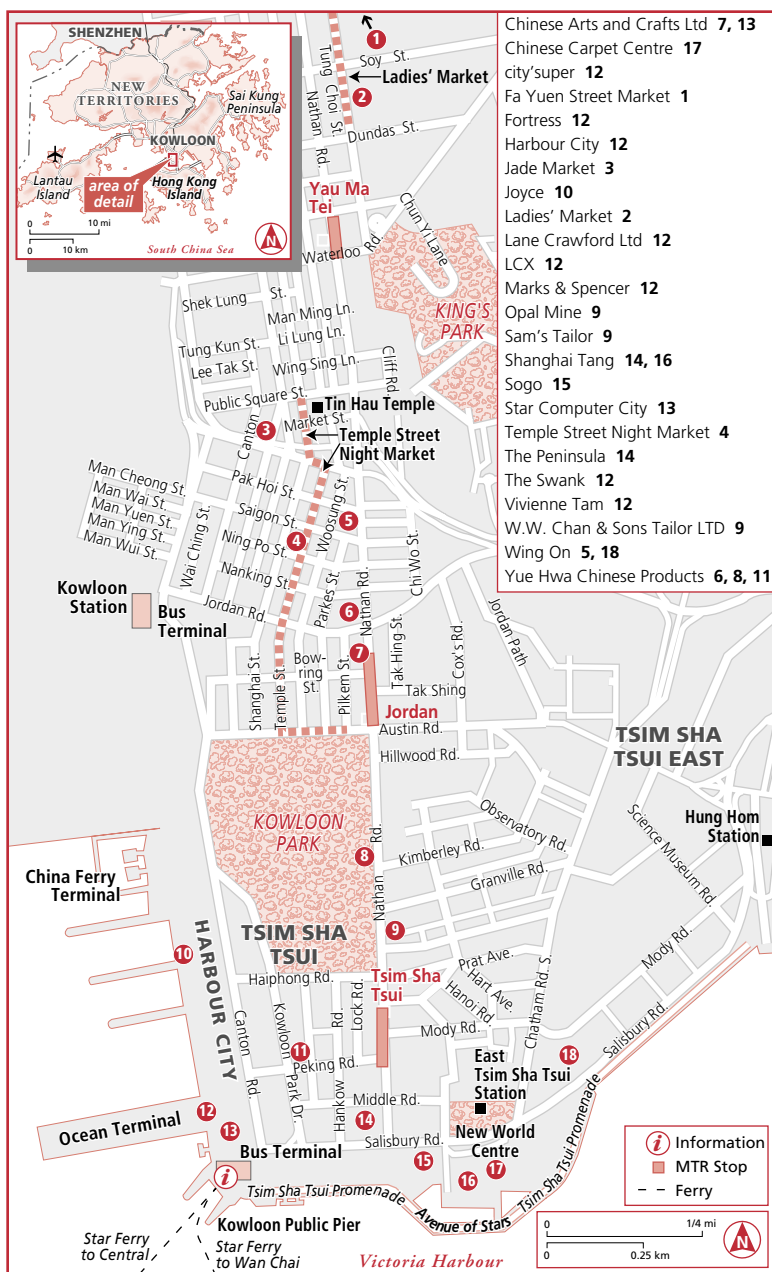
Many stores, especially the larger ones, will pack and ship your purchases home for you. Since basic insurance usually insures only against loss, it's a good idea to buy an all-risk insurance for valuable or fragile goods, available at the store. However, since these policies can be expensive, find out whether using your credit card to make your purchase will provide automatic insurance.

In addition, all upper-bracket and most medium-range hotels offer a parcel-wrapping and mailing service. If you decide to ship your purchases home yourself, the easiest thing to do is to stop by the post office and buy ready-made boxes, which come with everything you need to ship goods home. Packages sent to the United States, Europe, or Australia generally take 6 to 8 weeks by surface mail and 1 week by airmail. For major purchases, you can also buy postal insurance covering damage or loss in transit.

2 GREAT SHOPPING AREAS

Hong Kong is so filled with shops, boutiques, street markets, department stores, and malls, it's hard to think of places where you *can't* shop. Still, there are specific hunting grounds for various products, as well as areas that have more shops than elsewhere.

Tsim Sha Tsui has the greatest concentration of shops in Hong Kong. Nathan Road, which runs through Kowloon for 4km (2½ miles) from the harbor to the border of the New Territories, is lined with stores selling clothing, jewelry, eyeglasses, cameras, electronic goods, crafts from China, shoes, handbags, luggage, watches, and more. You will also find tailors, tattoo artists, and even shops that will carve your name into a wooden chop (a stamp used in place of a signature for official documents). Be sure to explore the side streets radiating off Nathan Road for shops specializing in washable silk and casual clothing and for export overruns of fun, youth-oriented fashions at modest prices, especially Granville Road. Department stores, Chinese emporiums, and shopping arcades, as well as several huge shopping malls are also located in this neighborhood. Harbour City, on Canton Road, for example, is the largest shopping center in Hong Kong. Farther



222 north, in Yau Ma Tei, is Hong Kong's most famous outdoor market, the Temple Street Night Market, with vendors selling clothing, CDs, watches, toys, mobile phones, Chinese souvenirs, and accessories. The nearby Ladies' Market is also great for inexpensive clothing and accessories. Specialized markets in Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok sell everything from clothing and flowers to goldfish, songbirds, and jade.

For upscale shopping, **Central** is where you'll find international designer labels. The Landmark, Prince's Building, Alexandra House, and Chater House boast designer boutiques selling jewelry, clothing, leather goods and more, with names ranging from Armani, Cartier, and Chanel to Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Tiffany & Co. Pacific Place is an upscale shopping mall selling everything from clothing to electronics; ifc mall sells high-end clothing and accessories. Hip Shanghai Tang is a good place to shop for upscale Chinese clothing and souvenirs, while the adjacent six floors in the Pedder Building boasts dozens of clothing boutiques and factory outlet stores. Li Yuen Street East and West street markets are a slice of old Hong Kong, offering inexpensive jackets, watches, children's clothing, and accessories.

Another happy hunting ground is **Causeway Bay** on Hong Kong Island. In contrast to Tsim Sha Tsui, it caters more to locals than to tourists, and prices are often lower. It's always packed with shoppers, giving it a lively, festival-like atmosphere every day of the week. In addition to small shops selling everything from shoes and clothing to Chinese herbs, there's a Japanese department store and a large shopping complex called Times Square specializing in clothing, electronics, and housewares. Also check the area around Jardine's Crescent, an open-air market with cheap clothing, food, and produce. For shoes, get on the tram and head for Happy Valley; on Leighton and Wong Nai Chung roads (near the racecourse), with rows of shoe and handbag shops.

One of my favorite places to shop for inexpensive fashions is **Stanley Market** on the southern end of Hong Kong Island, where vendors sell silk clothing and business and casual wear. In recent years, shops specializing in Chinese crafts and products have also opened in Stanley Market (and of course, I can't resist a leisurely lunch on Stanley's quaint waterfront promenade). Another great shopping destination on southern Hong Kong Island is **Ap Lei Chau** (an island connected to Aberdeen by bridge), where at Horizon Plaza you'll find discount outlets for pricey downtown clothing stores, as well as many antiques and furniture stores.

Antiques and curio lovers also head for **Hollywood Road** and **Cat Street** in the Western District on Hong Kong Island, where everything from snuff bottles to jade carvings and Ming vases is for sale. Chinese handicrafts, including porcelain, furniture, silk clothing, and embroidery, are sold in Chinese-product department stores and Chinese arts-and-crafts shops located on both sides of the harbor. Several deluxe hotels boast arcades housing designer boutiques, most notably The Peninsula and InterContinental.

3 SHOPPING A TO Z

The stores listed below are just a few of the thousands upon thousands in the SAR. For more detailed listings, check HKTb's website, www.discoverhongkong.com/qts, for shops that are members of the HKTb. You might also want to look at *Suzy Gershman's Born to Shop Hong Kong, Shanghai & Beijing*.

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES

Several of the Chinese-product stores, listed under “Chinese Craft Emporiums” below in this chapter, also stock antiques, especially porcelain. Additionally, some hotel shopping arcades have shops specializing in antiques. Antiques buffs should also inquire at HKTb whether international auctioneers Christie’s or Sotheby’s are holding one of their regular sales for antiques in Hong Kong.

The most famous area for antiques and chinoiserie, however, is around **Hollywood Road** and **Cat Street**, both above the Central District on Hong Kong Island. This area gained fame in the 1950s following the 1949 revolution in China (which flooded the market with family possessions). Hollywood Road twists along for a little more than .8km (1/2 mile), with shops selling original and reproduction Qing and Ming dynasty Chinese furniture, original prints, scrolls, porcelain, clay figurines, silver, and rosewood and blackwood furniture, as well as fakes, reproductions, and curios. Near the western end is Upper Lascar Row, popularly known as Cat Street, where sidewalk vendors sell snuff bottles, curios, and odds and ends, as well as reproductions and souvenir items (Mao watches, alarm clocks, and statues are perennial favorites). At the eastern end of Hollywood Road, near Pottinger Street, is a cluster of chic antiques shops displaying furniture and blue-and-white porcelain, including goods from neighboring Asian countries such as Korean chests and Japanese hibachi. If you’re a real antiques collector, I suggest you simply walk through the dozens of shops on and around Hollywood Road. Most are open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 5 or 6pm; some are open Sunday as well.

Another good stomping ground is **Horizon Plaza**, 2 Lee Wing St., Ap Lei Chau, an island connected to Aberdeen by bridge. This huge warehouse has more than a dozen shops selling antiques (take bus no. M590 from Exchange Square in Central to Ap Lei Chau).

The main thing to keep in mind when buying antiques in Hong Kong is that they may not be antique at all. In many instances, it’s obvious you’re buying a reproduction, simply because of the price or because 20 items just like it are sitting in the stall next door, and you may not care simply because you like it. For serious shopping, however, if you cannot tell the difference between originals and reproductions, you’re better off shopping for the real thing at one of the HKTb member stores, which display HKTb’s gold circle and calligraphy logo. Be sure to ask whether an antique has been repaired or restored, as this can affect its value. If the piece is quite expensive, ask that it be tested. (The most important rule is to shop with reputable dealers when buying expensive pieces. And make sure that if the test turns out negative, the shop will pay for the test. As you can see, this process takes time, money, and effort.) Wood, for example, can be tested using carbon-14 dating, while ceramics can be tested with the Oxford Test. The authenticity of bronze, jade, glass, and stone can also be determined through testing. If you’re purchasing anything more than 100 years old, request a Certificate of Antiquity detailing its age and origin, along with a receipt detailing your purchase. Although it’s illegal to smuggle antiques out of mainland China, many smuggled items do in fact end up in Hong Kong, where it is legal to then sell, buy, and own them. Needless to say, this has caused friction between China and Hong Kong, especially when international auction houses have sold well-documented smuggled Chinese antiques.

Arch Angel Antiques ★ Established in 1988 by an American and Dutch couple, this is one of Hollywood Road’s largest and most reputable shops for Asian antiques and art, including museum-quality ceramics, furniture, Ming dynasty figurines, terra-cotta animals, boxes, and collectibles. In addition to this three-story main shop, nearby galleries (which the owners will show you on request) showcase ancient ceramics, bronze

224 Buddhas, terra-cotta figures, stone sculptures, and contemporary Vietnamese art. Every antique item for sale is accompanied by a detailed certificate of authenticity. The main shop is open daily from 9:30am to 6:30pm. 53–55 Hollywood Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2851 6848**. www.archangelgalleries.com. MTR: Central.

Cat Street Galleries Cat Street Galleries, located between Hollywood Road and Cat Street, houses several individually owned booths of arts and crafts and expensive antiques from the various dynasties, making it a good place to begin an antiques shopping odyssey. It's open Monday through Friday from 11am to 6pm and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 38 Lok Ku Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2543 1609**. MTR: Sheung Wan. Bus: 26 from Des Voeux Rd. Central (in front of the HSBC headquarters) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., at Man Mo Temple. Or take the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator to Hollywood Rd. and turn right.

Dragon Culture ★★ Finds All serious fans of Chinese antiques eventually end up here. One of the largest and most knowledgeable purveyors of antiques in Hong Kong, owner Victor Choi began collecting Chinese antiques in the 1970s, traveling throughout China from province to province and to all the major cities. He shares his expertise in three books: *Collecting Chinese Antiquities in Hong Kong* (a must for both the novice and the experienced buyer), *Horses for Eternity* (proceeds from this go to charity), and *Antiquities through the Ages*, all of which you can purchase in his shop. Choi has also given lectures on Chinese antiques in the HKTb's Meet the People program. With another gallery in New York, he carries Neolithic pottery, three-color glazed pottery horses from the Tang dynasty, Ming porcelains, bronzes, jade, woodcarvings, snuff bottles, calligraphy, paintings, brush pots, stone carvings, and more, and also guarantees authenticity for all items he sells. According to Choi, prices for antiques are a fourth of what they'd fetch in New York. He's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 231 Hollywood Rd., Sheung Wan. ☎ **852/2545 8098**. www.dragonculture.com.hk. MTR: Sheung Wan. Bus: 26 from Des Voeux Rd. Central (in front of the HSBC headquarters) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., at Man Mo Temple. Or take the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator to Hollywood Rd. and turn right.

Teresa Coleman Fine Arts Established in 1982, this gallery is best known for its collection of antique embroidered costumes and textiles from the Chinese imperial court, with approximately 2,000 pieces dating from the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). Complimenting the collection are costume accessories and ornaments, including fans and paintings created in China during the 18th and 19th centuries expressly for the Western export market. Teresa Coleman also owns the nearby Tibetan Gallery, 55 Wyndham St., Central (☎ **852/2530 4863**). Teresa Coleman Fine Arts is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30am to 6pm. 79 Wyndham St., Central. ☎ **852/2526 2450**. www.teresacoleman.com. MTR: Central.

True Arts & Curios Finds This tiny shop is so packed with antiques and curios that there's barely room for customers. Although everything from snuff bottles, porcelain, antique silver, earrings, hair pins, and children's shoes (impractical but darling, with curled toes) are in stock, the true finds here are some 2,000 intricate woodcarvings, pried from the doors and windows of dismantled temples and homes. You'll find them hanging from the ceiling and in bins, many of them dusty and grimy from years of neglect. The best ones are carved from a single piece of wood, masterpieces in workmanship and available at modest prices. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm and Sunday from 2 to 6pm. 89–91 Hollywood Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2559 1485**. MTR: Sheung Wan.

Wing Tei It's not unusual to find (and hear) a vigorous game of mah-jongg being played at the back of this family-owned shop, which claims to be the biggest wholesaler of porcelain in Hong Kong. It offers lots of choices in the lower to medium price range, making it a good bet for casual collectors looking for antique home decor. Antique furniture, woodcarvings, curios, and other objects are also for sale. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm. 190 Hollywood Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2547 4755**. MTR: Sheung Wan. Bus: 26 from Des Voeux Rd. Central (in front of the HSBC headquarters) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., at Man Mo Temple. Or take the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator to Hollywood Rd. and turn right.

ART GALLERIES

A global mania for art from mainland China has led to a boom in galleries in Hong Kong, many of which also offer contemporary art from other Asian countries as well. The galleries below are two of the most well known. For art lovers with pockets less deep, **Picture This** (www.picturethiscollection.com), with two locations in Central at 9 Queen's Rd. Central, on the 6th floor (☎ **852/2525 2820**), and shop 212 of the Prince's Building at 10 Chater Rd. (☎ **852/2525 2803**), sells vintage posters (including original travel and movie posters), antique maps, photographs of old Hong Kong and China, and other memorabilia from both China and the West.

Hanart TZ Gallery This very tiny gallery (in the same building as American Express) has been exhibiting, promoting, and selling experimental art from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan since 1983. Its owner/curator, Chang Tsong-zung, has given lectures on the contemporary local art scene for HKTb's Meet the People program. Exhibition space is small, so be sure to ask for recent catalogs. It's open Monday through Friday from 10am to 6:30pm and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 202 Henley Building, 2nd floor, 5 Queen's Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2526 9019**. www.hanart.com. MTR: Central.

Schoeni Art Gallery ★ This 465-sq.-m (5,000-sq.-ft.) gallery shows contemporary Chinese oil paintings by both up-and-coming and established artists. A smaller gallery at nearby 27 Hollywood Rd. (☎ **852/2542 3143**) specializes in contemporary works by European and Asian artists. Both are open Monday through Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm. 21–31 Old Bailey St., Central. ☎ **852/2869 8802**. www.schoeni.com.hk. MTR: Central.

CARPETS

Hong Kong is a good place to shop for Chinese, Indian, Persian, and other types of carpets and rugs. Additionally, the locally made Tai Ping carpets are famous the world over, produced with virgin wool imported from New Zealand.

For imported carpets from India and the Middle East, several specialty shops are in the **Hollywood Road** and **Wyndham Street** areas in Central. For hand-knotted wool or silk Chinese carpets, be sure to check out the section “Chinese Craft Emporiums” listed below.

The **Chinese Carpet Centre**, in Shop LO21 on the ground floor of the New World Centre at 18–24 Salisbury Rd., Sim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2730 7230**; www.cccrugs.com.hk; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), stocks more than 100,000 Chinese carpets, mostly handmade of silk, wool, or cotton but also machine-made acrylic, from modern to classical designs.

For **Tai Ping** carpets, a conveniently located showroom is in Shop 213 of the Prince's Building, a high-end mall next to the Mandarin Hotel, 10 Chater Rd., Central (☎ **852/2522 7138**; www.taipingcarpets.com; MTR: Central). If you don't see what you like, you can have one custom-designed, specifying the color, thickness, and direction of the weave. It takes about 3 months to make a carpet; the company will ship it to you.

226 For one-stop shopping, head to **Horizon Plaza**, 2 Lee Wing St., Ap Lei Chau, warehouse of mostly furniture and accessory shops, including more than a dozen stores selling Persian, hand-knotted Oriental, and other rugs (bus: M590 from Exchange Square in Central to Ap Lei Chau, on the south side of Hong Kong Island, near Aberdeen). The complex has about 50 shops, and most are open daily from about 10am to 6 or 7pm.

CHINA (PORCELAIN)

Chinaware, a fine, translucent earthenware, was first brought from China to Europe by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Its name was subsequently shortened to “china,” and Hong Kong remains one of the best places in the world to shop for both antique (mainly from the Manchu/Qing dynasty, 1644–1912) and contemporary Chinese porcelain. Traditional motifs include bamboo, flowers, dragons, carp, and cranes, which adorn everything from dinner plates to vases, lamps, and jars. Also popular is translucent porcelain with a rice grain design. And, of course, European and Japanese china is also available in Hong Kong, including Meissen, Wedgwood, and Noritake.

Probably the best place to begin looking for Chinese porcelain is at one of the Chinese-product stores, listed below under “Chinese Craft Emporiums.” In addition, malls and shopping centers like Pacific Place in Admiralty, Times Square in Causeway Bay, and Harbour City in Tsim Sha Tsui also have porcelain shops (see “Megamalls & Shopping Centers,” later in this chapter). Nowadays, contemporary china is generally both dishwasher- and microwave-safe.

Overjoy Porcelain Factory With more than 400 stock designs, dinner services are the specialty here. You may also mix and match, or even create your very own design. Sets are usually commissioned for 6, 8, or 12 diners and take 4 to 6 weeks to complete. Otherwise, other items for sale include lamps and those cute Chinese mugs with lids. The store will ship purchases abroad and make free deliveries to Hong Kong hotels. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm, but because it's in the New Territories, you'd be wise to call first. Or, visit its smaller shop on the first floor of Fleet Arcade, Fenwick Pier Lung King Street, Wan Chai (☎ 852/2511 2763; MTR: Wan Chai), open the same hours. 1st floor, Block B of Kwai Hing Industrial Building, 10–18 Chun Pin St., Kwai Chung, New Territories. ☎ 852/2487 0615. MTR: Kwai Hing station; then take a taxi.

Wah Tung China Company ★ This is reputedly the largest company specializing in hand-painted antique porcelain reproductions, especially huge pieces like vases and garden stools. Its vast collection covers all Chinese artistic periods, including Song dynasty celadons, Canton Rose, Chinoiserie, Chinese Imari, and 17th- and 18th-century Chinese export porcelain. Although new owners have changed the focus of the company to a more European look (a move, no doubt, to entice the mainland nouveau riche), the Aberdeen warehouse, with 20,000 items on display, has plenty of Asian reproductions in stock. An additional small showroom is on the 7th floor of the Lee Roy Commercial Building, 57–59 Hollywood Rd. (☎ 852/2543 2823), but serious shoppers will want to make the trek to Aberdeen (but be sure to call first). Both locations are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm and Saturday from 9am to 5pm. 14–15 Floor, Grand Marine Ind. Building, 3 Yue Fung St., Tin Wan, Aberdeen. ☎ 852/2873 2272. www.wahtungchina.com. There is no direct bus from Central; you are best off taking a taxi.

CHINESE CRAFT EMPORIUMS

In addition to the shops listed here, which specialize in traditional and contemporary arts, crafts, clothing, souvenirs, and gift items from China, several souvenir shops are in

Stanley Market (located in Stanley on the southern end of Hong Kong Island) that carry lacquered boxes, china, embroidered tablecloths, figurines, and other Chinese imports. Other markets with Chinese souvenirs include Li Yuen Street East and West in Central and the Temple Street Night Market in Kowloon, both described later in this chapter under “Markets.”

Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd ★★ In business for more than 50 years, this is the best upscale chain for Chinese arts and crafts and is one of the safest places to purchase jade. Prices are high, but so is the quality. You can also buy elegant silk dresses and blouses, beautiful Chinese jackets, arts and crafts, antiques, jewelry, watches, carpets, cloisonné, porcelain, furs, stone carvings, Chinese herbs and medicine, rosewood furniture, chinaware, Chinese teas, and embroidered tablecloths or pillowcases here—in short, virtually all the upmarket items that China produces. It’s a great place for gifts in all price ranges. The main shop, spread on two floors and located in Star House near the Star Ferry, is open daily from 10am to 9:30pm. Branches are conveniently located in the JD Mall, 233 Nathan Rd., Kowloon (☎ **852/2730 0061**; MTR: Jordan); Shop 220 in Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (☎ **852/2523 3933**; MTR: Admiralty); and in the China Resources Building, 26 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2827 6667**; MTR: Wan Chai). 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2735 4061**. www.crcetail.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Shanghai Tang ★★ You are stepping back into the Shanghai of the 1930s when you enter this small but upscale two-level store with its gleaming wooden and tiled floors, raised cashier cubicles, ceiling fans, and helpful clerks wearing classical Chinese jackets. This is Chinese chic at its best, with neatly stacked rows of updated versions of traditional Chinese clothing, ranging from cheongsams and silk pajamas to padded jackets, caps, and shoes—all in bright, contemporary colors and styles. If you’re looking for a lime-green or shocking pink padded jacket, this is the place for you. Shanghai tailors are on hand to custom-make something for you. You will also find children’s clothing and funky accessories and home furnishings, from silk-covered photo albums and beaded picture frames to funky clutch purses and silver chopsticks.

Shopping for Souvenir Foodstuffs & Teas

Both Chinese Arts and Crafts and Yue Hwa sell Chinese teas and herbs, but for a bigger selection, head to **city’super**, which can only be described as a giant food department store, filled with every foodstuff you can imagine (and many more you cannot). Not only does it have the usual food items, drinks, and condiments, but it also imports foodstuffs found nowhere else in Hong Kong, like packages of Japanese curry rice or biscuits from England. It also has a good selection of Chinese teas, including so-called blossom teas, with buds that open like a flower when you pour hot water over them (a great gift for the tea drinkers back home). You’ll find the largest city’super in Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2375 8222**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), with smaller outlets at Times Square, Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2506 2888**; MTR: Causeway Bay), and ifc mall, Central (☎ **852/2234 7128**; MTR: Central).

228 Tiny branches of Shanghai Tang are in The Peninsula hotel (☎ 852/2537 2888) and Hotel InterContinental (☎ 852/2723 1012), both on Salisbury Road in Tsim Sha Tsui (MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), as well as Shop 237 in Pacific Place (☎ 852/2918 1505; MTR: Admiralty), and both east and west halls of Hong Kong International Airport (☎ 852/2261 0606 and ☎ 852/2261 0318, respectively), but the main shop has the largest selection. Its sign is hidden under the eaves of the Pedder Building, so you may have to search for it. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 8pm and Sunday from 11am to 7pm. Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central. ☎ 852/2525 7333. www.shanghaitang.com. MTR: Central.

Yue Hwa Chinese Products Whereas Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd (see above) caters to an upmarket international clientele with wide, spacious aisles and pricey goods, Yue Hwa is decidedly more for the local market, a bit disorderly, and always packed with locals shopping for both traditional Chinese and everyday products. The main shop in Yau Ma Tei stocks a wild assortment of wares, from household goods to clothing, shoes, jade jewelry, arts and crafts, china, linens, furniture, tea, foodstuffs, medicinal herbs like dried sea horses, and even antlers. It was here that I bought some friends a gag wedding gift years ago—Chinese whiskey with preserved lizards in it, for only HK\$25 (US\$3.25/£1.75)—definitely a bargain. I also love to browse its clothing department, especially the sales racks. The store is open daily from 10am to 10pm.

The branch stores are more upscale and specialize primarily in Chinese handicrafts, clothing, and jewelry, with convenient locations at Park Lane Shopper's Boulevard at 143–161 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2739 3888; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); 1 Kowloon Park Dr. and Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2317 5333; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); 678 Nathan Rd., Mong Kok (☎ 852/2395 7951; MTR: Mong Kok); 55 Des Voeux Rd. Central, Central District (☎ 852/2522 2333; MTR: Central); and 83 Wan Chai Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2611 9622; MTR: Wan Chai). 301–309 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon. ☎ 852/3511 2222. www.yuehwa.com. MTR: Jordan.

DEPARTMENT STORES

It probably comes as no surprise to learn that the SAR has a great many department stores. Wing On and Lane Crawford, two upmarket local chain department stores, offer a nice selection of clothing, accessories, and local and imported designer fashions, gift items, and cosmetics. Japanese and English department stores are also quite popular with the locals.

Local Department Stores

Lane Crawford Ltd ★ This upscale department store, founded in 1850, is a hometown favorite for its large clothing and accessory departments for the whole family, including shoes, handbags, jewelry, silver, crystal, and cosmetics. It has branches on both sides of the harbor and is similar to established chain stores in England and the United States, with all the usual top-name brands.

This main store, with 7,618 sq. m (82,000 sq. ft.) of designer goods and consignment art that make it look more like a gallery than a store, is open daily from 10am to 9pm. Other branches can be found at: Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2118 3668; MTR: Admiralty), which specializes in designer collections of furniture, linens, lighting, chinaware, and decorative accessories, all arranged as though it were in a luxury apartment; Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2118 3638; MTR: Causeway Bay); and Shop 100, Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, 3 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2118 3428; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). Bargain hunters should head to the

Lane Crawford Warehouse, on the 25th floor of Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing St., Ap Lei Chau (☎ 852/2118 3403), where last-season's clothing, accessories and home decor are sold at deeply discounted prices. Podium 3, ifc mall, Central. ☎ 852/2118 3388. www.lane-crawford.com. MTR: Central.

Wing On Founded in Shanghai more than a century ago and one of Hong Kong's oldest department stores, this main shop offers a wide selection of clothing, jewelry, accessories, and household items, with conveniently located branches at Wing On Kowloon Center across from the Nathan Hotel, 345 Nathan Rd., Kowloon (☎ 852/2710 6288; MTR: Jordan) and at Wing On Plaza, 62 Mody Rd., in Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2196 1388; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). The main branch is open daily from 10am to 7:30pm. 211 Des Voeux Rd., Sheung Wan. ☎ 852/2852 1888. www.wingonet.com. MTR: Sheung Wan.

Other Department Stores

Harvey Nichols This department store got its start in 1813, when Mr. Harvey opened a linen shop in London; Mr. Nichols joined the store in 1820. No doubt the two gentlemen would have difficulty recognizing their namesake today, especially in this very posh setting on the other side of the world. It has all the usual suspects in designer names, as well as some brands carried nowhere else in Hong Kong, giving it a leg up in the city's very competitive fashion and accessories market. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 9pm and Sunday from 10am to 7pm. The Landmark, 15 Queen's Rd. Central, Central District. ☎ 852/2301 0165. MTR: Central.

Marks & Spencer Known in Britain for its great prices on clothing and affectionately nicknamed "Marks & Sparks," this import from the United Kingdom is open daily from 10am to 8pm. You might be able to find larger, Western sizes here for clothing and shoes, though many of the fashions are in smaller, Asian sizes. It also has a couple branches on the Hong Kong side, including Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2923 7972; MTR: Causeway Bay). Ocean Centre, Harbour City, Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2926 3344. www.marksandspencer.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Seibu One of the largest department-store chains in Japan (its Tokyo store is the third-largest department store in the world), this was Seibu's first store to open outside Japan. An upscale, sophisticated department store targeting Hong Kong's affluent yuppie population, it is the epitome of chic, from its Art Deco Italian furnishings to fashions from the world's top design houses. More than 65% of its merchandise is European, and 25% is from Japan. The Loft department carries well-designed housewares and gifts, while Seed is the place to go for the latest fashions. The supermarket in the basement is stocked with imported goods. It's open Sunday through Wednesday from 10:30am to 8pm and Thursday through Saturday from 10:30am to 9pm. There's a branch in Langham Place, Portland Street, Mong Kok (☎ 852/2269 1888; MTR: Mong Kok). Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ☎ 852/2971 3888. MTR: Admiralty.

Sogo Sogo is much larger and more egalitarian than the other Japanese department stores listed above; its goods are cheaper and its prices lower. Consequently, the 12-story store is often packed (particularly on Sun) with families shopping for clothing, toys, furniture, household goods, and electrical appliances. In the second basement is a large supermarket. A small, classier subterranean branch is located across the harbor, at 12 Salisbury Rd. in front of the InterContinental, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/3556 1212). Both are open daily from 10am to 10pm. 555 Hennessy Rd., Causeway Bay. ☎ 852/2833 8338. www.sogo.com.hk. MTR: Causeway Bay.

Because Hong Kong has no import duty or sales tax and because the latest models are often on sale here months before they're available in other countries, shopping for electronic goods has long been a popular tourist pastime. However, prices have increased for electronic products in recent years, so if you're interested in buying a digital camera, camcorder, DVD or MP3 player, computer, mobile phone, or other electronic product, be sure to check prices at home before coming to Hong Kong to make sure that what you want to buy here is really a bargain. Then, head to Tsim Sha Tsui for the many shops along Nathan Road and surrounding streets, to malls, and to dedicated electronics shopping centers. Compare prices first, and to be on the safe side, shop only in stores that are members of HKTB and skip those that do not have price tags. Otherwise, you may end up buying a discontinued model at inflated prices (see "Caveat Emptor," p. 219). **Fortress** (www.fortress.com.hk) is a big-name chain offering cameras, computers, cellphones, home appliances, and other electronic and electric goods, with locations throughout Hong Kong, including major shopping malls and tourist areas. Convenient outlets are Shop no. 333A, Harbour City (☎ **852/3101 1413**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); 14-16 Han-kow Rd. (☎ **852/2311 2318**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); Melbourne Plaza, 33 Queen's Rd., Central (☎ **852/2121 1077**; MTR: Central); and Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (☎ **852/2506 0031**; MTR: Causeway Bay).

For computers and software, try dedicated malls such as **Star Computer City**, located on the second floor of the Star House across from the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry terminal at 3 Salisbury Rd., or the **Computer Mall**, located on the 10th and 11th floors of the Windsor House, 311 Gloucester Rd. in Causeway Bay. **Times Square**, a mall in Causeway Bay, has computer and camera stores on its seventh and eighth floors, including Fortress (see above) and **Broadway**, another chain you can trust. In any case, whatever you buy, be sure to inspect every piece of equipment before leaving the store (do not assume what's inside a box matches the picture on the outside and check to make sure instructions are in English), make sure equipment works and that its voltage is compatible with yours at home, and obtain warranties and receipts. For computers, look for complete packages that offer computer, printer, scanner, and software at competitive prices, and be sure that the loaded software is in English.

A fun place for adventuresome shoppers and browsers is **Apliu Street** (beside Cheung Sha Wan MTR Station and parallel to Cheung Sha Wan Rd.), which functions as a street market for secondhand electronic goods and a hodgepodge of junk, including fishing poles, pots and pans, walking sticks, flashlights, chain saws, and more. The market, which caters almost exclusively to locals with nary a tourist in sight, is open weekdays from about 11am to 8pm and weekends from 11am to 11pm. You need to know your goods here, and be sure to bargain fiercely. Don't neglect the many stores behind the vendors, either, selling new and used cellphones, watches, batteries, and more.

FASHION

Ever since Hong Kong received a large influx of Shanghaiese tailors following the revolution in China in 1949, Hong Kong has been a center for the fashion industry. Today, clothing remains one of Hong Kong's best buys, and many major international design houses have boutiques here; several have factories as well, mostly across the border in mainland China. Watch out for a number of Hong Kong designers, including Vivienne Tam, Walter Ma, Lu Lu Cheung, Peter Lau, William Tang, Benny Yeung, and Barney Cheng.

For a wide range in prices, the department stores listed above are best for one-stop shopping for the entire family, as are Hong Kong's many malls and shopping centers. Otherwise,

small, family-owned shops abound in both Tsim Sha Tsui and Stanley Market, offering casual wear, washable silk outfits, and other clothing at very affordable prices.

If you're looking for international designer brands and don't care about price, several arcades and shopping centers are known for their brand names. **The Landmark**, located on Des Voeux Road Central in Central, is an ultrachic shopping complex boasting the highest concentration of international brand names in Hong Kong, including Gucci, Tiffany & Co., Polo/Ralph Lauren, Manolo Blahnik, Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, Sonia Rykiel, Louis Vuitton, Jimmy Choo, and Dior, as well as British luxury import Harvey Nichols, restaurants, and other shops. (Though for mainland Chinese these brands will be priced cheaper, Westerners will not find any particular bargains.) The shops here are generally open daily from 10:30am to 7:30pm. Other nearby fashion centers known for their international designer boutiques (and linked to the Landmark via elevated walkways) include the **Prince's Building**, next to the Mandarin Hotel, with boutiques for a. testoni, Chanel, Cartier, Ralph Lauren, and others; **Alexandra House** with outlets for Prada and Dolce & Gabbana among others; and **Chater House**, with several Armani shops that sell everything from household items to clothing and cosmetics.

Across the harbor, **The Peninsula** hotel, on Salisbury Road in Tsim Sha Tsui, has concessions for Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Goyard, Chanel, Dior, Shanghai Tang, Prada, and Manolo Blahnik, to name only a few of the 80-some shops. Tsim Sha Tsui's **Canton Road**, with a growing number of designer shops, has emerged as Hong Kong's Champs-Élysées, with Dior, Salvatore Ferragamo, Chanel, Louis Vuitton (the world's largest), Hermès, Gucci, Prada, Hugo Boss, Armani and other stores lining the street.

For trendier designs catering to an upwardly mobile younger crowd, check out the **Joyce** chain ★, the first fashion house in Hong Kong, established in the 1970s by Joyce Ma to satisfy Hong Kong women's cravings for European designs. Today her stores carry clothing by Galliano, Vera Wang, Alexander McQueen, Rei Kawakubo (Comme des Garçons), and others on the cutting edge of fashion. You'll find Joyce shops at 18 Queen's Rd. Central, in Central (☎ 852/2810 1120; MTR: Central); Shop 232 in Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2523 5944; MTR: Admiralty); and Shop G106 in the Gateway, Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2367 8128; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). Bargain hunters in the know head also to the **Joyce Warehouse**, located on the south end of Hong Kong Island near Aberdeen, on the 21st floor of Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing St., Ap Lei Chau (☎ 852/2814 8313; bus: M590 from Exchange Square in Central to Ap Lei Chau). You never know what you may find among the discounted, off-season designer wear, but discounts run 30% to 70% off the original prices and I have found some delightful bargains here (open daily 10am–7pm). **The Swank**, too, carries the latest fashions from international designers like Kenzo, Galliano, and Noriko Araki from its stores in Shop 202 of Alexandra House, Central (☎ 852/2868 6990; MTR: Central); Shop 230 of Pacific Place (☎ 852/2736 8567; MTR: Admiral); and Shop 103B of Ocean Centre, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2175 4228; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui).

For young, fun fashion, Granville Road, east of Nathan Road, attracts teenagers and 20-somethings looking for clothing, lingerie, accessories, and cosmetics at bargain prices. Cheap, too, are factory outlets and street markets (see below). For young shoppers with money to burn, **Fashion Walk**, 9 Kingston St., Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2890 5200; MTR: Causeway Bay), carries hip clothing, accessories, and beauty products, from DKNY Jeans to Marc by Marc Jacobs; it's open from noon to 10pm daily. Otherwise, Hong Kong's number-one draw for young shoppers is **LCX**, which occupies most of Level 3 of Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/3102 3668). Cutting-edge fashions and

232 accessories here include those by Fossil, Agnès b, Bauhaus, and Swatch, as well as many names I'm too old to recognize. It's open Sunday to Thursday 10:30am to 9:30pm and Friday and Saturday from 10:30am to 10:30pm.

For Chinese clothing, best bets include Chinese department stores (see “Chinese Craft Emporiums,” earlier in this chapter), Shanghai Tang (p. 227), and Hong Kong's many markets (see “Markets,” below). Another, albeit pricey, alternative is **Blanc de Chine**, with locations on the second floor of the Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central (☎ 852/2524 7875; MTR: Central), and in the Landmark, Des Voeux Road Central (☎ 852/2104 7934; MTR: Central). In addition to both Western and Chinese clothing, these classy stores also produce their own chic line of Chinese clothing. You'll find **Vivienne Tam's** Chinese designs with a Western twist at Shop 309, the Landmark, Des Voeux Road Central, Central (☎ 852/2868 2826; MTR: Central); Shop 209, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2918 0238; MTR: Admiralty); Shop 302, Times Square, Causeway Bay (☎ 852/2506 0098; MTR: Causeway Bay); and Shop 215 of Ocean Centre, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2117 0028; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). She also has an outlet store in Citygate, Shop 245 (☎ 852/2265 8808; MTR: Tung Chung), with discounted prices.

Factory Outlets & Discount Stores

Savvy shoppers head for Hong Kong's factory outlets to buy at least some of their clothes. These outlets sell excess stock, overruns, and quality-control rejects; because these items have been made for the export market, the sizes are Western. Bargains include clothes made of silk, cashmere, cotton, linen, knitwear, and wool, and some outlets have men's and children's clothing as well. Some manufacturers even produce clothing for famous designer labels, though it's not unusual to find labels cut out.

However, there are a few caveats about shopping in factory outlets. For one thing, you never know in advance what will be on sale, and sometimes the selection is disappointing. Some outlets do not have fitting rooms, and it's important to carefully examine garments inside and out for tears and stains. What's more, some outlets are indistinguishable from upmarket boutiques, with prices to match. Unfortunately, it seems that some shops simply call themselves “factory outlets” because that's what tourists are looking for. Thus, unless you have lots of time, it may not be worth your while to make the trek in search of a good deal. Several street markets—notably Ladies' Market in Mong Kok (see “Markets” below)—also serve as outlets for mainland factories.

On Hong Kong Island, the best-known building that houses factory-outlet showrooms is the **Pedder Building**, 12 Pedder St., Central. More than 30 shops are located on five floors, though many of these shops are not factory outlets—they're simply regular boutiques with the same merchandise at the same prices found at their other branches. In addition, a new trend seems to be shops selling used designerwear, shoes, and handbags, making it good for bargains in last season's fashions. The Pedder Building also has shops selling jewelry, accessories, and home decor. In any case, it's convenient to have so many shops in one building and it's fun to just poke around here.

Otherwise, the best place for one-stop discount shopping is **Citygate**, located at the end of Tung Chung MTR Line on Lantau island (☎ 852/2109 2933; www.citygateoutlets.com.hk; MTR: Tung Chung). Hong Kong's only outlet mall, it offers discounts of 30% to 70% off international brand names, including Bally, Bauhaus, Benetton, Esprit, Laura Ashley, Vivienne Tam, Timberland, adidas, Nike, and more. Note, however, that not all the shops at Citygate are outlets. Because of its late hours, you can cap off a trip to the Giant Buddha (see p. 264 in chapter 11) with a shopping expedition here. Open hours differ depending on the shop, but all are open daily, most of them from about 11am to 9:30 or 10pm.

JEWELRY

According to the HKTB, Hong Kong has more jewelry stores per square mile than any other city in the world. Gems are imported duty-free from all over the world, and Hong Kong is reputedly the world's fourth-largest trading center for diamonds. Gold jewelry, both imported and locally made, is required by law to carry a stamp stating the accurate gold content.

Jade, of course, remains the most popular item of jewelry for both visitors and Chinese. It's believed to protect wearers against illness and ward off bad luck. The two categories of jade are jadeite and nephrite. Jadeite (also called Burmese jade) is generally white to apple green in color, although it also comes in hues of brown, red, orange, yellow, and even lavender. It may be mottled, but the most expensive variety is a translucent emerald green. Nephrite, which is less expensive, is usually a dark green or off-white. True jade is so hard that supposedly even a knife leaves no scratch. Unless you know your jade, your best bet is to shop in one of the Chinese-product stores, listed earlier in this chapter under "Chinese Craft Emporiums." For less expensive pieces and souvenirs, visit the Jade Market, described below under "Markets."

Pearls, almost all of which are cultured, are also popular among shoppers in Hong Kong. Both sea- and freshwater pearls in all shapes, sizes, colors, and lusters can be found for sale in Hong Kong. For inexpensive strands, check the vendors at the Jade Market. Many shops along Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui also retail pearls.

Opals, most of which are mined in Australia but cut in Hong Kong, are also popular buys. Prices vary depending on quality, with black opals the most expensive and white the most common. To get an idea of prices, stop by the **Opal Mine**, 92 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2721 9933; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), which operates its own mine in Australia and sells both jewelry and loose stones.

MARKETS

Markets offer the best deals in Hong Kong, though a lot depends on how well you can bargain. Be sure to scrutinize the items that interest you carefully, since you won't be able to return them. Check clothing for faults, tears, cuts, marks, and uneven seams and hemlines. Make sure electronic gadgets work; the cute but cheap alarm clock I bought my son lasted only a week.

Hong Kong Island

Jardine's Crescent The open-air market that spreads along this narrow street in Causeway Bay is a traditional Chinese market for cheap clothing and accessories, including shoes, bras, underwear, costume jewelry, handbags, hair accessories, children's clothing, and cosmetics. Though you may not find something worth taking home at this very local market, it's fun just to walk around. The nearest MTR station is Causeway Bay (take exit F), but you can also reach this area easily by tram. It's open daily from 11am to 8pm.

Li Yuen Street East & West These two steep alleys are parallel pedestrian lanes in the heart of the Central District, very narrow, and often congested with human traffic. Stalls are packed with Chinese jackets, handbags, clothes, scarves, sweaters, toys, baby clothes, watches, shoes, bolts of cloth, makeup, umbrellas, needles and thread, knickknacks, and even bras. Bargaining is the name of the game here. Don't neglect the open-fronted shops behind the stalls; some of these are boutiques selling fashionable but cheap clothing as well as shoes, purses, and accessories. These two streets are located just a couple of minutes' walk from the Central MTR station, between Des Voeux Road Central and Queen's Road Central. Vendors are open daily from 11am to 7pm.

234 Stanley ★★ Stanley Market, rather small and easily navigated, is probably the most popular and best-known market in Hong Kong. Located on the southern coast of Hong Kong Island on a small peninsula, it's a great place to buy inexpensive clothing, especially sportswear, cashmere sweaters, silk blouses and dresses, and even linen blazers and outfits suitable for work. Men's, women's, and children's clothing is available. Shopkeepers are not keen about bargaining unless you're buying several pieces, no doubt because tourists come here by the busload. In fact, Stanley is not as cheap as it once was, many shops have remodeled into chic boutiques, and old-timers complain that Stanley has become a tourist trap. Still, you're bound to find at least something you're wild about, especially if you like cheap, fun fashions. The inventory changes continuously—one month it seems everyone is selling tie-dyed shirts, the next it's linen suits, washable silk, Chinese traditional jackets, or Gore-Tex coats. I usually walk through the market first, taking note of things I like and which stores they're in, comparing prices along the way. Most stores carry the same products, so it pays to comparison-shop. In addition to clothing, there are also many souvenir shops selling Chinese paintings, embroidered linen, beaded purses, handicrafts, curios, and jewelry. And of course, no trip to Stanley would be complete without a meal in one of its laid-back restaurants (p. 163).

To reach Stanley, take bus no. 6, 6A, 6X, or 260 from Central's Exchange Square bus terminal (bus no. 260 also stops in front of Pacific Place) or Minibus no. 40 from Causeway Bay. The bus ride to Stanley, a trip in itself due to hair-raising curves and coastal vistas, takes approximately 30 heart-stopping minutes. From Kowloon, take bus no. 973 from Mody Road in Tsim Sha Tsui East or from Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. The shops are open daily from 9:30 or 10am to about 6:30pm.

Wanchai Market This local market, centered on Spring Garden Lane and Wan Chai Road (between Johnston Rd., Tai Yuen St., and Queen's Rd. East), is very much a local market, attracting housewives with its wet markets and household goods, but also young office workers with its stalls selling clothing, shoes, and handbags originally meant for export at very competitive prices. It's located near the Wanchai MTR Station and is open daily from 7am to 7pm.

Kowloon

Fa Yuen Street Market Located just a few minutes' walk north of Ladies' Market, north of Mong Kok Road, this street market is geared to local residents rather than tourists and offers clothing for women and children, as well as toys and produce. With laundry fluttering from the apartments above, this is a typical Mong Kok Street, full of character. The nearest MTR station is Prince Edward, and stalls are open from 9:30am to 8pm daily.

Jade Market Jade, believed by the Chinese to hold mystical powers and to protect its wearer, is available in all sizes, colors, and prices at the Jade Market, located at the junction of Kansu and Battery streets in two temporary, tentlike structures in the Yau Ma Tei District. The jade comes from Burma, China, Australia, and Taiwan, and is sold here by licensed merchants. Still, unless you know your jade, you won't want to make any expensive purchases here. Rather, come for inexpensive jade bangles, pendants, earrings, figurines, and gifts. This market is also recommended for pearls, especially inexpensive freshwater pearls from China. Otherwise, this market is fun just for its unique atmosphere.

The Jade Market is open daily from 10am to about 4pm (mornings are best), though vendors stay until 6pm on busy days like Sunday. It's located halfway between the Yau Ma Tei and Jordan MTR stations or is less than a 30-minute walk from the Star Ferry.

Ladies' Market ★ If you want to shop at a market on the Kowloon side in the daytime, this very large market is your best bet. Stretching along Tung Choi Street (between Argyle and Dundas sts.) in Mong Kok, it serves as a lively market for inexpensive women's and children's fashions, shoes, socks, hosiery, jewelry, sunglasses, watches, handbags (including fake designer handbags), and other accessories. Some men's clothing is also sold. Although many of the products are geared more to local tastes and sizes, the increasing number of tourists has brought more fashionable clothing and T-shirts in larger sizes, and you may find some great bargains here. The atmosphere is fun and festive, especially at night when it seems to be a popular destination for young people on dates. The nearest MTR station is Mong Kok. Vendors are open daily from about 1 to 11pm.

Temple Street Night Market ★★ Temple Street, in the Yau Ma Tei District of Kowloon, is a night market that comes to life when the sun goes down. It offers the usual products sold by street vendors, including T-shirts, jeans, menswear, watches, lighters, pens, sunglasses, jewelry, CDs, mobile phones, electronic gadgets, alarm clocks, luggage, Chinese souvenirs, and imitation designer watches and handbags. Bargain fiercely, and check the products carefully to make sure they're not faulty or poorly made. The night market is great entertainment, a must during your visit to Hong Kong, though the surge of shoppers can be overwhelming. If you follow the market north around the left side of the car park (the wares here get decidedly more racy—sex toys, and so on), you'll come to the Tin Hau Temple, to the right of which are fortune-tellers and sometimes even street-side performers singing Chinese opera. Although some vendors begin setting up shop at 4pm, the Night Market is busiest from about 7pm until it closes at 10pm, and is located near the Jordan MTR station.

MEGAMALLS & SHOPPING CENTERS

Hong Kong boasts shopping complexes that are so huge I call them “megamalls.” Aside from the more convenient ones listed below, other Hong Kong megamalls include **Festival Walk** (located above Kowloon Tong MTR Station), the **New Town Plaza** in Sha Tin in the New Territories, and the **Taikoo Shing City Plaza**, located at the Taikoo MTR station on Hong Kong Island. **Citygate**, located at Tung Chung MTR station on Lantau island, is Hong Kong's only outlet mall (p. 232).

Harbour City ★ This is the largest of the megamalls and certainly one of the largest in Asia. Conveniently located right next to the dock that disgorges passengers from cruise liners and just east of the Star Ferry, it stretches more than .8km (1/2 mile) along Canton Road and contains more than 700 outlets, with shops selling clothing, accessories, jewelry, cosmetics, antiques, electronic goods, furniture, housewares, toys, Asian arts and crafts, and much more. Harbour City is divided into four zones (designated different colors on the map of Harbour City): Ocean Terminal with its many shops relating to kids and sportswear, including LCX (a shopping destination for teenagers, p. 231), Toys “R” Us (the largest of this chain in Asia), and Jumpin Gym (a game arcade); Ocean Centre, anchored by Marks & Spencer department store and the flagship store of Louis Vuitton; the Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel Arcade, consisting mostly of the Lane Crawford department store and restaurants; and the Gateway Arcade at its northernmost end. If you're searching for a specific shop, stores and restaurants often give their zone as their address. To most people, however, Harbour City may seem like one huge mall and the zones won't mean anything to them. Some shops are closed on Sunday but otherwise the hours are about 10 or 11am to 8 or 9pm. Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2118 8601. www.harbourcity.com.hk. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

236 ifc mall ★★ ifc mall is part of a massive redevelopment beside Hong Kong Station, terminus of the Airport Express. It's a smart-looking, three-level complex housing more than 200 high-end shops (like Lane Crawford, kate spade, Prada, and Versace) and restaurants, as well as a five-screen cinema, a city's super food store, and open-air terraces with views of the harbor. While not nearly as large as the other malls mentioned here, its location, just minutes from the Central Ferry Piers and practically on top of Hong Kong Station, is convenient, and its restaurants boast great views. Most shops are open daily from 10am to 8pm. 8 Finance St., Central. ☎ 852/2295 3308. www.ifc.com.hk. MTR: Central.

Langham Place I was shocked when this spiffy new mall opened in Mong Kok, traditionally an area with narrow streets packed with tiny family businesses, a poor cousin to Tsim Sha Tsui—but I guess it's just a glimpse of things to come. Boasting some 300 shops, including a Seibu Japanese department store, it's packed with both locals and mainland Chinese rather than tourists, making it an interesting stop for those who don't mind not recognizing many of the brand names sold here. It's open daily from 11am to 11pm. 8 Argyle St., Mong Kok. ☎ 852/3520 2800. www.langhamplace.com.hk. MTR: Mong Kok.

Pacific Place Pacific Place was the largest and most ambitious commercial project to hit Central when it opened almost 20 years ago; in fact, it shifted the city center toward the east. With the opening of Hong Kong Station and the new ifc mall to the west, however, Pacific Place is no longer the center of attention. In fact, I find it rather dull, no different from the generic malls you encounter all over the world and certainly less compelling than Hong Kong's swankier, newer malls. If you're staying in one of Pacific Place's three hotels, however, you'll definitely want to take a spin through here, with approximately 200 shops selling every well-known brand and two major department stores (Lane Crawford and Seibu). Most shops are open daily from about 10:30am to 8pm. 88 Queensway, Central. ☎ 852/2844 8988. www.pacificplace.com.hk. MTR: Admiralty.

Times Square This popular mall offers 16 floors of shopping and dining. In the basement are fast-food outlets, a city's super food store, and shops selling health and beauty products, while the next six floors offer clothing, shoes, handbags, jewelry, watches, and other accessories. Shops dealing in computers, electronics, and home appliances dominate the seventh and eighth floors (both Fortress and Broadway, two large chains, have stores here), while the ninth floor is the place to go for children's clothing and toys. Marks & Spencer and Lane Crawford department stores are also here, but one of Times Square's major draws is its Food Forum on the top four floors, home to more than a dozen top-grade restaurants. Most shops are open daily from 10am to 10pm. 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay. ☎ 852/2118 8900. www.timessquare.com.hk. MTR: Causeway Bay.

TAILORS

The 24-hour suit is a thing of the past, but you can still have clothes custom-made here in a few days. Tailoring in Hong Kong really began in the 1950s, when tailor families from Shanghai fled China and set up shop in Hong Kong. Today, prices are no longer as low as they once were, but they're often about what you'd pay for a ready-made, top-quality garment in the West; the difference, of course, is that a tailor-made garment should fit you perfectly. The standards of the better, established shops rival even those of London's Savile Row—at less than half the price.

Tailors in Hong Kong will make anything you want, from business suits and evening gowns to wedding dresses, leather jackets, and monogrammed shirts. Some stores will

allow you to provide your own fabric, while others require that you buy theirs. Many tailors offer a wide range of cloth from which to choose, from cotton and linen to very fine wools, cashmere, and silk. Hong Kong tailors are excellent at copying fashions, even if all you have is a picture or drawing of what you want.

On average, you should allow 3 to 5 days to have a garment custom-made, with at least two or three fittings. For a suit, expect three fittings and a minimum of 5 days. Be specific about what you want, such as lining, tightness of fit, buttons, and length. If you aren't satisfied during the fittings, speak up. Alterations should be included in the original price (ask about this during your first negotiations). If, in the end, you still don't like the finished product, you don't have to accept it. However, you will forfeit the deposit you are required to pay before the tailor begins working, about 50% of the total cost.

With more than 2,500 tailoring establishments in Hong Kong, it shouldn't be any problem finding one. Some of the most famous are located in hotel shopping arcades and shopping complexes, but the more upscale the location, the higher the prices. Though touts both persistent and annoying along Nathan Road will try to get you into their shop, some of Hong Kong's most well known shops are here, too. In any case, your best bet is to deal only with shops that are members of the HKTB, listed online (www.discoverhongkong.com/qts) and mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Once you've had something custom-made and your tailor has your measurements, you will more than likely be able to order additional clothing later, even after you've returned home.

A-Man Hing Cheong Co., LTD. This tailor shop was established in 1898 on Queen's Road Central but is now ensconced in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel's shopping arcade, with correspondingly high prices. About 70% of its customers are from overseas, many of whom are repeat customers even after they return home. Most of its fabrics are British imports, and most suits are a classic English style. Suits, which require a minimum of 3 sittings and 5 days, range from HK\$7,000 to HK\$15,000 (US\$909–US\$1,948/£454–£974), depending on the material. It's open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 7pm and Sunday 9:30am to 6pm. Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central. ☎ 852/2522 3336. MTR: Central.

Sam's Tailor This is one of the most well-known tailor shops on Nathan Road, with clients that have included Bill Clinton, Margaret Thatcher, and Armani. Tailor-made, two-piece suits for men and women start at HK\$2,300 (US\$299/£150). Shirts, starting at around HK\$270 (US\$35/£18), can be completed in 24 hours (except weekends). It's open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 7:30pm and Sunday 10am to 12:30pm. 94 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2367 9432. www.samstailor.com MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

W.W. Chan & Sons Tailor LTD Don't be put off by the second-floor walkup to this shop (in the same building as Sam's Tailor, above); this is actually one of Hong Kong's most famous tailors, with sections for both men and women. Expect to pay about HK\$8,750 (US\$1,136/£568) for a men's two-piece suit, which takes about a week to make. Women's fashions range from HK\$1,330 (US\$173/£86) for a pair of slacks to HK\$5,270 (US\$684/£342) for an evening coat, not including the cost of the fabric. It's open Monday to Saturday 9am to 6pm. 94 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2366 9738 for the men's department, ☎ 852/2367 5588 for the women's). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Hong Kong After Dark

Nightlife in Hong Kong seems pretty tame when compared to Tokyo or Bangkok. With the world of Suzie Wong in Wan Chai now a shadow of its former wicked self, Hong Kong today seems somewhat reserved and, perhaps to some minds, yawningly dull. For the upper crust who live here, exclusive membership clubs are popular for socializing and entertaining guests, while the vast majority of Chinese are likely to spend their free evenings at one of those huge lively restaurants.

Yet it would be wrong to assume that the SAR has nothing to offer in the way of nightlife—it's just that you probably won't get into any trouble enjoying yourself. To liven things up, Hong Kong stages several annual events, including the Hong Kong Arts Festival in February/March, and the Hong Kong International Film Festival in March/April. Other cultural activities and entertainment are presented throughout the year, including theater productions, pop concerts, and Chinese opera and dance performances.

Most of Hong Kong's bars and clubs are concentrated in a handful of nightlife districts. In the Central District, most popular is Lan Kwai Fong, in the vicinity of Lan Kwai Fong and D'Aguilar streets, where a multitude of bars and restaurants have long added a spark to Hong Kong's financial district. Nearby, SoHo, along the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator south of

Hollywood Road, boasts an ever-growing number of ethnic restaurants and bars. Business is so good, some predict a future merging of the two nightlife meccas as more and more establishments set up shop along connecting Wyndham and Hollywood roads. Wan Chai has also witnessed a revival with a spate of new bars, restaurants, and strip joints, while Knutsford Terrace, a small alley on the north end of Tsim Sha Tsui, is popular for its open-fronted bars and restaurants. You can party until dawn; indeed, some bars and discos don't take off until after midnight.

Remember that a 10% service charge will be added to your food/drinks bill. If you're watching your Hong Kong dollars, take advantage of happy hour. (Actually, "happy hours" would be more appropriate, since the period is generally from 5–8pm and often even longer than that.) Furthermore, many pubs, bars, and lounges offer live entertainment, from jazz to Filipino combos (musicians and singers together performing all kinds of music genres), which you can enjoy simply for the price of a beer. Plus, you can enjoy many of the city's finest nighttime charms—strolling along the Tsim Sha Tsui harbor waterfront or around Victoria Peak, watching the nightly Symphony of Lights outdoor laser and light show, or browsing at the Temple Street Night Market—for free.

1 THE PERFORMING ARTS

The busiest time of the year for the performing arts is the **Hong Kong Arts Festival**, held every year in February and March. This international 3-week affair features artists from around the world performing with orchestras, dance troupes, opera companies, and chamber ensembles. Appearing at past festivals, for example, were the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the



Information, Please

To find out what's going on during your stay in the SAR, you can pick up a number of free magazines around town.

- *What's On—Hong Kong* is an HKTb leaflet published weekly that lists events in theater, music, and the arts, including concerts and Chinese opera (you can also access it at www.discoverhongkong.com). Pick up a copy at any HKTb branch (p. 29).
- Hong Kong's Leisure and Cultural Services Department (www.lcsd.gov.hk) also puts out its own monthly calendar of events—from Cantonese opera to the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra—taking place in City Hall and the Cultural Centre, available at both of these venues.
- *HK Magazine*, distributed free at restaurants, bars, and other outlets around town and aimed at a young readership, is a weekly that lists goings-on at the city's theaters and other venues, including plays, concerts, the cinema, and events in Hong Kong's alternative scene.
- *Where Hong Kong*, *CityLife*, and *bc* are three other free magazines published monthly with nightlife information and special events. You will find these magazines for free in hotels, restaurants, and bookstores.
- A useful online navigational tool to find out about club events, drink specials, and special happenings is www.hkclubbing.com.
- For virtually everything happening in Hong Kong, from Chinese opera to pop concerts, film festivals, and family entertainment, check out www.urbtix.hk, the city's ticketing agent.

Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, the Stuttgart Ballet, and the Paul Taylor Dance Company. For information about the Hong Kong Arts Festival programs, tickets (HK\$60–HK\$650/US\$7.80–US\$84/£3.90–£42), and future dates, call ☎ **852/2824 2430** or visit www.hk.artsfestival.org.

To obtain tickets for the Hong Kong Arts Festival, as well as tickets throughout the year for classical-music performances (including the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra), Chinese opera, rock and pop concerts, theatrical productions, dance, and other major events, contact the **Urban Council Ticketing Office (URBTIX)**, the ticketing system run by the government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Convenient URB-TIX outlets are in City Hall, Low Block, 7 Edinburgh Place in Central, and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd. in Tsim Sha Tsui, both open daily from 10am to 9:30pm. Drop by one of the outlets, or reserve a ticket in advance by calling URB-TIX at ☎ **852/2734 9009**. You can also book tickets before arriving in Hong Kong, either by calling the Credit Card Hotline at ☎ **852/2111 5999**, daily from 10am to 8pm Hong Kong time, or through the URB-TIX website at www.urbtix.hk. The Hong Kong Tourism Board's website, www.discoverhongkong.com, also offers e-ticketing.

Full-time students and senior citizens are often eligible for half-price tickets, so be sure to ask when making reservations.

Chinese Opera

Of the various Chinese performing arts, Chinese opera is the most popular and widely loved. Dating back to the Mongol period, Chinese opera predates the first Western opera by about 600 years, although it wasn't until the 13th and 14th centuries that performances began to develop a structured operatic form, with rules of composition and fixed role characterization. Distinct regional styles also developed, and even today marked differences are visible among the operas performed in, say, Peking, Canton, Shanghai, Fukien, Chiu Chow, and Sichuan.

Most popular in Hong Kong are Beijing (or Peking) opera, with its spectacular costumes, elaborate makeup, and feats of acrobatics and swordsmanship; and the less flamboyant but more readily understood Cantonese-style opera. Plots usually dramatize legends and historical events and extol such virtues as loyalty, filial piety, and righteousness, with virtue, corruption, violence, and lust serving as common themes. Performances feature elaborate costumes and makeup, haunting tonal orchestrations and crashing cymbals. Accompanied by seven or eight musicians, the actor-singers sing in shrill, high-pitched falsetto, a sound Westerners sometimes do not initially appreciate. Although lyrics are in Chinese, body language helps translate the stories and costumes are chosen to signify specific stage personalities; yellow is reserved for emperors, while purple is the color worn by barbarians.

Another aspect of Chinese opera that surprises Westerners is its informality. Unlike Western performances, Chinese operas are noisy affairs. No one minds if spectators arrive late or leave early; in fact, no one even minds if a spectator, upon spotting friends or relatives, makes his or her way through the auditorium for a chat.

For visitors, the easiest way to see a Chinese opera is during the **Hong Kong Arts Festival** (see above), held from about mid-February to mid-March each year. Alternatively, Cantonese opera is a common feature of important Chinese festivals, such as the birthday of Tin Hau or the annual Bun Festival on Cheung Chau island, when temporary bamboo theaters are erected.

Otherwise, Cantonese opera is performed fairly regularly at Town Halls in the New Territories, as well as in City Hall in Central and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui. However, Chinese opera is immensely popular in Hong Kong, so much so that tickets for these shows often sell out well in advance, making it difficult for tourists to attend performances. If you're still determined to try, call URB TIX in advance of your arrival in Hong Kong, book online (see above), or, once in the SAR, contact the HKT B or check with one of the tourist publications for information on what's playing and then call or drop by URB TIX. Alternatively, the concierge of your hotel may be able to secure seats. Prices generally range from about HK\$100 to HK\$300 (US\$13–US\$39/£6.50–£19).

Classical Music

Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra ★★ Established in 1977, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is the world's largest professional Chinese-instrument orchestra. It features more than 80 full-time musicians who perform both traditional folk music and full-scale contemporary works, including commissioned pieces, in approximately 30 concerts annually. Musicians play a wide range of traditional and modern Chinese instruments (mainly stringed Chinese instruments, which are completely different from Western violins, cellos, and so on), as well as suitable Western instruments, combining them

with Western orchestrations or Chinese music. Guest musicians, like Yo-Yo Ma, sometimes perform with the orchestra. Performing at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2734 2009); and City Hall, Edinburgh Place, Central District (☎ 852/2921 2840). www.hkco.org. Tickets for most concerts HK\$120–HK\$260 (US\$16–US\$34/£8–£17). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui for Cultural Centre or Central for City Hall.

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra The Hong Kong Cultural Centre is the home of the city's largest (Western-style) orchestra: the Hong Kong Philharmonic, founded in 1975. It performs regularly from September to July and at other scheduled events throughout the year, such as providing live accompaniment to the Hong Kong Ballet. Its conductor is Edo de Waart; guest conductors and soloists appear during the concert season. In addition to Western classical pieces, its repertoire is enriched by works commissioned from Chinese composers. Performing at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2734 2009); and occasionally at City Hall, Edinburgh Place, Central District (☎ 852/2921 2840). www.hkpo.com. Tickets HK\$120–HK\$280 (US\$16–US\$36/£8–£18). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Dance

Both the **Hong Kong Ballet Company** and the **Hong Kong Dance Company** have extensive repertoires. The Hong Kong Ballet Company (☎ 852/2573 7398; www.hkballet.com), founded in 1979, performs both classical works and modern pieces, usually at the Cultural Centre or the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The Hong Kong Dance Company (☎ 852/3103 1888; www.hkdance.com) specializes in traditional Chinese dance and the development of Chinese dance in modern forms, with about five major productions each year.

Theater

Most plays presented in the SAR are performed in Cantonese. Hong Kong's leading local troupes are the **Chung Ying Theatre Company** (☎ 852/2521 6628; www.chungying.com), a nonprofit community ensemble that plays in a wide range of venues, from schools and seniors' homes to Hong Kong's main theaters, often performing works by local writers, and the **Hong Kong Repertory Theatre** (☎ 852/3103 5930; www.hkrep.com), which performs original Chinese works. Both perform in Cantonese at various venues, including City Hall in Central and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui. Prices range from about HK\$100 to HK\$160 (US\$13–US\$21/£6.50–£10).

Otherwise, your best bet for English-language performances is at the **Fringe Club** ★★, 2 Lower Albert Rd., Central (☎ 852/2521 7251; www.hkfringeclub.com; MTR: Central), a venue for experimental drama (in English and Cantonese), live music, comedy, art exhibitions, and other happenings, from mime to magic shows. The Fringe Club occupies a former dairy-farm depot built in 1813 and consists of two theaters, exhibition space, a restaurant, and a rooftop bar.

Impressions

Hong Kong illuminated . . . is wonderful. Imagine a giant Monte Carlo with a hundred times as many lights!

—Alfred Viscount Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World*, 1923

City Hall Located right beside the Central District's waterfront, City Hall's Low Block has a 1,500-seat balconied concert hall, as well as a 470-seat theater used for plays and chamber music. Exhibitions are frequently held in the foyer, while the lobby has pamphlets of upcoming events. Box office daily 10am–9:30pm. Connaught Rd. and Edinburgh Place, Central District. ☎ **852/2921 2840**. www.cityhall.gov.hk. MTR: Central.

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Located across the street from the Arts Centre, the academy is Hong Kong's institution for vocational training in the performing arts. It also features regular performances in theater and dance, by both local and international playwrights and choreographers. Its Theatre Block is composed of six venues, including the Lyric Theatre, Drama Theatre, Concert Hall, and Recital Hall; there's also an open-air theater. 1 Gloucester Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2584 8633**. www.hkapa.edu. MTR: Wan Chai.

Hong Kong Arts Centre Built on Wan Chai's waterfront of reclaimed land, the Arts Centre is the host of the Hong Kong Arts Festival and other international presentations, as well as performances by Hong Kong's own amateur and professional companies. It offers a regular schedule of plays or dances, exhibition galleries, and showings of foreign films. The center has three auditoriums: Shouson Theatre, McAulay Studio Theatre, and Agnès b. Cinema. Box office daily 10am–6pm. 2 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2582 0200**. www.hkac.org.hk. MTR: Wan Chai.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Sandwiched between the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Star Ferry concourse, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre is the territory's largest arena for the arts. Opened in 1989, this complex is a good bet for free music and events, including family shows on Saturday afternoon from 3 to 5pm that may include Chinese dance, a magic show, or music. Thursday Happy Hour, from 6 to 7pm, features Chinese classical music, Western music, puppetry, and other free shows by local performance groups. Pick up a monthly leaflet of events at the Centre or call the number below for program inquiries.

Otherwise, the pride of the Cultural Centre is its 2,100-seat Concert Hall, home of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. It features a 93-stop, 8,000-pipe Austrian Rieger organ—one of the world's largest. Two levels of seating surround the stage, which is set near the center of the oval hall. The center has two additional theaters: the Grand Theatre, used for musicals, large-scale drama, dance, film shows, and Chinese opera; and the smaller Studio Theatre, designed for experimental theater and dance. Box office daily 10am–9:30pm. 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2734 2009**. www.hkculturalcentre.gov.hk. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

2 THE CLUB & MUSIC SCENE

LIVE MUSIC

Hong Kong does not have the kind of jazz-, rock-, or blues-club scenes that many other cities do. On the other hand, live music is such a standard feature of many restaurants, hotel cocktail lounges, and bars, that it would be hard *not* to hear live music in the SAR. Although a few establishments levy a cover charge, most charge absolutely nothing.

Bars, lounges, and clubs listed below offering live music include **All Night Long**, **Hard Rock Cafe**, **Lobby Lounge** (in the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong), **Ned Kelly's Last Stand**, and **Sticky Fingers**, all in Kowloon; **California**, the **Captain's Bar**,

the **Cavern**, and **Insomnia** in Central; **Dusk til Dawn**, **Fenwick**, **Club JJ's**, and the **Wanch** in Wan Chai; and **ToTT's** in Causeway Bay.

Otherwise, the **Fringe Club**, 2 Lower Albert Rd., Central (☎ 852/2521 7251; www.hkfringeclub.com; MTR: Central), Hong Kong's best-known venue for alternative events, offers live music most Fridays and Saturdays from 10:30pm at its Fringe Gallery, including jazz, funk, folk, Canto-pop, and blues, as well as other musical programs other days of the week. The cover for Friday and Saturday night music is HK\$90 (US\$12/£5.85). An open-air rooftop bar is decked out with Astroturf and palm trees offering weekend brunches for HK\$99 (US\$13/£6.45), weekday vegetarian lunches for HK\$80 (US\$10/£5), and happy hour Sunday to Thursday from 3 to 9pm. Call for an updated listing, visit its website, or pick up the Fringe Club's monthly calendar.

DANCE CLUBS

With only a couple of exceptions, most nightclubs in Hong Kong are small, simple bars that morph into miniature discos late at night or on weekends, as well as trendy clubs that cater mostly to their in-crowd members but may occasionally allow nonmembers on slow nights (the best plan of action to get into a membership club is to dress smartly, come on a weeknight or early in the evening, and be nice to the doorman). Many clubs are "member" clubs in name only, giving them license to turn away those who don't fit their image. Discos and dance clubs in Hong Kong generally charge more on weekend nights, but the admission price usually includes one or two free drinks. After that, beer and mixed drinks are often priced the same. Bars, whether with DJs or live music, rarely charge cover.

Mad About Mah-jongg

You don't have to be in Hong Kong long before you hear it: the clackity-clack of mah-jongg, almost deafening if it's emanating from a large mah-jongg parlor. You can hear it at large restaurants (mah-jongg parlors are usually tucked into side rooms), at wedding celebrations, in the middle of the day, and long into the night. In a land where gambling is illegal except at the horse races, mah-jongg provides the opportunity for skillful gambling. Many hard-core players confess to an addiction.

Although mah-jongg originated during the Sung dynasty almost 1,000 years ago, today's game is very different, more difficult, and played with amazing speed. Essentially, mah-jongg is played by four people, using tiles that resemble dominoes and bear Chinese characters and designs. Tiles are drawn and discarded (by slamming them on the table), until one player wins with a hand of four combinations of three tiles and a pair of matching tiles. But the real excitement comes with betting chips that each player receives and which are awarded to the winner based on his or her combination of winning tiles. Excitement is also heightened by the speed of the game—the faster tiles are slammed against the table and swooped up, the better. Technically, the mah-jongg game is over when a player runs out of chips, though it's not unusual to borrow chips to continue playing. Hong Kong stories abound of fortunes made and lost in a game of mah-jongg.

244 In addition to the clubs below, check “The Bar, Pub & Lounge Scene” section below for places that offer dancing, including **Bahama Mama’s**, **Delaney’s** and **Sticky Fingers** in Kowloon; **Al’s**, the **Cavern**, **Club 97**, **Dragon-i**, **Fong Underground**, **Insomnia**, **Lux**, and **Solas** in Central; **Carnegies** and **Joe Bananas** in Wan Chai; and **ToTT’s** in Causeway Bay.

Central District

Propaganda ★★★ Hong Kong’s longest-standing and most popular gay disco, Propaganda moved into upgraded quarters in the SoHo nightlife district some years back, with a discreet entrance in a back alley (it’s a bit hard to find; look for the alley off Pottinger St.). Only about 5% of the people who come through the doors are straight, but everyone is welcome. Come late on a weekend if you want to see this alternative hot spot at its most crowded, and note that it functions only as a bar Tuesday and Wednesday. It’s open Tuesday through Thursday from 10pm to 4:30am, Friday and Saturday from 10pm to 6am. 1 Hollywood Rd., Central. ☎ **852/2868 1316**. No cover Tues–Thurs; cover Fri HK\$120 (US\$16/£7.80) before 11:30pm, HK\$140 (US\$18/£9.10) 11:30pm–3am, HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) after 3am; cover Sat HK\$120 (US\$16/£7.80), HK\$240 (US\$31/£16), and HK\$180 (US\$23/£12) respectively. MTR: Central.

Causeway Bay & Wan Chai

Fenwick Revelers hoping to score for the night make a point of hitting this huge basement dance club, where a live band plays techno, R&B, top hits, and oldies ranging from the Beatles to the Doors. Happy hour is from 5 to 10pm every day except Sunday, but at this time of night you’re apt to find yourself alone, as this place doesn’t fill up until the wee hours of the morning. It’s open Sunday through Thursday from 5pm to 6am, Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 7am. 41 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2861 1669**. No cover, except for occasional special events, when it’s HK\$80 (US\$10/£5.70). MTR: Wan Chai.

Tribeca This hotel club is more egalitarian than most, since it’s located near the convention center and attracts a mixed local crowd in addition to conventioners and out-of-towners. It’s divided into three different sections, including one with a small dance floor and raised platforms for exhibitionists. On Thursdays, ladies drink for free; Saturday features hip-hop and R&B. It’s open Monday through Saturday 10pm to 4am. Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong, 4th floor, 1 Harbour View, Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2836 3690**. Cover HK\$120–HK\$200 (US\$16–US\$26/£7.80–£13) Mon–Sat, HK\$90 (US\$12/£5.85) Sun, including 1 drink. MTR: Wan Chai.

3 THE BAR, PUB & LOUNGE SCENE

KOWLOON

For concentrated nightlife in Tsim Sha Tsui, head to Knutsford Terrace, a narrow, alley-like pedestrian lane just north of Kimberley Road, where you’ll find a row of open-fronted bars and restaurants, most with outdoor seating.

All Night Long This open-fronted bar is classier than the others on Knutsford Terrace, with a backlit bar at the far end of a tall-ceilinged room and modern art on its walls. Free live music, provided nightly by in-house bands that rotate among sister bars in both Hong Kong and Singapore, range from rock-’n’-roll oldies to the Top 40. It’s open from 5pm to 6am daily. 9 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ **852/2367 9487**. www.liverockmusic247.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Aqua Spirit ★★★ This glam venue is one of Hong Kong's hottest bars, due in no small part to its unbeatable location on the 30th floor of a Tsim Sha Tsui high-rise, where slanted, soaring windows give an incredible bird's-eye view of the city. Circular booths shrouded behind strung beads, designer drinks, and a voyeur's dream location on an open mezzanine overlooking diners at the 29th-floor Aqua, which serves passable Italian and Japanese fare, make this one of Kowloon's most talked-about venues. Note the minimum drink charge of HK\$150 (US\$19/£9.75), but since drinks are pricey, you won't have trouble meeting your quota. Entrance to both Aqua and Aqua Spirit is on the 29th floor. The bar is open Sunday through Thursday from 5pm to 2am, and Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 3am. 1 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/3427 2288. www.aqua.com.hk. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Bahama Mama's One of many bars lining Knutsford Terrace, this one is decorated in a kitschy Caribbean theme and offers lots of tables outside from which to watch the passing parade, as well as a small dance floor. Happy hour is daily from 4 to 9pm, as well as Sunday through Thursday from 12:30 to 3am. Drink specialties include fruit cocktails, frozen margaritas, and tequila shots. It's open Monday through Thursday from 4pm to 3am, Friday and Saturday from 4pm to 4am, and Sunday from 4pm to 2am. 4-5 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2368 2121. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Delaney's This very successful, upmarket Irish pub was founded by two traveling Irishmen who, disappointed to discover there were no Irish pubs in Hong Kong (let alone a fresh pint of Guinness) and believing that no city in the world should be without an Irish pub, opened their first Delaney's in the 1990s in Wan Chai (18 Luard Rd.; ☎ 852/2804 2880), followed 9 months later by this convenient location in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui. Decorated in old-world style with vintage-looking posters and photographs, its convivial atmosphere gets an extra boost from free weekly events, such as Tuesday quiz night with prizes and a DJ on Thursday and Friday nights. The great selection of draft beers and whiskeys also doesn't hurt. Big soccer and rugby events are shown on three big screens. In addition to a set roast lunch offered Sundays, it also has an à la carte menu listing Irish stew, beef and Guinness pie, corned beef and cabbage, and other Irish favorites. Happy hour is from 5 to 9pm daily; open hours are daily from 8am to 2am. 71-77 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2301 3980. www.delaneys.com.hk. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Hard Rock Cafe You can come to this international chain for a burger, fish and chips, fajitas, or a steak, but you can also come for its nighttime ambience, when a DJ enlivens the scene daily from 7pm and one of several rotating live bands takes over every night except Mondays from 10pm, playing everything from classic to modern rock. Best of all, there's no cover charge. It's open Sunday through Thursday from 11am to 1am, and Friday and Saturday from 11am to 3am. Silvercord Building., 30 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2375 1323. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Lobby Lounge ★★★  This comfortable cocktail lounge boasts gorgeous water-level views of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island. You'll fall in love all over again (with Hong Kong, your companion, or both) as you take in one of the world's most famous views (this is a very civilized place for watching the nightly Symphony of Lights laser show), listen to live music (6pm-12:45am), and imbibe in one of the bar's famous martinis or one of its signature Nine Dragons cocktails. Note that after 9pm, non-hotel guests are charged a HK\$160 (US\$21/£10) cover. Open daily from 7am to 1am. In Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2721 1211. www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

246 Ned Kelly's Last Stand Named after one of down under's most famous outlaws, this lively Aussie saloon has been attracting a largely middle-aged crowd since 1972 with free live Dixieland jazz daily from 9:30pm to 1am. It serves Australian chow and pub grub, including a Ploughman's lunch, beef stew, fish and chips, Australian sirloin steak, Irish stew, hamburgers, and cottage pie (baked bowl of minced beef, onions, vegetables, and mashed potatoes). Happy hour is from 11:30am to 9pm. It's open daily from 11:30am to 2am (to 2:30am weekend nights). 11A Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2376 0562. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

PJ Murphy's Irish Country Pub Seven TV screens beaming in sports also beam in the guys, making this Irish pub a lively place indeed during testosterone-high sporting events. Otherwise, it's a decent place for pub grub (cottage pie, chili con carne, Irish lamb shank stew, porter pie) or the weekend carvery lunch. It also has one computer where you can check e-mail for HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) an hour. It's open daily from 7am to 2am, with happy hour every day from 5 to 8pm. 32 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2782 3383. www.murphyspj.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Sky Lounge This plush and comfortable lounge is on the top floor of the Sheraton, affording one of the most romantic views of the harbor and glittering Hong Kong Island. Note that from 8pm onward a minimum drink charge of HK\$118 (US\$15/£7.65) per person is enforced Sunday through Thursday, HK\$138 (US\$18/£8.95) Friday and Saturday. Or come earlier for the afternoon tea buffet, available Sunday from 2 to 6pm and weekdays from 4 to 6pm for HK\$95 (US\$12/£6.15). It's open Monday through Thursday from 4pm to 1am, Friday from 4pm to 2am, Saturday from 2pm to 2am, and Sunday from 2pm to 1am. In the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, 20 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ☎ 852/2369 1111. www.sheraton.com/hongkong. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Sticky Fingers Tsim Sha Tsui East is a wasteland when it comes to nightlife, so if you find yourself staying in one of the many hotels here, this bar with live music nightly from 10:15pm could be a godsend—if you don't mind the “professional” women who hang out here (and to be fair, at many other Hong Kong bars as well). The talented Filipino band plays rock-'n'-roll hits for the tiny dance floor. It's open daily from 7am to 5pm, with happy hour from 9am to 10pm. 66 Mody Rd. (just east of the Shangri-La Hotel), Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ 852/2369 8981. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Tapas Bar For a more sophisticated setting in Tsim Sha Tsui East than Sticky Fingers (see above), step inside this small but popular hotel bar with its own streetside entry. In addition to a changing tapas menu that might offer the likes of sizzling prawns flavored with garlic and parsley, Thai fish cakes, seared tuna, stuffed portobello mushrooms, and artisanal cheeses, it also offers more than 50 wines by the glass. An especially good deal is happy hour from 5 to 8pm daily, with two glasses of wine for the price of one. It's open daily from 3:30pm to 1am. Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ☎ 852/2721 2111. www.shangri-la.com. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Central's nightlife is focused on **Lan Kwai Fong**, a square block lined with restaurants and bars. It's everyman's watering hole, from bankers in suits dropping by for a pint to camera-toting tourists to Western and Chinese gays. The fuel, of course, is happy hour, and the busiest night of the week is Friday or the night before a holiday. By midnight the streets are packed; some people don't even bother with the bars, buying beer from a convenience store and drinking it outside (if there's an ordinance against it, I've never

seen it enforced). LKF, as it's often referred to, is so popular, the nightlife district now extends down Wyndham all the way to SoHo, a smaller entertainment district known for its ethnic eateries and hole-in-the-wall bars.

Agave Fans of Mexico's most famous spirit should make a point of visiting this showcase for tequila (or its branch in Wan Chai at 93–107 Lockhart Rd.; ☎ 852/2866 3228), with approximately 150 brands of 100% agave tequila on offer, as well as 30 different margaritas and a range of Mexican food from tacos and fajitas to burritos. An open-fronted, noisy bar in Lan Kwai Fong, it has a daily happy hour from 5 to 9pm. Open Sunday through Thursday from 5pm to 2am, and Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 4am. 33 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2521 2010. MTR: Central.

Al's Rather innocent-looking during the day, this informal diner, decorated in 1950s Americana style and offering decent burgers, meatloaf, and breakfast served anytime, transforms into one of Lan Kwai Fong's most extroverted party scenes on weekend nights, no doubt fueled by the house specialty—Jell-O shots—and music supplied by a DJ. A few shots, and you may find yourself joining the others dancing on the tables. Open daily at 11am, closing at 1am on Sunday, 2am Monday to Wednesday, 3am on Thursday, and 4am Friday and Saturday, with happy hour Monday to Friday, 4 to 8pm. 39 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2869 1869. MTR: Central.

Bulldog's Bar & Grill Live broadcasts of Australian, English, and American sporting events on five large screens make this one of Lan Kwai Fong's most successful bars, especially among American navy personnel, who are attracted by a large U.S. flag hung outside its doors whenever they're docked in town. But it's the balcony with a bird's-eye view of the never-ending parade of revelers that does it for me. Comfort food ranges from burgers and all-day breakfasts to fish and chips and shepherd's pie; a curry buffet is offered Wednesdays from 6:30 to 9pm for HK\$108 (US\$14/£7). Happy hour is daily from 4 to 8pm. Opening at 11:30am daily, it closes at 2am Sunday through Thursday and 4am Friday and Saturday. Other branches are at 21–25 Luard Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2529 2661), and 66 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2311 6993). 17 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ☎ 852/2523 3528. www.bulldogsbarandgrill.com. MTR: Central.

California ★★ This chic bar opened in 1983 and was long the place to see and be seen in Lan Kwai Fong—the haunt of young nouveaux riches in search of a definition. Newer establishments have since encroached upon California's exalted position, but it remains a respected and sophisticated restaurant/bar, with free live jazz Thursday to Saturday nights from 10pm. You might consider starting your night on the town here with dinner and drinks; a plus to coming early is happy hour from 6 to 9pm. The menu exalts Californian cuisine, offering the likes of Alaskan cod, fresh seafood ravioli, and Parmesan-encrusted pork, though hamburgers (the house specialty) remain hugely popular. If the crowds of Lan Kwai Fong set you on edge, this is a sane alternative, though California, too, can get crowded, especially as the evening wears on. It's open Monday through Thursday from noon to midnight, Friday and Saturday from noon to 4am, and Sunday from 6pm to midnight. 24–26 Lan Kwai Fong St., Central. ☎ 852/2521 1345. www.lkfe.com. MTR: Central.

Captain's Bar ★ This refined bar is so popular with Hong Kong's professional crowd, especially at the end of the working day, that the Mandarin Oriental's recent overhaul left it virtually unchanged (to have done otherwise would have unleashed a torrent of protest from the bar's fiercely loyal fans). Well known for its expertly made martinis and its pints of beer served in aluminum and silver tankards, it's a small, intimate place, with seating

248 at the bar or on couches and light jazz Monday to Saturday from 9pm. Open Monday through Saturday from 11am to 2am and Sunday 11am to 1am. In the Mandarin Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central. ☎ 852/2825 4006. www.mandarinoriental.com. MTR: Central.

The Cavern ★ Located at the top end of Lan Kwai Fong, this classy live-music venue attracts a slightly older crowd with its casual-chic dress code, large outdoor seating area, and sexy interior bathed in red lights. The three house bands, silhouetted on stage, play unplugged, easy-listening acoustics from 8 to 11pm (including very good imitations of the Beatles). Then, at 11pm, the tables are removed; the band switches to electric, turns up the volume, and plays everything from the Rolling Stones to the Black Eyed Peas; and the Cavern transforms into a dance club (admission of HK\$100/US\$13/£6.50, which includes one drink, is charged Wed–Sat from 11pm). Open Sunday through Tuesday from 5pm to 4am and Wednesday to Saturday from 5pm to 5am or later. Lan Kwai Fong Tower, Ground Floor, 55 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2121 8969. MTR: Central.

Club 97 ★★ Opened more than 25 years and still one of Lan Kwai Fong's most revered nightlife establishments, this club underwent a transformation some years back that changed it from a disco to a sophisticated lounge, in recognition that its customers had grown up and were more prone to predinner cocktails or late-night drinks rather than dancing. The small dance floor is still there, but gone is the foreboding entrance that once turned away any but the in crowd, and in its place is an open-fronted facade that welcomes a mixed clientele of gays and straights. Weekly events to watch out for are Salsa Wednesdays, Thursday Ladies' Night with drink specials, the Friday gay happy hour (6–10pm) complete with drag shows, and Sunday reggae night, which draws a huge crowd wishing to chill out before the workweek begins. In any event, this happening place is a must for any decent pub crawl through Lan Kwai Fong. It's open Monday through Thursday from 6pm to 2am (happy hour 6–9pm), Friday 6pm to 4am (happy hour 6–10pm), Saturday 8pm to 4am (happy hour 8–9pm), and Sunday 8pm to 3am (happy hour 8–9pm). 9 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ☎ 852/2810 9333. www.ninetysevendgroup.com. MTR: Central.

Dragon-i This is one of Hong Kong's most talked-about bars; the fact that it lures models with promises of free drinks is obviously good for business, since it also brings in those who like to ogle models. Its interior is bathed in red from the glow of lanterns, while the outdoor patio, decorated with huge birdcages filled with live birds, provides some relief from the crowds, especially when things start hopping from 11:30pm when a DJ stirs action on the dance floor. The bar's other incarnation is as a venue for lunch or dinner (its all-you-can-eat lunch for HK\$148/US\$19/£9.60, served Mon–Sat from noon–2:30pm and Sun 11am–4pm, includes dim sum and Japanese fare); happy hour is from 3 to 9pm. Located on a hill above Lan Kwai Fong and open all day, it closes Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 3am and Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at 5am, but you'll never get in on Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday unless you're a dead ringer for Uma Thurman. The Centurium, 60 Wyndham St., Central. ☎ 852/3110 1222. www.dragon-i.com.hk. MTR: Central.

Finds ★★ Think Scandinavian ice cave and you're close to the cool, minimalist design and atmosphere of this restaurant/bar, an acronym for the five Nordic nations (Finland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden). The mouthwatering menu includes fresh seafood (like filet of North Sea halibut), hearty soups, and "scapas" (Scandinavian tapas, ranging from smoked salmon pie to Finnish meatballs with crushed lingonberries). Wi-Fi in the lounge, specialty vodkas, an outdoor terrace, and happy hour from 6 to 8pm

Monday through Friday make this a good place to chill, work, or party. A DJ gets things rolling Wednesday through Saturday nights from 10pm. It's open Monday and Tuesday from noon to 1am, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 2am, Friday from noon to 3am, Saturday from 7pm to 3am, and Sunday 7pm to 1am. It's located at the top end of Lan Kwai Fong, on the second floor of the Lan Kwai Fong Tower. 55 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2522 9318. MTR: Central.

Fong Underground If you don't embarrass yourself by falling down the stairs leading to this hip basement venue, decorated in chic Asian style, you might find this a welcome refuge for an early evening drink or a quiet place to chill Monday and Tuesday nights. Things heat up the rest of the week after 9pm, however, when the resident DJ's house music entices people to the small dance floor. Open 6pm Monday to Friday and 8pm Saturday, closing at 1am Monday to Thursday and 5am Friday and Saturday. 34 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2523 2002. MTR: Central.

Insomnia One of Lan Kwai Fong's most popular bars, Insomnia is at its most crowded in the wee hours of the morning, when there's no room to spare on the packed dance floor. Live music, provided by bands that rotate venues in Hong Kong and Singapore, begins at 7pm nightly. Both the kitchen and the bar are open 24 hours, though they'll close the place down if the number of patrons dwindles by dawn, leaving true insomniacs with nowhere to go until things kick up again at 8am, when the bar reopens with a happy hour until to 9pm. 38–44 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2525 0957. www.liverock-music247.com. MTR: Central.

Lei Dou ★ **Finds** Its name translates as “Right Here,” though that seems like a cruel joke since no sign appears outside to alert passersby exactly where right here might be (management assured me a sign will eventually be posted; until then, look for a yellow facade with a red square). Inside, the decor is old-world-boudoir-meets-edgy-contemporary, with sofas and easy chairs spread through several cozy rooms, palm trees, fanciful decorations, and artwork spotlighted on the walls. It's open daily 5pm to 3am; oddly, there is no happy hour here. 20–22 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2525 6628. MTR: Central.

Lux Although this classy venue in the heart of Lan Kwai Fong serves as both a restaurant and a bar, it seems most successful as a bar, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when it morphs into a dance club after midnight. Its contemporary, international food, however, is not to be overlooked, particularly if you're in the mood for thin-crust pizzas, huge salads, Angus prime rib, or fresh seafood. Happy hour is Monday through Saturday from noon to 9pm. It's open Monday through Friday from noon to 3pm for lunch, from 11am to 3pm Saturday and Sunday for brunch, and from 6 to 11pm daily for dinner, closing at 1am Sunday to Wednesday, at 2am Thursday, and at 3:30am Friday and Saturday. California Tower, 30–32 D'Aguilar St., Central. ☎ 852/2868 9538. MTR: Central.

Red Those in search of a drink outside Lan Kwai Fong should head to this hip bar on the fourth floor of ifc mall, with an outdoor patio and panoramic views of Central's skyscrapers and Victoria Harbour. Popular with bankers and other working professionals from surrounding Central, Red features healthy Californian cuisine (entrance, in fact, is through health club Pure), happy hour from 6 to 9pm daily, and a DJ Thursday to Saturday nights from 7pm. It's open Monday through Wednesday 11:30am to midnight, Thursday 11:30am to 1am, Friday and Saturday from 11:30am to 3am, and Sunday from 11:30am to 10pm. ifc mall, 8 Finance St., Central. ☎ 852/8129 8882. www.pure-red.com. MTR: Central.

Tips Gay in Hong Kong

The gay scene in Hong Kong is fairly low key, but it's a lot more visible now than it used to be. In addition to Propaganda, Hong Kong's most famous gay dance club (p. 244), several bars have dedicated gay nights, including Club 97 on Friday nights (p. 248). For a list of gay events and bars, pick up **DS**, a gay lifestyle magazine distributed free at bars, or check its website at www.dimsum-hk.com.

Solas If you don't have what it takes to get into Dragon-i (see above), take solace in Solas, just a short walk downhill. The roomy, Irish-owned lounge bar, with dramatic red lighting and Celtish-themed accents, has a daily happy hour from 4 to 9pm and a DJ nightly from 10pm playing everything from funk and Latin to underground disco. It's open Sunday through Thursday from 4pm to 3am and Friday and Saturday from 4pm to 4am. 60-Wyndham St., Central. ☎ **852/3162 3710**. www.solas.com.hk. MTR: Central.

Staunton's Bar & Café Located on the corner of Staunton and Shelley streets, beside the Central-Mid-Levels Escalator, this open-fronted bar, with views of commuters traveling on the escalator, was one of the first of many bars and restaurants that now give the SoHo district its unique, homey atmosphere. It offers more than 30 wines by the glass, as well as Wi-Fi. Happy hour is from 4 to 8pm daily. It's open Monday through Friday 10am to 2am, and Saturday and Sunday from 8am to 2am. 10-12 Staunton St., Central. ☎ **852/2973 6611**. MTR: Central.

Yumla This is a small bar with a big heart and is very much loved by its regulars. It claims to host music no one else loves, though the crowds that surge in to listen to resident and visiting DJs spin everything from techno and funky house to hip-hop clearly dispel that claim. Though Yumla has free Wi-Fi, unless you come early, I can't imagine surfing here (happy hour is until 9pm). It's open Monday to Thursday from 5pm to 2am, Friday from 6pm to 4am, and Saturday from 7pm to 4am or later. It's located off Pottinger just down from Wyndham Street; look for its artsy facade, which serves as a canvas for changing murals painted by resident and traveling artists. 79 Wyndham St., Central. ☎ **852/2147 2382**. www.yumla.com. MTR: Central.

Zinc I like this bar for several reasons. For one, it's independently owned rather than part of a restaurant/bar conglomerate, which is as rare in Lan Kwai Fong these days as late-night sobriety. Also, it's classier than most of the bars here, with a Zen-like decor and a statue of Buddha at the entrance. Finally, it's a great place for people-watching, with outdoor spectator seating for the never-ending pedestrian parade. Off-putting for me, however, are the names of some of its cocktails (I probably would not go for the Cock-Sucking Cowboy), and what would the Buddha say if he could comment on the pole dancing that takes place here some nights? And when the DJ starts livening things up Monday to Saturday nights, this bar ends up being not much different from its competitors. Happy hour is from 5 to 10pm daily. It's open Sunday to Thursday 5pm to 3am and Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 6am. 35 D'Aguilar St. Central. ☎ **852/2868 3446**. MTR: Central.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Wan Chai was where the action was, buzzing with sailors fresh off their ships and soldiers on leave from Vietnam. It was a world of two-bit hotels,

raunchy bars, narrow streets, and dark alleyways where men came to drink and brawl and spend money on women. Nowadays, most of Wan Chai has become respectable (and a bit boring)—an area full of office buildings, mushrooming high-rises, and Hong Kong's expansive convention center. A small pocket of depravity, however, is concentrated mostly on Lockhart and Luard roads and consists of bars catering to young revelers and shows of erotic female dancers.

In addition to the listings below, **Agave**, **Bulldog's**, and **Delaney's** (p. 247, 247, and 245, respectively) all have branches in Wan Chai.

Carnegies Named after the Scotsman who made it big in the United States and gave millions to charity, this bar, decorated with rock memorabilia, offers a good selection of wines and spirits but is best known as the place where everyone dances on the bar. Wednesdays are Ladies' Night, when women get free sparkling wine from 9pm to closing. Otherwise, happy hour is until 9pm daily. It's open from 11am to 3am (to 5am Fri and Sat). 89 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ 852/2866 6289. www.carnegies.net. MTR: Wan Chai.

Club JJ's ★ This slick hotel venue, located in the swank Grand Hyatt near the convention center, is a bit off the beaten track for barhoppers. In fact, you'll want to dress up so you won't feel out of place sipping drinks in its diminutive martini bar or roomier, classy main bar, where you can also dine on yummy Thai food and grilled meats (although JJ's is a private club targeting people in their 30s and 40s, it doesn't turn away anyone who is well dressed). The real action takes place in the music room, where a polished resident band performs a mix of Top 40s, funk, and soul beginning at 9:30pm. Happy hour is Monday through Saturday from 5 to 9:30pm. It's open Monday through Saturday from 5pm, closing at 2am Monday through Thursday and at 3am Friday and Saturday. Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ 852/2588 1234. www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com. MTR: Wan Chai.

Dusk til Dawn ★ This is one of my top picks for an evening out in Wan Chai. It attracts a mostly expat and Southeast Asian clientele, who come to take advantage of its noon-to-9pm happy hour (3–9pm on Sat and Sun), food and snack menu served until 5am, and nightly free live music starting at 10pm. Open Monday through Friday from noon to 6am, and Saturday and Sunday from 3pm to 6am. 76–84 Jaffe Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ 852/2528 4689. MTR: Wan Chai.

Inn Side Out Causeway Bay isn't known for nightlife, making this bar/American bistro even more of a standout. It's the only brewery in Hong Kong (though the brewery itself is located in Aberdeen) and has large patio seating complete with palm trees between its two glass-enclosed bar areas, where big screens broadcast major sporting events. The menu includes salads, pizza, burgers, and barbecued ribs, making it a decent place for a meal as well. It's a bit hard to find, behind Sunning Plaza and off Sunning and Hoi Ping roads. Happy hour is from 2:30 to 8:30pm daily. It's open Sunday to Thursday from 11:30am to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 11:30am to 1:30am. 10 Hysan Ave., Causeway Bay. ☎ 852/2895 2900. www.elgrande.com.hk. MTR: Wan Chai.

Joe Bananas This has long been one of the most popular hangouts in Wan Chai, maybe because it's reportedly also one of Hong Kong's best pickup bars. Still, it attracts a wide range of people during its various incarnations throughout the day, from area office workers of all ages for its popular lunch and after-work drinks, to a more youthful crowd that begins to loosen up when a DJ starts spinning at 8pm and parties full blast after 10pm when the place transforms into a disco. Wednesday is Ladies' Night, with free drinks for women from 9pm to 4am, while Sunday is Salsa Night, with free salsa lessons

252 from 7 to 9pm followed by a salsa party till midnight. Happy hour is until 8pm nightly. It's open Monday to Thursday from 11am to 5am, Friday from 11am to 6am, Saturday from 4pm to 6am, and Sunday from 4pm to 5am. 23 Luard Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2529 1811**. www.maddogspubs.com. MTR: Wan Chai.

Old China Hand Surrounded by girlie bars, this is one of the old-timers in Wan Chai (since 1977), an informal British pub popular with older expats but welcoming to tourists as well with its open facade good for people-watching. In the tradition of the pub lunch, meals include steak-and-kidney pie, fish and chips, sandwiches, salads, chili con carne, and a fixed-price lunch priced at HK\$49 (US\$6.35/£3.20). Happy hour is daily from noon to 10pm and midnight to 2am, with even cheaper drinks on offer during "crazy hour" Monday through Friday from 5 to 7pm. Live music is Sundays from 4pm to midnight. It's open 24 hours on Friday and Saturday; the rest of the week it's open from 10am to 3am. 104 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2527 9174**. MTR: Wan Chai.

ToTT's ★★ This striking venue, with an eye-catching oval bar accented with electric-blue lights and spiraling blue pendants, offers fabulous views of Victoria Harbour and Kowloon from its 34th-floor perch. Live music and dancing is Monday through Saturday nights from 10pm, with a minimum drink/snack charge of HK\$168 (US\$22/£11) Monday to Thursday and HK\$188 (US\$24/£12) Friday and Saturday (the minimum charge is waived for hotel guests or diners who eat here; p. 156 for the restaurant's review). The bar is open Sunday through Thursday from 6:30pm to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 6pm to 2am. In the Excelsior Hotel, 281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay. ☎ **852/2837 6786**. <http://mandarinoriental.com/excelsior>. MTR: Causeway Bay.

The Wanch ★ Offering free live music nightly, this unpretentious bar is a good bet for Wan Chai barhopping. Monday is jam night, Thursday and Sunday are Ladies' Night, and every other Sundays it's sing-along music. Live music begins at 9:30pm Monday through Thursday, 10pm Friday and Saturday, and 3pm Sunday. Happy hour is generous: from the time it opens to 10pm every day except Sunday. Open Monday through Friday 11am to 2am, Saturday 4pm to 2am, and Sunday 3pm to 2am. 54 Jaffe Rd., Wan Chai. ☎ **852/2861 1621**. MTR: Wan Chai.

4 ONLY IN HONG KONG

NIGHT TOURS

If you have only 1 or 2 nights in Hong Kong and you're uncomfortable roaming around on your own, I recommend an organized night tour. **Watertours**, an old Hong Kong company that specializes in boat tours, offers several evening cruises, including tours that combine cruises with various land activities. The Aberdeen & Harbour Night Cruise, for example, includes a sunset cruise with unlimited drinks, dinner aboard the Jumbo Kingdom floating restaurant in Aberdeen, and a stop at a scenic overlook midway up Victoria Peak. This 4½-hour tour is offered nightly and costs HK\$720 (US\$94/£47), including dinner. Some nightly cruises coincide with the Symphony of Lights laser show. Watertours can be booked through most hotels or by calling ☎ **852/2926 3868** (www.watertours.com.hk). The **Star Ferry** has 2-hour cruises that include the Symphony of Lights for HK\$140 (US\$18/£9.10). For more information on these call ☎ **852/2118 6201** or go to www.starferry.com.hk/harbourtour.

Other tour companies offering night tours (these two concentrate on land tours but also offer evening cruises) include **Gray Line** (☎ 852/2368 7111; www.grayline.com.hk), which offers a night tour that takes in Victoria Peak, a harbor cruise with views of the Symphony of Lights, and a look at Lan Kwai Fong, and **Splendid Tours & Travel** (☎ 852/2316 2151; www.splendidtours.com).

If you're in Hong Kong anytime from September to May on a Wednesday evening, you can go to the **horse races** in **Happy Valley** or **Sha Tin**. Although you can go on your own for as little as HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p), you can also take an organized trip to the races offered by both Gray Line and Splendid Tours, which includes a meal, a seat in the Royal Jockey Club members' stand, and racing tips. (p. 193).

NIGHT STROLLS

One of the most beautiful and romantic sights in the world must be from **Victoria Peak** at night. The Peak Tram, which costs HK\$33 (US\$4.30/£2.15) round-trip and runs daily until midnight, deposits passengers at the Peak Tower terminal. From the terminal, turn right, and then turn right again onto a pedestrian footpath. This path, which follows Lugard and Harlech roads, circles the Peak, offering great views of glittering Hong Kong. Popular with both lovers and joggers, the path is lit at night and leads past expensive villas and primeval-looking jungles. This is definitely the best stroll in Hong Kong, and it only takes about an hour.

On the other side of the harbor, a promenade lines the **Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront**, popular among young Chinese couples. It stretches from the Star Ferry terminus all the way through Tsim Sha Tsui East, with romantic views of lit-up Hong Kong Island across the choppy waters. Best of all is the nightly **Symphony of Lights** from 8 to 8:18pm, when an impressive laser-and-light show is projected from more than 40 buildings on both sides of the harbor. The Guinness World Records says this is the "World's Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show." The best vantage point: between the Avenue of Stars and the Cultural Centre, where music and English narration is played Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights (another favorite viewing spot is Bauhinia Square in front of the Convention Centre in Wan Chai).

The Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront is very safe at night, as it has lots of people. As for Victoria Peak, I have walked it alone several times at night, but to be honest, it's probably best with someone else.

NIGHT MARKETS

If you're looking for colorful atmosphere, head for the **Temple Street Night Market** (p. 235), near the Jordan MTR station in Kowloon. Extending for several blocks, it has stalls where clothing, accessories, toys, pens, watches, sunglasses, cassettes, household items, and much more are sold. Be sure to bargain fiercely if you decide to buy anything, and be sure to check the merchandise to make sure it isn't going to fall apart in 2 weeks. This is also a good place for an inexpensive meal at one of the *dai pai dong* (roadside food stalls), which specialize in seafood, including clams, shrimp, mussels, and crab.

But the most wonderful part of the market is its northern end, to the right, around the white parking area. Here, near the Tin Hau temple, you'll find palm readers and fortune-tellers, some of whom speak English, as well as street musicians and singers. You'll have to hunt for the tiny alleyway of musicians, where groups set up their own stages and are surrounded by an appreciative audience. Cantonese pop songs and operas are among the favorites, and when the musicians do an especially good job, they are rewarded with tips. Get there before 9pm to see the musicians. Otherwise, although

254 some vendors set up shop as early as 4pm, the market is in full swing from about 7 to 10pm daily.

Farther north, near the Mong Kok MTR station, is the **Ladies' Market** (p. 235), which stretches along Tung Choi Street between Argyle and Dundas streets. It's a great place to shop for inexpensive women's, men's, and children's fashions and accessories, including watches, handbags, T-shirts, and other goods. It's not quite as touristy as the Temple Street Night Market, and the atmosphere is fun and festive. It's open daily from about 1 to 11pm.

Side Trips from Hong Kong

Mention Hong Kong and most people think of Hong Kong Island's Central District, Victoria Peak, the shops and neon of Tsim Sha Tsui, and the Star Ferry crossing Victoria Harbour. What they don't realize is that Hong Kong Island and Kowloon comprise only 10% of the entire territory—the New Territories and the outlying islands make up the other whopping 90%.

If you have a day or two to spare, or even just an afternoon, I suggest you spend it on a trip outside the city in one of the SAR's rural areas. Escape the bustle and chaos of the city in one of the region's small villages in the countryside, or on the islands, and you'll have the chance to glimpse an older and slower way of life, where traditions still reign supreme and where life follows a rhythm all its own.

1 THE NEW TERRITORIES

Before the 1980s, the New Territories were made up of peaceful countryside, with duck farms, fields, and old villages. No more. A vast 1,008-sq.-km (389-sq.-mile) region that stretches from Kowloon to the border of mainland China, the New Territories have long been Hong Kong's answer to its growing population. Huge government housing projects mushroomed throughout the New Territories, especially in towns along the railway and subway lines. Once-sleepy villages became concrete jungles virtually overnight.

Close to one-half of Hong Kong's population—about 3.3 million people—lives in the New Territories, many in subsidized housing. The New Territories, therefore, are vitally important to the SAR's well-being and its future. For visitors to ignore the area completely would be shortsighted; many find the housing projects, in some suburbs stretching as far as the eye can see, nothing short of astounding. If, on the other hand, it's peace and quiet you're searching for, don't despair. The New Territories are so large and so mountainous that not all the land has been turned into housing, and the area still makes an interesting side trip; it's so different from the city itself that it's almost like visiting an entirely different country.

Traveling in the New Territories, you may notice women wearing wide-brimmed hats with a black fringe and pajama-like clothing. These women are Hakka, as are most of the farmers of the New Territories. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), some of the Hakka clans in the area built walls around their homes to protect themselves against roving bandits and invaders. A handful of these walled villages still exist today, along with ancestral halls and other ancient, traditional buildings. One of my favorite things to do in the New Territories is to walk one of two Heritage Trails, both of which highlight village life in the New Territories and take you past significant historic buildings and walled villages. Both trails are described in more detail later, but be sure to pick up HKTB's two pamphlets, the *Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail* and the *Ping Shan Heritage Trail*. I also suggest that before visiting

256 any walled village, try to see the Sam Tung Uk Museum in Tsuen Wan (also described later), since it will greatly enrich your visit to a lived-in walled village.

VISITOR INFORMATION & TOURS

All MTR train stations in the New Territories have free maps in English of their immediate surroundings, complete with descriptions of buses that serve the area. Simply stop by the ticket or customer service counter at your destination and ask for the *Station Information* location map. Other useful pamphlets, which you should pick up at a HKTb visitor center before heading to the New Territories, are the leaflet “Major Bus Routes in the New Territories,” which tells you which bus to take, the fare, and the frequency of buses along the route; the booklet *Discover Hong Kong by Rail*, which describes attractions at MTR stations and provides maps; *Hong Kong Walks*, which contains a useful map of Sha Tin, described below; and pamphlets for the Lung Yeuk Tau and Ping Shan heritage trails.

If your time is limited, a good tactic for seeing the New Territories is to leave the driving to someone else and opt for an organized tour. The “Land Between” Tour by Gray Line emphasizes both the rural side of Hong Kong and its urban development, enabling visitors to learn about the lifestyle, customs, and beliefs of the local people. The “Heritage Tour,” a must for architectural buffs, covers historic Chinese architectural sites spread throughout Kowloon and the New Territories, including a restored 18th-century walled village, a Man Mo temple, an ancestral hall, and Tai Fu Tai, a stately country mansion. For more information on these and other tours, see “Organized Tours & Cultural Activities” in chapter 7, beginning on p. 191.

GETTING AROUND THE NEW TERRITORIES

Two major MTR lines, an East Rail Line and a West Rail Line, provide the fastest and most convenient way to reach major destinations. Subway lines also serve some satellite towns in the New Territories.

For years, every visitor to the New Territories took the train to the border for a look into forbidden and mysterious China. Now, of course, it's easy to get permission to enter China, and the border lookout has lost its appeal—the view was never very exciting anyway. Still, you might want to take the train up into the New Territories just for the experience, as well as for the interesting stops you can make on the way.

The East Rail, in operation since 1910, is Hong Kong's primary north-south transportation link. Departing from East Tsim Sha Tsui Station on Kowloon's southern tip, the East Rail connects 12 stations along its main route, passing through such budding satellite towns as Sha Tin, University, Tai Po Market, Tai Wo, and Fanling before reaching Sheung Shui—your last stop unless you have a visa to enter China. The entire trip from East Tsim Sha Tsui Station to Sheung Shui takes just 39 minutes and costs only HK\$11.50 (US\$1.50/75p) one-way for ordinary class and HK\$23 (US\$3/£1.50) for first class. Trains depart every 3 to 8 minutes. There are two offshoot lines from the East Rail; the Ma On Shan Rail from Tai Wai Station (convenient for visiting Che Kung Temple, below) and a small spur line running from Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau, another border crossing into mainland China.

I have arranged the towns below in the order in which you'll reach them when traveling north from Kowloon on the East Rail. Before departing, be sure you have the *Discover Hong Kong by Rail* booklet on hand, available free from any HKTb office. For a map of the New Territories, turn to the “Hong Kong Region” map on p. 4.

SHA TIN

Fewer than 13km (8 miles) north of Tsim Sha Tsui, Sha Tin is Hong Kong's prime example of a budding satellite town, with a population close to 700,000. It's so huge that it has swallowed what were once surrounding villages, including Tai Wai, the first stop on the East Rail after passing into the New Territories. Change trains here for the Ma On Shan Rail and go one stop to Che Kung Temple Station (ask for the *Station Information* brochure with a map of the surrounding area at the station). Take Exit B from Che Kung Temple Station, walk through the pedestrian tunnel, and then turn right for **Che Kung Temple**, 7 Che Kung Miu Rd. (☎ 852/2603 4049). This modern Taoist temple, built in 1993 on the site of a previous temple established more than 100 years ago, honors Che Kung, a general from the Song dynasty (A.D. 960–1279) credited with suppressing a revolt in southern China, controlling floods, and safeguarding villagers from a plague. You'll find a giant statue of Che Kung inside, holding his sword, but the temple is popular with nearby residents mainly because of Che Kung's reputation for granting good fortune. Many visitors bring food offerings and burn incense to ask for blessings, and there are many fortune-tellers on hand. Admission is free, and it's open daily from 7am to 6pm.

Just a 15-minute walk east of the temple, on the other side of Lion Rock Tunnel Road on Sha Kok Street, is **Tsang Tai Uk** (also called Shan Ha Wai, which means Walled Village at the Mountain Foot), a tiny, walled village built in the 1840s for members of the Tsang clan, who made their fortune as stonemasons. (Tsang Tai Uk translates as "Mr. Tsang's Big House"). With its high, thick walls, four parallel rows, two side columns of houses, and central courtyard with ancestral halls housing a painting of the clan founder and photographs of the family, it's typical of Hakka settlements in Guangdong Province (formerly Canton Province) but unusual for Hong Kong. Still occupied by about 300 members of the Tsang clan, it is a vision of communal life from Hong Kong's not-so-distant past, with seniors sitting in doorways and women drawing water from courtyard wells and hanging up laundry. Although not as old nor as famous as other walled villages, Tsang Tai Uk is, in my opinion, more intriguing and interesting because it has been spared the intrusion of the modern apartments that now plague most villages (the new Ma On Shan Rail, however, passes right outside Tsang Tai Uk, destroying some of its former pastoral peacefulness). The recent addition of public toilets has made life easier, as most of the 99 apartments are without private facilities and residents formerly relied on chamber pots.

Since Tsang Tai Uk is off the tourist pathway and serves as home to a number of families, visitors should be respectful of the inhabitants' privacy when visiting the compound. Tsang Tai Uk is about a 15-minute walk from Che Kung Temple (see above). To reach it, turn right onto Che Kung Miu Road and then follow signs through the pedestrian tunnels to Tsang Tai Uk. After exiting the last tunnel, you'll pass a tennis court to your left before seeing Tsan Tai Uk. Since getting there is confusing despite a few small signs, it's best to have the concierge of your hotel write out the name in Chinese so you can show people for directions.

North, across the river from Che Kung Temple and Tsang Tai Uk (walk back to the pedestrian tunnels and follow signs to the museum, crossing Lion Bridge; the walk takes about 15 min.), is the **Hong Kong Heritage Museum** ★★, 1 Man Lam Rd. (☎ 852/2180 8188; <http://hk.heritage.museum>), in my opinion the main reason for a visit to the area. Opened in 2001, it presents both the history and culture of the New Territories in a series of themed exhibitions. Foremost is the New Territories Heritage Hall, with displays, photographs, and videos relating to the customs, religions, and lifestyle of the early fishermen and settlers and how they have changed over the centuries. A barge loaded for market, an ancestral hall, a

258 Chinese medicine shop, traditional clothing, and other items are also on display. Particularly stunning are the models showing the growth of Sha Tin since the 1930s. I also like the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall, a must for anyone wishing to gain insight into the history and characteristics of this unique form of entertainment, with musical instruments, elaborate costumes and headgear, a typical backstage scene, and touch screens for viewing actual Cantonese operas. The Chao Shao-an Gallery shows the works of Chao Shao-an (1905–98), a Hong Kong artist famous for his bird-and-flower paintings, while the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art contains porcelains, bronzes, furniture, jade, and other works of Chinese art dating from the Neolithic period to the 20th century. For the kids, there's also a toy museum with games they can play and the hands-on Children's Discovery Gallery, where they can practice being an archaeologist, wear traditional costumes, and learn about marshes. In case you get thirsty, a teahouse off the lobby offers an extensive range of Chinese teas. Allow at least 2 hours for the museum. It's open Monday and Wednesday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm and Sunday and holidays from 10am to 7pm. Admission is HK\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) for adults and HK\$5 (US\$0.65/35p) for children, students, and seniors. Admission is free on Wednesdays. It's located about halfway between Tai Wai and Sha Tin stations, about a 15-minute walk from each.

On a hill west of Sha Tin Station is the **Monastery of 10,000 Buddhas** (☎ 852/2691 1067). Annoyingly, it's not shown on any HKTb maps nor mentioned in any of its literature, but there are two ascents that begin just west of the station (if you're arriving at Sha Tin Station, take Exit B for Pai Tau Village, walk through the village, and then look for the sign). In any case, it takes about a half-hour's energetic walk to reach the actual monastery; first you have to climb more than 400 twisting steps, flanked by life-size gold-colored statues, an impressive sight themselves. The temple was established in the 1950s by a monk named Yuet Kai, who wrote 98 books on Buddhism. He's still at the temple—well, actually, his body is still there. He's been embalmed and covered in gold leaf and sits behind a glass case in the main hall. In attendance are more Buddha images than you've probably ever seen gathered in one place. In fact, despite the monastery's name, almost 13,000 of the tiny statues line the walls, and no two are exactly alike. Also on the expansive grounds are a nine-story pink pagoda you can climb to the top, statues galore (including those of animals painted a riot of colors), numerous mausoleums where ashes are interred for a steep fee (this is how the monastery earns its money), and a very simple vegetarian cafeteria. The temple affords a good view of Sha Tin's high-rise housing estates and the surrounding mountains. Admission is free, and it's open daily from 9am to 5:30pm.

Where to Dine

The **Monastery of 10,000 Buddhas** has a very simple dining hall (☎ 852/2699 4144) serving vegetarian dishes from an English menu, including deep-fried taro fish (not real fish, of course), fried bean curd, E-Fu noodles with vegetables, and other choices. All dishes cost HK\$45 (US\$5.85/£2.90) Monday to Friday, HK\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) weekends and holidays. No credit cards are accepted and it's open daily from 11:30am to 5pm.

Otherwise, the **New Town Plaza** (☎ 852/2684 9175; www.newtownplaza.com.hk), a massive shopping mall (more than 400 shops and restaurants) located beside the Sha Tin MTR station, is a good place for a snack or quick meal, with cafeterias, fast-food outlets, and restaurants serving both Western and Asian fare, including Indonesian, Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Chinese food. Restaurants with branches here that were described in chapter 6 are **Simply Thai**, Shop 703 (☎ 852/3523 1638; p. 161), serving Thai specialties; the **Spaghetti House**, Shop 153 (☎ 852/2697 9009; p. 141),

one in a chain of successful American-style spaghetti-and-pizza parlors; and **Genki Sushi**, Shop A197a (☎ 852/2608 9322; p. 139), with conveyor-belt sushi.

TAI PO

Another satellite town of the New Territories, Tai Po was first settled by Tanka boat people more than 1,000 years ago because of its strategic location on a river that flows into Tolo Harbour. Today, many Hakka farmers and residents—more than 300,000 of them—call it home. Yet it retains its rural atmosphere, especially the vicinity around its traditional market, one of the most colorful in Hong Kong.

To reach it, take the East Rail to Tai Wo Station, surrounded by housing estates built in the last few decades and now part of the Tai Po satellite town (ask for the *Tai Wo Station* street map and information pamphlet at the station). Exit the station onto Po Nga Road (in the direction of McDonald's), cross the Tai Wo Bridge over the Lam Tsuen River, turn left on Pak Shing Street and then right onto **Fu Shin Street**, a pedestrian lane that has been serving as Tai Po's market since 1892. It bustles with activity from 7am to 6pm as housewives shop here twice daily to secure the freshest produce, fish, meat, dried herbs, and other ingredients for the day's meals. Big chunks of meat hang from hooks; butcher shops sell virtually every part of the pig; hardware stores are packed to the rafters with pots, bamboo steamers, and other goods; and fish swim in tanks. I love this market.

Near the middle of Fu Shin Street is a small **Man Mo Temple**, built in 1892 to commemorate the founding of Tai Po's market. Dedicated to the Taoist gods of war and literature, it could accommodate overnight guests to the market in its ladder-accessible upper floor, while side halls were used by market administrators to settle disputes between merchants and to store records. Today it's a popular spot for older residents to gather and play mah-jongg or simply pass the time. As at the Man Mo Temple on Hong Kong Island (p. 183), huge incense coils suspended from the temple's ceiling are purchased by worshippers and burn for more than 2 weeks. Behind the temple is the tiny Town Earthgod Shrine, where townspeople burn offerings for dead relatives. A nearby shop sells paper offerings in the shapes of cars, gold bars, clothing, and other luxury goods that might prove useful for the dead in their afterlife.

At the end of Fu Shin Street, turn right and walk uphill 1 block to the small **Hong Kong Railway Museum**, 13 Shung Tak St. (☎ 852/2653 3455; <http://hk.heritage.museum>), occupying what was formerly the very tiny Tai Po Market railway station, built in 1913 in traditional Chinese style with ceramic figurines cresting its gabled roof. Besides the station's original waiting hall and ticket office, the museum displays a few model trains (including those from other countries, like the Shinkansen bullet train from Japan and the ICE from Germany) and fascinating historical photographs showing Tai Po, Yau Ma Tei during construction of its station approximately 100 years ago (completely void of buildings, almost impossible to visualize today), and the former Tsim Sha Tsui Station rail station, completed in 1916 for passengers arriving overland from London. Outside the station are a narrow-gauge steam locomotive, six vintage railway coaches dating from the early 1900s, and an outdoor model train set for children. This museum will appeal mainly to railway buffs, who will probably spend about 20 minutes here. It is open (and free) Wednesday through Monday from 9am to 5pm.

FANLING

A small farming settlement for several centuries, Fanling is now a huge satellite town with more than 350,000 inhabitants. However, the **Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail** takes you through the traditional part of Fanling with its rural atmosphere. Many of the historic

260 buildings along the trail are legacies of the Tang clan, the first and largest of the Five Great Clans to settle in the New Territories, back in the 12th century. Royal descendants of the eldest son of the princess of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), they established five *wais* (walled villages) and six *tsuen* (villages) in the area around Luk Yeuk Tau, which takes its name from the nearby Mountain of the Leaping Dragon. The trail, which stretches about 2.25km (1.4 miles) and takes approximately 1 hour to complete, passes more than a dozen historic structures along the way, including four walled villages (Lo Wai, the first walled village built by the Tang clan, is my favorite; open daily 9am–5pm), a study hall, a Tin Hau temple, and one of Hong Kong's largest ancestral halls, built in the 16th century to honor the founding Tang ancestor and noted for its elaborate wood carvings and central chamber housing the soul tablets of the Song princess and her husband (open Wed–Mon 9am–1pm and 2–5pm). Admission to all sights is free. The Tangs of the area still practice traditional village customs, including the Tin Hau Festival (usually in Apr) and a special lantern lighting ceremony held the 15th day of the first lunar month to honor baby boys. This is a great walk, but I'm saddened by modern housing that has encroached upon what was once pastoral farmland just a few years back; instead of the chirping of birds, the most common sound nowadays comes from buzz saws (luckily, the Ping Shan Heritage Trail in the West New Territories has remained largely untouched, but it doesn't have the walled villages this walk has; see p. 261).

To reach the Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail, take minibs no. 54K from the east exit of Fanling Station to Lo Wai walled village (it's not the beginning of the trail, but it gets most interesting from here onward). Near the end of the trail, at the San Wai walled village, take bus no. 56K back to Fanling Station. Be sure to pick up the free brochure *Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail*, which contains a map and information on historic buildings, at one of the HKTb Visitor Information and Services Centres.

Where to Dine

The most memorable place to dine in Fanling is at **Fung Ying Seen Koon**, 66 Pak Wo Rd. (☎ **852/2669 9186**), Hong Kong's largest Taoist temple, established in 1929 by refugees fleeing Canton (Guangzhou). It offers vegetarian food daily from 11am to 5pm in a simple dining room to the left of the main hall. Main dishes on the English menu, ranging in price from HK\$40 to HK\$65 (US\$5.20–US\$8.45/£2.60–£4.20), include hot and spicy bean curd, deep-fried crispy taro rolls, and fried elm fungus with three kinds of mushroom. There's a self-service station for rice and congee. Set meals for two people are HK\$105 (US\$14/£6.80), though the menu for this is in Chinese only (you can't go wrong, as all the food is good). MasterCard and Visa are accepted. To reach Fung Ying Seen Koon, visible from the Fanling Station platform, take the west exit and go through the pedestrian underpass.

SHEUNG SHUI

Once its own market town, Sheung Shui, the last stop before the China border, has been swallowed up in the budding satellite town that now spreads out from Fanling. Although much of Sheung Shui's charm has been lost due to the construction of modern buildings, it's still more peaceful than other old villages closer to the beaten path. Of all the historic, traditional Chinese buildings in the New Territories, few impress me as much as **Tai Fu Tai ★★**, built in 1865 and the only Mandarin mansion restored and remaining in Hong Kong. It belonged to Man Chung-luen, the 21st generation of the Man clan (another of the Five Great Clans), a merchant and scholar who attained the highest grade in the Imperial Chinese Civil Service Examinations. Constructed of granite and bricks and adorned with colorful ceramic figurines, fine plaster moldings, wood carvings, and

murals, it is striking for its simplicity, a stark contrast to mansions built by the Western gentry class during the same period. Resembling a miniature fort, without windows but with an inner courtyard to let in light, it contains a main hall, side chambers, bedrooms, study, kitchen, servants' quarters, and lavatory. In the back of the main hall is a portrait of Man Chung-luen, flanked by pictures of his two wives and two sons. Not shown are his eight daughters. Remarkably, the mansion was occupied by members of the Man clan until the 1980s. Nearby is the **Man Lun Fung Ancestral Hall**, built to honor the eighth member of the Man clan. Both Tai Fu Tai and the ancestral hall are open free to the public Wednesday through Monday, 9am to 1pm and 2 to 5pm. To reach them, take bus no. 76K from Sheung Shui Station traveling in the direction of Yuen Long (West) about 30 minutes to San Tin (near the post office), followed by a 5-minute walk back along Castle Peak Road to the signposted entrance. Since it's a bit difficult and time-consuming to visit on your own, you might want to take Gray Line's guided "Heritage Tour" (see p. 191 in chapter 7), which takes in this site, as well as a few stops of the Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail and the Man Mo Temple in Tai Po, described above.

WEST NEW TERRITORIES

If I were to choose only one quick destination in the New Territories, it would be Tsuen Wan with its excellent walled-village museum. It's easily reached by taking the MTR Tsuen Wan Line, which runs from Central through Tsim Sha Tsui and Kowloon, to the last stop. Tsuen Wan was a small market town just 100 years ago, with a population of about 3,000 Hakkas and a thriving incense powder-producing industry. The first of many designated satellite towns in the New Territories, it has grown to a population of more than 290,000 residents, living mostly in high-rise housing estates.

The main reason for visiting Tsuen Wan is its excellent **Sam Tung Uk Museum ★★★**, 2 Kwu Uk Lane, Tsuen Wan (☎ 852/2411 2001; <http://hk.heritage.museum>), located just a few minutes' walk from Tsuen Wan MTR station by taking exit B2. The museum is actually a restored Hakka walled village, built in the 18th century by members of the farming Chan clan and consisting of minuscule lanes lined with tiny tile-roofed homes. Although as many as 300 clan members once lived here, the village was abandoned in 1980. Today the museum is an oasis in the midst of modern high-rise housing projects. Four of the homes, all windowless, have been restored to their original condition and are furnished much as they would have been when occupied long ago, with traditional Chinese furniture (including elegant black-wood furniture), and contain farm implements, kitchens, and lavatories. In the middle of the village is the ancestral hall, while other rooms contain exhibits dedicated to Hakka traditions and customs such as rice cultivation (rice, no longer produced in Hong Kong, is all imported) and to Tsuen Wan's history, complete with photographs of Sam Tung Uk before and during its restoration. Ask at reception to see an 8-minute video, played on request, that describes the walled village's restoration into a folk museum and the purpose of its many rooms, including the ancestral hall. Be sure, too, to take a look at the landscaped garden adjacent to the village. The museum is open Wednesday through Monday from 9am to 5pm, and admission is free.

A free minibus, no. 95k, makes runs between MTR Tsuen Wan Station and Tsuen Wan West Station, a stop on the West Rail Line. Or, you can walk between the two stations in about 20 minutes via Tai Ho Road (be sure to stop by the customer service counter at MTR Tsuen Wan Station to pick up the *Station Information* brochure, which contains a map showing the location of both stations).

From Tsuen Wan West Station, take the West Rail four stops to Tin Shui Wai Station. At Tin Shui Wai Station, take exit E for the **Ping Shan Heritage Trail**, the start of which is easy

262 to spot by its ancient pagoda (be sure to pick up the free *Ping Shan Heritage Trail* brochure at HKTB). This wonderful walking trail is only 1km (.65 miles) long and takes less than 30 minutes to complete, yet it passes a wealth of traditional Chinese structures along the way, most relating to the powerful Tang clan, who settled the Ping Shan area in the 12th century as one of the Five Great Clans of the New Territories. Although it lacks the wow factor of walled villages that the Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail boasts (see above), I prefer this walk because of its rural, traditional surroundings, which make for a fascinating stroll.

The three-story Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda (open 9am–1pm and 2–5pm; closed on Tues) is the only ancient pagoda in Hong Kong, constructed more than 600 years ago to improve the area's feng shui and ward off evil spirits. A small flea market, held near the pagoda on weekends and holidays, sells clothing and accessories. Other highlights are a walled village (not open to the public), two temples, and two study halls built for members of the Tang clan studying for the Imperial Civil Service Examination (those who passed could become officials in the Qing government, thereby enhancing the social status of the Tang family). But the main attraction is the 700-year-old Tang Ancestral Hall (open daily 9am–1pm and 2–5pm), still used by the Tang clan for ancestral worship, ceremonies, and festivals. Be sure, too, to take a peek in the village surrounding the ancestral hall, with its impossibly narrow lanes that hark back to earlier centuries. The trail culminates at the Old Ping Shan Police Station, built in 1899 atop a hill and now serving as the Ping Shan Tang Clan Gallery (☎ 852/2617 1959), a visitor center that introduces local folk customs and history. In addition to historic items like furniture, a wedding dress, implements used for cricket fights (forbidden today), and old photographs, videos throughout cover everything from traditional marriage ceremonies to the Tang educational system. The gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Admission to this and other sights along the trail is free.

If you have more time to spare, following the map on the *Ping Shan Heritage Trail* brochure, walk 5 minutes to the Ping Shan Light Rail Station (which is so small it looks like a tram stop). Take light rail Rte. 761 to Tin Yat Station and then transfer to Rte. 706 for Wetland Park Station, from which it's a 5-minute walk to the new **Hong Kong Wetland Park**, Tin Shui Wai (☎ 852/3152 2666; www.wetlandpark.com). This 61-hectare (150-acre) park was created to replace lost habitat due to construction of the Tin Shui Wai satellite town. A visitor center, overlooking the wetland reserve, introduces the importance of wetlands, from tundras to tropical swamps, with plenty of touch screens to engage the kids. Outside, boardwalks and pathways lead past freshwater marshes, fish ponds, woodlands, grasslands, mudflats, and mangroves, which serve as habitats for 150 species of birds that live here or pass through (including the winter habitat of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill), as well as fish, reptiles, mammals, and butterflies. Unfortunately, surrounding high-rise housing estates detract from what would otherwise be a great outdoor experience. In any case, avoid weekends and holidays, as this is a very popular family attraction. It's open Wednesday through Monday from 10am to 5pm. Admission is HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95) for adults and HK\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) for children, students, and seniors.

2 THE OUTLYING ISLANDS

Hong Kong is surrounded by some 260 outlying islands, most of them barren and uninhabited. Because construction in the New Territories is booming and transportation to underpopulated areas there can be slow, the islands offer the easiest opportunity to see

Tips The Best Seat on Ship

The best view aboard ferries to the outlying islands is on the left side of the boat, as Central, the Western District, and Hong Kong Island glide past in all their glory.

something of rural Chinese life—just hop on a ferry in Central and then sit back and enjoy the view. In fact, taking a ferry to an outlying island is the cheapest harbor cruise there is, making getting there part of the fun.

Three of the most accessible and popular islands are **Lantau, Cheung Chau, and Lamma**. Each offers something different: Lantau, which can also be reached by MTR and then cable car, is famous for its giant outdoor Buddha—one of Hong Kong's major attractions—and Po Lin Monastery with its vegetarian meals; Cheung Chau, with its beach, boat population, and thriving fishing community, is a popular destination for families and is the best choice for immersion into village life; and Lamma, known for its open-air seafood restaurants, hiking trail, and beaches, is best for getting away from it all.

GETTING TO THE ISLANDS

Ferries to all three islands depart approximately every hour or two from Hong Kong Island's Central Ferry Piers, also home of the Star Ferry. You can purchase your ticket at the piers just prior to departure or use the magnetic Octopus transportation card, but avoid going on Sunday or holidays when the ferries are packed with city folks on family outings. There are two kinds of ferries: ordinary ferries and quicker hover-ferry service (called "Fast Ferries"). The Fast Ferries to Lantau, Cheung Chau, and Lamma are used mostly by commuters. I personally prefer the slower, ordinary ferries because the view is better, especially if you're headed for Lantau or Cheung Chau: These have the bonus of deluxe class, which is on the upper deck and has an open deck out back—a great place to watch the harbor float past when the weather is nice. In addition, deluxe cabins are the only ones that are air-conditioned, a plus when humidity is at its peak. Note, however, that ferries to Lamma have no deluxe class or outside deck. In any case, you might wish to head out to an island via regular ferry and then return via Fast Ferry. An additional infrequent ferry service from Tsim Sha Tsui's Star Ferry concourse to Lantau and Cheung Chau runs on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, but it may not offer deluxe class.

Fares to the islands are a bargain. Monday to Saturday, tickets for ordinary ferries cost just HK\$11.50 to HK\$13 (US\$1.50–US\$1.70/75p–85p) for ordinary class and HK\$18 to HK\$19.20 (US\$2.35–US\$2.50/£1.15–£1.25) for deluxe, depending on the destination. Fares are slightly higher on Sunday and public holidays: HK\$16.80 to HK\$19.20 (US\$2.20–US\$2.50/£1.10–£1.25) for ordinary class and HK\$26.20 to HK\$31.70 (US\$3.40–US\$4.10/£1.70–£2.05) for a deluxe ticket. Fast Ferries range from HK\$22.50 to HK\$36.70 (US\$2.90–US\$4.75/£1.45–£2.40), depending on the destination and the day of the week.

In any case, by ordinary ferry it takes only 35 minutes to reach Lamma, 55 minutes to reach Cheung Chau, and 50 minutes to reach Lantau. Fast Ferry reduces travel time to 20 minutes for Lamma, 30 minutes for Cheung Chau, and 40 minutes for Lantau.

For information on ferry schedules and prices, drop by the Hong Kong Tourist Board for a free copy of timetables and prices. You can also obtain information on schedules to Cheung Chau and Lantau at ☎ **852/2131 8181** and www.nwff.com.hk; for Lamma, call ☎ **852/2815 6063** or visit www.hkkf.com.hk.

Inhabited since Neolithic times and twice the size of Hong Kong Island, Lantau is Hong Kong's largest island. But while Hong Kong Island has a population of 1.4 million, **Lantau ★★★** has only about 88,000. Much of its population growth has occurred only recently, first with the founding of Discovery Bay, a large, modern, and expensive settlement of condominiums popular with expats and chuppies (the local term used to identify Chinese yuppies), then with Hong Kong's new airport (which brought with it the creation of a new satellite town at Tung Chung), and finally with the 2006 opening of Hong Kong Disneyland (p. 189). But one of its biggest draws is the Giant Tian Tan Buddha, the largest seated outdoor Buddha in the world. Accessible by ferry or via MTR and then cable car, Lantau is by far the most popular of Hong Kong's outlying islands.

Yet much of Lantau remains mountainous and lush. Country parks make up more than half of the island, with 69km (43 miles) of marked hiking trails. Lantau is an island of high peaks, remote and isolated beaches, small villages, temples, and monasteries. To do the island justice, I suggest arriving the old-fashioned way, by ordinary ferry, followed by a bus to the Giant Buddha and then returning to the city by cable car and subway. You should allow at least 5 hours for the entire trip.

Ordinary ferries, with both ordinary and deluxe class, depart from Central Ferry Pier no. 6 in Central approximately every 2 hours between 6:10am and 10:30pm and arrive about 50 minutes later at Silvermine Bay, known as *Mui Wo* in Chinese. There is also more frequent hover-ferry service from the same pier, which gets you there in about 40 minutes but doesn't provide panoramic views from an outside deck in deluxe class. In Mui Wo, as soon as you exit the ferry pier, you'll see a bus terminal with buses going to other parts of the island, with departures coinciding with the arrival of the ferries. For the Giant Buddha and Po Lin Monastery, take bus no. 2 bound for Ngong Ping (Po Lin Monastery). The exact fare of HK\$16 (US\$2.10/£1.05) Monday through Saturday and HK\$25 (US\$3.25/£1.65) on Sunday and public holidays is required, so come with lots of change or use the handy Octopus transportation card. The bus from Silvermine Bay to Po Lin Monastery takes about 45 minutes as it hurtles around hair-raising curves and up and down through lush countryside—not for the faint of heart. I always enjoy every minute of it. For the most panoramic views, sit on the left side of the bus.

If you don't wish to ride the ferry, you can also reach Lantau by taking the Tung Chung MTR Line, which departs from Hong Kong Station in Central and travels to Tung Chung, the end terminus, in about 30 minutes. In Tung Chung, you can board a 17-passenger cable car that travels 5.7km (3½ miles) directly to Ngong Ping in about 25 minutes, with fantastic views of the surrounding countryside, the airport and South China Sea. The round-trip fare of the Ngong Ping Cable Car is HK\$88 (US\$11/£5.70) for adults and HK\$45 (US\$5.85/£2.90) for children; one-way fares are HK\$58 and HK\$28 (US\$7.55/£3.75 and US\$3.65/£1.80), respectively. Note that on "special days" (about 60 days a year, mostly on holidays and weekends in summer), prices are higher by HK\$5 to HK\$10 (US\$65¢–US\$1.30/35p–65p). Otherwise, bus no. 23 also travels between Tung Chung and Ngong Ping in about 50 minutes; the fare is the same as from Mui Wo and the ride is no less hair-raising.

Exploring Lantau

The most famous attractions on Lantau (in addition to Disneyland, p. 189) are the **Giant Tian Tan Buddha** and **Po Lin Monastery**, both situated on the plateau of Ngong Ping at an elevation of 738m (2,421 ft.). The Buddha is so huge that you'll have your first glimpses

of it en route. More than 30m (98 ft.) tall and weighing 250 tons, it was erected in 1993 as the world's largest seated outdoor bronze Buddha and can be seen as far away as Macau (or so it is claimed) on clear days. Some 260 steps lead up to the Buddha itself, but first you should stop at the ticket office at the bottom of the steps to purchase a meal ticket, since the other reason people come to Po Lin is to eat. The monastery is famous for its vegetarian lunches, served in a big dining hall (see "Where to Dine," below). Your meal ticket doubles as your admission ticket to a small museum inside the base of the statue, but there isn't much to see here. Rather, the best part is the view of the surrounding countryside from the statue's platform, which is free. The Giant Buddha is open daily from 10am to 5:30pm.

It's a couple minutes' walk onward to the colorful Po Lin Monastery, largest and best known of the dozens of Buddhist monasteries on Lantau. Po Lin (which means "precious lotus") was first established more than 100 years ago by reclusive monks; the present buildings date from 1921 and 1970. The ornate main temple houses three magnificent bronze statues of Buddha, representing the past, present, and future; it also has a brightly painted vermilion interior with dragons and other Chinese mythical figures on the ceiling. You'll probably want to spend about a half-hour wandering through the grounds here, but the best thing to do is dine on vegetarian cuisine (see below).

As for other things to do on Ngong Ping, about a 15-minute walk from the Giant Buddha, at the foot of Lantau Peak, is the **Wisdom Path**, designed in a figure eight to symbolize infinity and marked by 38 towering wooden pillars, each bearing a portion of the centuries-old Heart Sutra in Chinese characters. If you're truly adventurous or energetic, you can continue the climb to the top of Lantau Peak, the second-tallest peak in Hong Kong (1,000m/3,281 ft.); plan on 3 hours for the hike up and back.

Just a couple minutes' walk from the Buddha is also **Ngong Ping Village** (☎ 852/2109 9898; www.np360.com.hk), a Disneyesque interpretation of a traditional Chinese village with white-washed walls and landscaping. It's home to the Ngong Ping Cable Car as well as souvenir shops (my favorite is the Chopstick Gallery), restaurants, and the

A Tai O Excursion

I used to love going to Tai O, a small fishing village once famous for its salt-making industry on the northwestern end of Lantau. It wasn't so much for the stilt houses here, which were never very attractive anyway, but for the slow pace of life; the only way to cross the creek dividing the village was on a boat that was hand-pulled along a rope. A drawbridge now spans the creek and Tai O has grown. But travelers in search of sustainable tourism might want to make a detour here to stay overnight in one of the stilt homes or to visit its protected mangroves. Most people combine Tai O with a trip to Po Lin Monastery (p. 264).

Visitors can experience life in Tai O through several programs, including an overnight homestay in one of the stilt houses (HK\$100/US\$13/£6.50 per person) or a boat trip along the Tai O River, all of which provide local residents with jobs. Tai O is interesting also for its protected mangroves and migratory birds. For more information, contact the **Tai O Cultural and Ecological Integrated Resource Center**, 61–63 Wing On St. (an address it shares with the Hong Kong Y.W.C.A.), Tai O (☎ 852/2985 6310).

Moments Reflections on Reflexology

The best thing to do in Ngong Ping Village, in my opinion, is to drop in the **Oriental Massage Center** (☎ 852/2259 3901) for some foot reflexology. As in acupuncture, foot reflexology works on the premise that certain points in the foot correspond to specific organs and systems in the body. As the reflexologist works through these points, it can bring discomfort to afflicted areas. For me, it was the inside of my big toes, which connects to the cerebellum. Seeing my alarm (I was following his progress on a foot chart outlining pressure points), the reflexologist flattered me by explaining, "It's because your brain is working very hard." He then asked whether I was constipated. I wasn't sure, but I do know this: I was as regular as Old Faithful for the next few weeks. The cost of treatment? HK\$128 (US\$17/£8.30) for 30 minutes.

Ngong Ping Tea House, where you can enjoy a cup of tea and cake along with 15-minute demonstrations of traditional Chinese tea ceremonies three or four times a day. There are also two minor attractions: **Walking with Buddha**, a multimedia museum that describes the life of Siddhartha Gautama (who lived 2,500 years ago in Nepal and became Buddha), his path to enlightenment, the origin of Buddhism, and the religion's subsequent expansion around the world; and **Monkey's Tale Theatre**, which presents a computer-animated comical story with a moral twist about a selfish monkey who, with the help of the Monkey King, learns about greed, humility, friendship, and kindness. Admission to either is HK\$35 (US\$4.55/£2.25) for adults and HK\$18 (US\$2.35/£1.15) for children; combination tickets to both museums and tickets that bundle attractions with the cable car are also available. Ngong Ping Village is open Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm, Saturday from 10am to 6:30pm, and Sunday from 9am to 6:30pm, which are also the operational hours of the cable car.

From Po Lin, you can take the cable car to Tung Chung's MTR station; or you can board buses that will take you back to Mui Wo (Silvermine Bay) or Tung Chung (I always check departure times upon arrival at Po Lin, so I don't have to sit around after a just-missed bus). Energetic travelers can even opt to hike down to Tung Chung in about 3 hours. In Tung Chung, shoppers might want to check out Citygate, Hong Kong's only outlet mall and located right next to the MTR station (see p. 232).

Where to Dine

Po Lin Monastery ★★ **VEGETARIAN** Po Lin Monastery, offering fixed-price vegetarian meals, is the most famous place to eat on the island. Buy your lunch ticket from the counter at the base of the Giant Buddha or at the monastery itself; during busy times, your ticket is for a specific time, at an assigned table. Otherwise, set meals are served every half-hour. Two different meals of soup, vegetarian dishes, and rice are available: The ordinary HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£3.90) meal is served in an unadorned dining hall and the procedure is rather unceremonious, with huge dishes of vegetables, rice, and soup brought to communal tables. Grab a bowl and chopsticks and help yourself. Packed with Chinese families, the dining hall here is certainly colorful, and the food, though mediocre, is plentiful. The HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) "Deluxe" meal is served in a smaller adjacent "VIP Room" and is popular mostly with foreign visitors. Meals here are served on china plates, and the food is a notch above the cheaper meal. There's also a snack menu available at an open-air counter at the monastery; it consists of fried noodles and bean curd—skip it.

CHEUNG CHAU

If you have only 3 or 4 hours to spare and don't want to worry about catching buses and finding your way around, Cheung Chau is your best bet. In fact, if I were forced to select only one island to show visiting friends on a limited time schedule, Cheung Chau would be it. Only 12km (7½ miles) from Hong Kong Island, it's a 55-minute ride by ordinary ferry from outlying-ferry pier no. 5 in Central, with ferries leaving approximately every hour and offering scenic harbor views from the outdoor deluxe-class deck. Even quicker are the Fast Ferries, also departing every hour and making the trip in 30 minutes (but these don't have outdoor decks). Despite its name (Cheung Chau means "Long Island"), Cheung Chau is a tiny, dumbbell-shaped island (only 2.5 sq. km/1 sq. mile), with more than 25,000 residents concentrated in a thriving fishing village. There are no cars on the island, making it a delightful place for walking around and exploring rural village life. The island is especially popular with Chinese families for its rental bicycles and beach (you might want to bring your bathing suit), but my favorite thing to do here is to walk the tiny, narrow lanes of Cheung Chau village.

Inhabited for at least 2,500 years by fisher folk and serving as a haven for smugglers and pirates until the 1920s, Cheung Chau still supports a small population of fishing families, with fishing and tourism the island's main industries. The waterfront where the ferry lands, known as the Praya, buzzes with activity as vendors sell fish, lobster, and vegetables. The village itself is a fascinating warren of narrow alleyways, food stalls, markets, and open-fronted shops selling everything from medicinal herbs and incense to dried fish, rice, haircuts, and—a reflection of the island's tourist trade—sun hats, sunglasses, and beach toys.

Exploring Cheung Chau

To see Cheung Chau village, begin with a stroll along the **Praya**, the waterfront promenade right in front of the ferry pier. It's a good place from which to observe the many junks and fishing boats in the harbor. Although there seem to be fewer and fewer junks in Cheung Chau's harbor each time I visit, a small group of fishermen and their families still live on their junks here. I like this harbor more than Aberdeen because boats are moored right next to the waterfront, and I find it amazing how many families keep dogs aboard their boats (not to mention radar systems and computers). To the right as you exit the ferry pier are several open-air restaurants (and, as a sign of the times, a McDonald's), as well as the unimaginative-looking Regional Council Cheung Chau Complex, which houses a library, post office, and city market (open daily 6am–8pm) with more than 200 stalls that sell everything from fresh seafood to vegetables.

On the opposite end of the Praya (to the left as you leave the ferry) are more waterfront restaurants, shops with bicycles to rent, and souvenir shops. After about a 4-minute walk, take a right at the playground onto Pak She Fourth, at the end of which is the **Pak Tai Temple** (open daily 7am–5pm), guarded by stone lions. Built in 1783, it's dedicated to the "Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven," long worshipped as a Taoist god of the sea. Inside is an iron sword measuring almost 1.5m (5 ft.) in length that was found by local fishermen and thought to be 1,000 years old, as well as a sedan that is used to carry the statue of Pak Tai around the village during festivals. Before the altar are also statues of two formidable generals, Thousand Miles Eye and Favourable Wind Ear, who together can see and hear everything. Beside the temple, on a shaded terrace, old villagers are almost always engaged

268 in games of mah-jongg. But the most important event here is the Bun Festival, held in late April or May. It originated a century ago following a terrible plague and is famous throughout Hong Kong. It features 15m-tall (50-ft.) towers of buns (yes, they're edible!) and a parade of children who "float" through the streets suspended by hidden wires and rods.

Leaving the Pak Tai Temple, take a left onto Pak She Street, which later becomes San Hing Street. As you walk back to the center of the village, you'll pass open-fronted shops that sell incense, paper funeral objects such as cars (cremated with the deceased to accompany them to the next life), medicinal herbs, lotus-seed cakes, pungent shrimp paste, vegetables, jade, rattan, cheap toys, and souvenirs. You'll also pass people's homes with the living rooms that hold the family altar opening onto the street. This is the traditional Chinese home, with the family business and communal rooms on the ground floor and the bedrooms up above. All day long you can hear people playing mah-jongg.

At the end of San Hing Street, at a square, take a left to Tung Wan Road, which cuts across the thinnest part of the island from the Praya with its ferry to Tung Wan Beach. Here, just past the square, is a gnarled old banyan tree, considered to be the dwelling place of the spirit of health and fertility. At the end of Tung Wan Road is **Tung Wan Beach**, the most popular beach on the island, with lifeguards and shark nets. Nearby, past the playground and Warwick Hotel, is a smaller public beach, **Kwun Yam Beach**, and the **Cheung Chau Windsurfing Centre** (☎ 852/2981 8316; www.ccwindc.com.hk), with a pleasant outdoor cafe, windsurfing classes, and rental windsurfing boards ranging from HK\$90 to HK\$150 (US\$12–US\$19/£5.85–£9.75), depending on the size, for 1 hour, as well as kayaks that rent for HK\$60 (US\$7.80/£3.90) per hour for a one-seater and HK\$100 (US\$13/£6.50) for a two-seater. Unfortunately, views from both beaches are marred by the sight of the Lamma power plant and Hong Kong Island's high-rises.

From Tung Wan Beach, it's only a few minutes' walk via Tung Wan Road back to the Praya and ferry pier.

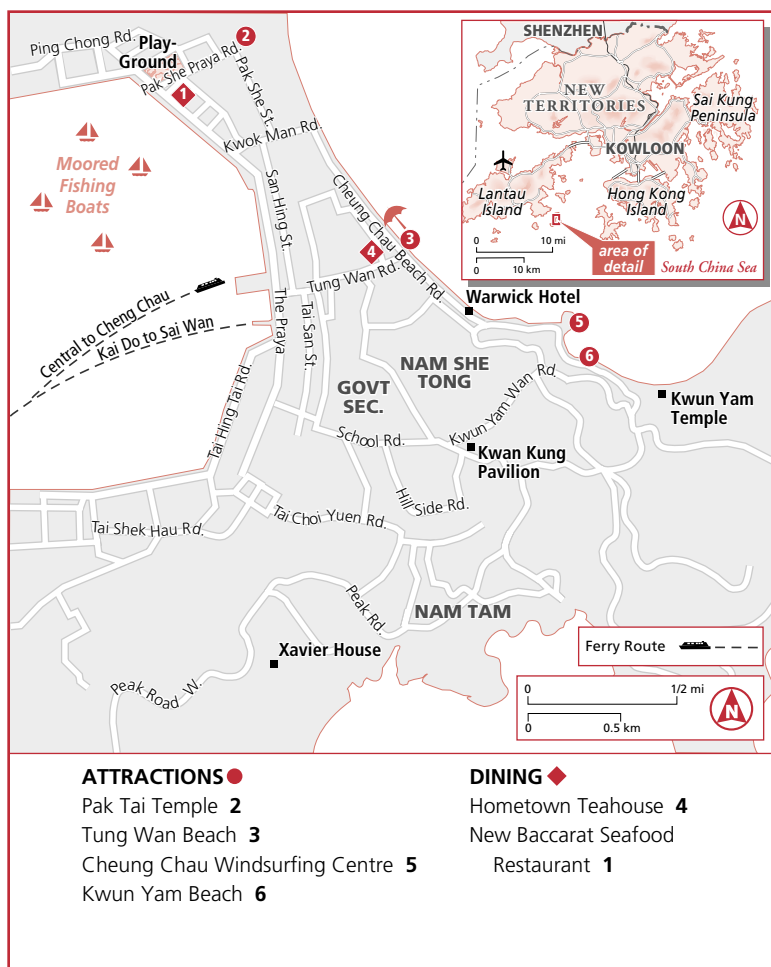
Where to Dine

Hometown Teahouse TEA/SUSHI This is a quirky teahouse, a laid-back and pleasant island oasis on the village's main passageway between the Praya and Tung Wan Beach. It's owned and managed by a Japanese woman, Takahiko-san, and her artist husband. Only a few items—sushi rolls with crab or sausage and herbal teas like *ganoderma* tea (which is thought to boost energy levels)—are available at the "counter," which is nothing more than an open window of a small house. Most people order the sushi set, which comes with tea, sushi, and a cookie. The teahouse itself is an outdoor terrace with a few tables and chairs.

12 Tung Wan Rd. ☎ 852/2981 5038. Rolled sushi HK\$9–HK\$16 (US\$1.15–US\$2.10/60p–£1.05); sushi sets HK\$20–HK\$24 (US\$2.60–US\$3.10/£1.30–£1.55). No credit cards. Daily 2–9pm.

New Baccarat Seafood Restaurant ★ CANTONESE On the Praya, one of many open-air restaurants now crowding the waterfront but also one of the oldest (located near the Pak Tai Temple on the corner of Pak She St. beside a playground), this simple spot offers outdoor seating under a canopy with a view of the harbor. Owned by a fishing family and sporting tanks of live sea creatures, it specializes in fresh seafood, including crab, lobster, squid, scallop, shrimp, and various fish. Try the steamed fresh fish, deep-fried crispy shrimp, or—my favorite—the steamed fresh scallops with minced garlic. Alternatively, you can buy your own fresh seafood from one of the many vendors on the Praya and have it cooked here for HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95).

9A Pak She Praya St. ☎ 852/2981 0606. Main dishes HK\$45–HK\$100 (US\$5.85–US\$13/£2.90–£6.50). No credit cards. Daily 11am–10:30pm. Turn left from the ferry and walk along the Praya about 4 min.



LAMMA

Lamma is the island to visit if you want to escape city life, do some pleasant hiking, swim, or dine alfresco on fresh seafood with views of a peaceful waterfront. The closest of the outlying islands, only 35 minutes by ordinary ferry and 20 minutes by Fast Ferry from Central Ferry Piers no. 4 in Central, Lamma is Hong Kong's third-largest island, has a population of about 12,000, and is still largely undeveloped. The island has no cars, and a 1½-hour hiking trail connects Lamma's two main villages—Yung Shue Wan and Sok Kwu Wan—both served by ferries from Hong Kong Island. Yung Shue Wan, with a large and youthful foreign population, has a decidedly bohemian laid-back atmosphere, while much smaller Sok Kwu Wan is popular for its open-air seafood restaurants. If it's summer, don't

270 forget to bring your bathing suit, since there are several beaches along the trails. You'd be smart, too, to buy bottled water from one of the many stores in either Sok Kwu Wan or Yung Shue Wan before setting out on the trail. In addition, try to avoid Sundays, when the trail is crowded with families, seniors walking dogs, and even mountain bikers.

Exploring Lamma

Although ferries from Central will deposit you at either Yung Shue Wan or Sok Kwu Wan, I personally prefer to land at Sok Kwu Wan for a light seafood meal, hike to a beach for some R & R, and then continue onward to Yung Shue Wan for drinks or dinner before heading back to Central. The advantage of this route is that ferry service is more frequent from Yung Shue Wan, which means you're not constricted to a limited departure schedule. If, however, you choose to hike the trail in reverse from my description below, remember that ferries to and from Sok Kwu Wan are less frequent, so you'll have to time your arrival and departure with precision (or, if you dine at Rainbow Seafood Restaurant, described below, you can take advantage of the restaurant's free shuttle boat to Central and Tsim Sha Tsui by making advance reservations). The hike between the two villages along a marked, concrete footpath takes about 1½ hours and is a true delight, with great views of the surrounding sea and, in the distance, even Ocean Park and Aberdeen on Hong Kong Island.

Tiny **Sok Kwu Wan** is famous for its open-air seafood restaurants and is a popular destination for those lucky enough to own pleasure boats. The restaurants are aligned along the small waterfront, extended over the water on stilts and shaded by canopies; they offer views of the harbor (and, unfortunately, of denuded hills belonging to a defunct cement factory across the harbor; there is talk of eventual landscaping, but only time will tell). All restaurants here have tanks of fresh seafood from which you can choose your own meal. Fresh seafood is available by the *catty* (one catty is about 1½ lb.). Prices for a catty vary each day, depending on supply and demand. One catty of prawns will cost approximately HK\$150 to HK\$175 (US\$19–US\$23/£9.75–£11), with half a catty usually enough for two people. A catty of lobster will cost about HK\$250 to HK\$280 (US\$32–US\$36/£16–£18), though small lobsters for one person are available for about HK\$100 to HK\$120 (US\$13–US\$16/£6.50–£7.80). If you go all out, meals here will average about HK\$250 (US\$32/£18) a person.

Incidentally, as you dine, you'll notice Hong Kong's largest fleet of fish-breeding rafts in the harbor, some also supporting family homes. Also in the harbor is **Lamma Fisherfolk's Village** (☎ 852/2982 8585; www.fisherfolks.com.hk), which you might want to visit if you're looking for something to do or simply want to support a worthwhile local endeavor. Reached by shuttle from Sok Kwu Wan's public pier (the same pier where the ferry docks), the floating "village" consists of moorings, fish-breeding rafts, and displays relating to local fisher-folk culture, including fishing tools, implements used to craft traditional junks, model boats, clothing, and more. Most interesting is the authentic 60-year-old junk, which you can explore at leisure, peeking into the boat's tiny sleeping quarters, the kitchen with its wood-burning stove, and even the "outhouse" toilet. It's open daily from 10am to sunset. Admission, including the shuttle boat to and from the village, is HK\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60) for adults and HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95) for children and seniors.

Turning right from the public pier and walking past the many seafood restaurants, you will soon come to a newly renovated Tin Hau temple on the edge of town, first founded more than 150 years ago. Tin Hau temples are common near the sea, since the goddess Tin Hau is believed to protect fishermen. Continue on the concrete path that hugs the harbor about 10 minutes to Lo So Shing School, where you should turn left. Soon you'll see the turnoff for **Lo So Shing Beach**, which you can reach in about 5 minutes (there

are also public latrines along this path). Prettily situated in a small bay, this is the island's nicest and least crowded beach, offering changing rooms and lifeguards on duty April through October daily from 9am to 6pm.

Otherwise, continuing on the main pathway takes you through lush and verdant valleys and banana groves, with butterflies flitting across the path and roosters crowing from the distance, before ascending to a hillside pavilion overlooking the scandalous cement factory. From this point, the path climbs higher onto barren and windswept hills. About halfway along the trail, on the top of a peak, is a pagoda where you can take a rest and enjoy the view of the South China Sea. After that, the barren hills give way to valleys and trees and then **Hung Shing Yeh Beach**, which also has changing facilities, showers, toilets, and lifeguards on duty in the summer. If it's hot, it may be hard to resist joining the throngs of families and taking another dip in the water. Regrettably, however, the beach is overshadowed by an unsightly power station.

The hiking path resumes on the other side of the beach. In less than 20 minutes, you'll reach **Yung Shue Wan**, but it takes a while to walk past new development before reaching Yung Shue Wan Main Street and the center of town. Yung Shue Wan, which translates as "Banyan Tree Bay," is Lamma's main town. It used to be small and undeveloped, with old houses and little garden plots, but new apartment buildings and shops have sprung up on its hillsides in the past couple decades, and the town is unfortunately blighted by that unsightly power station. What's more, small motorized wagons carrying building supplies zip around as if they can't get to construction sites soon enough. Compared to how the village looked in the early 1980s, I can barely recognize the place. Still, the village has a laid-back, tropical-island atmosphere, with a sizable population of expatriates drawn by low rents and the slow pace of life. With Yung Shue Wan's narrow streets, funky eateries, and shops selling Southeast Asian crafts, jewelry, and clothing, Hong Kong's bustling city life seems more than a short boat ride away.

Where to Dine

Bookworm Café ★★ **Finds** VEGETARIAN Lined with shelves of used books and serving as an informal resource and meeting center for Yung Shue Wan's expat residents, with occasional jam sessions, video nights, and other happenings, this casual restaurant is a great alternative to seafood and a godsend for those seeking organic vegetarian and vegan food. The interesting menu includes breakfasts, sandwiches, veggie pizza, tofu burgers, spinach lasagna, and salads like the "veg-out" salad plate with roasted eggplant, avocado, feta cheese, and black olives on a bed of mixed greens and herbs with Lebanese bread. There are also various teas, fresh juices, and power shakes. Dining is either in a small, air-conditioned room or across the street on an open terrace.

79 Yung Shue Wan Main St., Yung Shue Wan. ☎ **852/2982 4838**. www.bookwormcafe.com.hk. Main dishes HK\$40–HK\$85 (US\$5.20–US\$11/£2.60–£5.50). MC, V. Mon–Wed and Fri 10am–9pm; Sat and holidays 9am–10pm; Sun 9am–9pm.

Concerto Inn Garden Cafe **Kids** WESTERN/CHINESE/SNACKS Located right on Hung Shing Yeh Beach, about a 30-minute walk from the ferry pier in Yung Shue Wan, this clean, low-key establishment offers both accommodations and a pleasant cafe, with outdoor, covered seating beside a running fountain and views of the beach. Its menu is limited, but the restaurant makes a comfortable stop along the hiking trail for a hamburger, sandwich, spaghetti, rice and noodle dishes, ice cream, juice, or beer. A toddlers' play area in back makes for a good diversion for the little ones, especially on crowded days when service can be a bit slow.

Hung Shing Yeh Beach, Yung Shue Wan. ☎ **852/2982 1668**. Main dishes HK\$50–HK\$60 (US\$6.50–US\$7.80/£3.25–£3.90). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8am–10pm.

272 Man Fung Restaurant ★ CANTONESE/SEAFOOD If you start your hike at Sok Kwu Wan and end up hungry for seafood on this side of the island, this is my number-one pick for a hearty meal. Located just a minute's walk from the ferry pier, it offers pleasant outdoor seating right by the water with a view of the harbor and town. Specialties are its fresh seafood straight from the tank, including lobster served with a cheese sauce; fried prawns with garlic and butter; steamed crab with chile and prune sauce; and various other fish, scallop, and seafood dishes available at market price (inquire first before ordering). Otherwise, the menu lists pork, beef, chicken, and pigeon dishes, as well as vegetarian choices like deep-fried bean curd with chile or braised eggplant in a hot pot. Pitchers of Carlsberg draft beer and bottles of wine from France and Portugal are also available.

5 Yung Shue Wan Main St., Yung Shue Wan. ☎ **852/2982 0719**. Main dishes HK\$55–HK\$95 (US\$7.15–US\$12/£3.55–£6.15). AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–10pm.

Rainbow Seafood Restaurant ★★ CANTONESE/SEAFOOD This is the largest open-air restaurant on Sok Kwu Wan's waterfront, easily recognizable by its whirl of ceiling fans and red lanterns. Farther from the pier (and the defunct factory across the harbor) than many other restaurants, it therefore offers a better view of the harbor and boat rafts (don't confuse it with its smaller branch just beside the ferry pier, which does nevertheless have the added convenience of an air-conditioned bar). A nice touch is the water sprayed over its canopy to cool the restaurant on hot summer days. A member of the Hong Kong Tourist Board, it offers an English menu with photographs of its main dishes, including a variety of fresh seafood dishes, with prices for lobster, prawn, and fish clearly marked. Among its specialties are steamed garoupa, lobster available several ways (baked lobster with a cheese sauce is most popular), and fried crab with ginger and scallops. There are two fixed-priced feasts for two persons or more, costing HK\$320 and HK\$380 (US\$42/£21 and US\$49/£25) per person. Incidentally, this restaurant also offers free ferry service to and from Central Ferry Pier no. 9 in Central and Tsim Sha Tsui's public pier, with less frequent service from Aberdeen; be sure to call first and make a reservation (the schedule is posted on the restaurant's website).

17 1st St., Sok Kwu Wan waterfront. ☎ **852/2982 8100**. www.rainbowrest.com.hk. Seafood dishes HK\$60–HK\$200 (US\$7.80–US\$26/£3.90–£13). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–10pm.

A Local Bar

The Island Bar Located next to Man Fung Restaurant on the waterfront, just a minute's walk from the ferry pier, this is a longtime bar and local *gweilo* (foreign) hangout, popular with a mostly middle-aged crowd. Owned by expats living in Yung Shue Wan, it's a comfortable place to wait for the next ferry, play darts, and meet the locals. Happy hour is from 6 to 8pm daily.

6 Yung Shue Wan Main St., Yung Shue Wan. ☎ **852/2982 1376**. Mon–Fri 6pm–2am; Sat–Sun and holidays noon–2am.

3 CHINA

Hong Kong is a major gateway to China. Many first-time visitors to China join an organized tour for excursions to the mainland, though it's certainly easy enough to do on your own. Avid shoppers with a sense of adventure may want to make a day trip across the border to Shenzhen a priority, where fake designer watches and handbags are sold for a song. Two caveats for would-be shoppers: The cost of visas for some nationals, including

Americans, is so high that it cancels out bargains on goods; and pirated goods are illegal in many countries, including the United States. Frankly, I've never understood the desire for fake goods, but I do love shopping for fun accessories, and there are plenty of non-designer purses, watches, and other goods as well.

ORGANIZED TOURS

Virtually all hotels in Hong Kong work with tour agencies that offer a variety of excursions to China, ranging from 1-day trips to Guangzhou or Shenzhen to longer trips that include Guangzhou, Beijing, and other major destinations. Most of these trips follow identical itineraries at similar prices. For example, I joined a 1-day guided tour of Shenzhen (Shekou) and Guangzhou. In Shenzhen, we were shown a small, musty museum containing three terra-cotta figures taken from the tomb of China's first emperor near the city of Xi'an; and in Guangzhou, a local market; an unenlightened zoo with cramped, littered cages and a couple of panda bears; Six Banyan Temple; and the outside of a concert hall built in 1931 as a memorial to Sun Yat-sen (on weekdays, tours also take in a local kindergarten). What I most enjoyed about the trip, offered by Splendid Tours for HK\$1,230 (US\$160/£80) per person, was the journey by hover ferry to Shenzhen, the bus trip to Guangzhou, and the trip back by KCR railway, as these provided good vistas of the surrounding countryside with its duck and fish farms, rice fields, banana groves, and simple living conditions. The so-called attractions, however, were not worth seeing. In my opinion, you (and your pocketbook) are better off making the journey on your own, since the attractions are dismal. On the other hand, the most compelling reasons for joining a group tour are to see more than you could accomplish in a limited time on your own, and to save money through the tour's group visa, which is cheaper than individuals applying for visas on their own.

Companies offering organized trips into China (including day trips to Shenzhen's largest shopping mall, described below) include **Splendid Tours** (☎ 852/2316 2151; www.splendidtours.com), **Gray Line Tours** (☎ 852/2368 7111; www.grayline.com.hk), and **China Travel Service** (see "Visas," below), the official travel agency of the People's Republic of China. Unsurprisingly, CTS offers the most extensive list of tours, with trips that include Beijing, Guilin, Shanghai, Xi'an, Lijiang, and other major cities. CTS's 11-day trip, for example, includes train and plane travel from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, Guilin, Beijing, Xian, and Shanghai before returning to Hong Kong. The cost of this trip runs HK\$14,580 to HK\$15,170 (US\$1,893–US\$1,970/£947–£985), depending on the season.

VISAS

If you join an organized tour of China lasting 1 or 2 days, your visa for China will most likely be taken care of by the tour agency, with the price of tour group visas (which cost less than individual visas) included in the tour price. You can book tours up to the day before departure if there's room, but most charge more if you book later than 11:30am the day before departure, since the company will have to apply for an individual rush visa rather than submitting your passport along with the others for a group visa. For longer tours in China, however, or if you wish to visit China on your own, you'll need to obtain a visa yourself. Your hotel or a travel agency may be able to arrange this for you. Having your hotel's concierge or tour desk do the work certainly saves time, but prices are higher. Travel agencies are cheaper, but you'll have to first apply and then return to pick up the visa. You can also save money by planning ahead, as rush orders for visas add to the price.

One of the most popular places to apply for a visa is at a **China Travel Service** (CTS; www.ctshk.com), the official travel agency of the PRC. Hong Kong has several branches, including 78 Connaught Rd. Central, Central District (☎ **852/2853 3533**; MTR: Central); 138 Hennessey Rd., Wan Chai (☎ **852/2832 3888**; MTR: Wan Chai); and 27–33 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ **852/2315 7188**; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui), which is the most convenient with the most convenient hours: Monday through Friday from 9am to 7pm, Saturday from 9am to 5pm, and Sunday and holidays from 9am to 12:30pm and 2 to 5pm. Although a CTS is also located at the Lo Wu border crossing, residents of the United States and United Kingdom cannot obtain visas here.

To fill out an application for your visa, you will need your passport (with an expiration date of not less than 6 months away) and one passport photograph (you can have your portrait taken at Tsim Sha Tsui's CTS office for HK\$35/US\$4.55/£2.30; otherwise, the nearby YMCA Salisbury on Salisbury Rd. and the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station have portrait machines). Prices for a visa, unfortunately, vary depending on nationality and are subject to change. It's cheapest, however, to turn in your visa application at least 4 business days prior to departure. At the time this book was going to press, Americans applying for a visa 4 days in advance at CTS, which is cheaper than most places (especially hotel tour desks), were required to pay HK\$1,080 (US\$140) for a double-entry visa valid for 6 months (single-entry visas, which are cheaper, are not available to Americans). However, Americans in a hurry can obtain a visa more quickly by paying more: HK\$1,330 (US\$173) for visa applications made 3 days in advance and HK\$1,470 (US\$191) for same-day service (applications made before noon will be available by 5:30pm the same day).

U.K. residents fare better: HK\$500 (£32) for a single-entry visa (valid for 30 days) applied for 3 days in advance, HK\$700 (£45) for next-day service, and HK\$900 (£58) for same-day visa pickup. Otherwise, the regular price of a single-entry visa for many other nationalities, including Canadian, Australians, and New Zealanders, is HK\$210 (US\$27/£14) for applications made 3 days in advance; HK\$480 (US\$63/£31) for same-day pickup. In any case, visa requirements and prices can change overnight; call your embassy for updated information.

SHENZHEN

If you're planning a 1-day trip to China, your destination will be either Shenzhen or Guangzhou (see below). **Shenzhen**, located across the Hong Kong–China border, was established in the 1980s as one of China's first Special Economic Zones. Today, this experiment with capitalism looks almost like Hong Kong with its million people, concrete high-rises, traffic, industries, pollution, and relative prosperity. It's a shopping mecca for day-trippers who come for fake designer handbags, watches, and other goods at prices much cheaper than in Hong Kong. However, the HK\$1,080 (US\$140) minimum Americans now pay for a visa makes shopping in Shenzhen no longer a bargain.

You can travel to Shenzhen via the MTR East Rail, with trains departing Kowloon's East Tsim Sha Tsui Station every 3 to 8 minutes between 5:28am and 11:05pm. The trip from Tsim Sha Tsui East to Lo Wu, the border crossing (open daily 6:30am–midnight), takes about 43 minutes and costs HK\$36.50 (US\$4.75/£2.35) for ordinary class and HK\$73 (US\$9.50/£4.75) for first class. Prices are slightly cheaper if you have an Octopus card, but if you're traveling first class, you'll have to swipe your card once again on the train platform at the First Class Processor located in front of the first-class compartment. The Lo Wu Border Control is one of the busiest border crossings in the world.

Avoid traveling on weekends and holidays, if possible, when crowds of day-trippers can make the wait to cross over very long. Or, you can change trains in Sheung Shui for a 6-minute ride to Lok Ma Chau, a new border crossing into Shenzhen also with shopping and connection via the Shenzhen Metro to other destinations in Shenzhen.

After going through Customs, you can walk across the border into Shenzhen. Just across the border from Lo Wu is a huge shopping mall called Luohu Commercial City (also called Lo Wu Shopping Mall by tour agencies), with five floors of tiny shops selling a bewildering amount of inexpensively priced handbags, shoes, watches; jewelry; clothing (including Chinese padded jackets); and bolts of cloth. As for imitation designer bags and pirated DVDs, Chinese officials have cracked down on counterfeit goods (half the fake goods seized by U.S. Customs agents come from China, which should give would-be purchasers pause as well). That is not to say that such goods are unavailable. When I agreed, at a shopkeeper's insistence, to look at imitation handbags, I was whisked to a concealed back-room closet with rows and rows of bags. In a tiny electronics shop, the owner closed all his doors and sent his assistant scurrying up a concealed hole in the drop ceiling to retrieve pirated DVDs (don't bother buying DVDs—most of the time they aren't fully copied or they don't work). Several salons offer combination manicures and pedicures for as little as HK\$30 (US\$3.90/£1.95), but lack of hygienic conditions may discourage most tourists from giving them a whirl. In any case, bargaining is the name of the game, and since there are no ATMs around, bring plenty of HK dollars. You should also guard your belongings against pickpockets. Shops are open daily from 10am to 10pm.

As for tourist attractions, they're limited to Splendid China, a theme park with more than 80 miniatures of China's most historic buildings, sites, and scenic wonders, including the Great Wall and the Imperial Palace; Window of the World, which re-creates famous buildings, monuments, and scenic spots from around the world, including the Taj Mahal, Eiffel Tower, and Grand Canyon; and China Folk Cultures Villages, which presents the art and cultures of China's various ethnic groups with life-size villages and people dressed in native dress. All three are clustered together about 13km (8 miles) west of the border crossing; take the very efficient Shenzhen Metro subway from Lo Wu to Window of the World/Shijiezhichuang Station. Otherwise, Splendid China and China Folk Cultures villages are often included in 1-day tours offered by tour companies listed above. Most visitors to Shenzhen, however, come for the shopping.

FARTHER AFIELD

Farther afield is **Guangzhou (Canton)**, capital of Guangdong Province with a population approaching 12 million. A commercial city, Guangzhou is famous for its markets, including Haizhu Square with vendors selling electronics, toys, and souvenirs at great prices. Otherwise, the sights are confined to a Buddhist temple and the monuments and statues in the city's largest park, Yuexiu Yuan, that include a memorial to Sun Yat-sen. You can reach Guangzhou by rail in about 1 hour and 40 minutes from Hung Hom Station in Kowloon; cost of this trip is HK\$230 (US\$30/£15) for "premium" class and HK\$190 (US\$25/£12) for first class. At last check, through-train service to Guangzhou departed Hung Hom every hour or so from 7:28am to 7:24pm.

Be forewarned, however, that because tourist attractions in Shenzhen and Guangzhou are extremely limited, if you're really interested in a trip to China you should plan on traveling to Shanghai, Beijing, and beyond. For more information on China, see *Frommer's China*.

Macau

Hanging from China's gigantic underbelly on its southeastern coast, Macau covers all of 28.6 sq. km (11.4 sq. miles). About 64km (40 miles) west of Hong Kong across the Pearl River Estuary, it served as Portugal's last holdout in Asia until 1999, when it was handed back to China. Portugal's other former Asian strongholds, Goa and Malacca, had long before been claimed by neighboring powers.

With its unique mixture of Portuguese and Chinese cultures, Macau makes an interesting day trip or overnight stay if you want to get away from the bustle of Hong Kong. Although Macau's rising reputation as a gambling and shopping mecca—spurred by the grand openings of ever larger and grander casinos with equally ostentatious

shopping malls—is a major attraction for many, the city also has its fair share of beaches, fortresses, churches, temples, gardens, and excellent museums to explore. What's more, although prices have risen sharply the past few years, Macau is still a bargain compared to Hong Kong, especially when it comes to dining and accommodations (you can bask in luxury in Macau for a fraction of what you'd pay in the former British colony). And finally, Macanese cuisine, unique to Macau and combining ingredients from former Portuguese trading ports from around the world, is both inexpensive and delicious, especially when accompanied with Portuguese wine. If you're looking for a vacation from your vacation, I heartily recommend Macau.

1 MACAU TODAY

Macau is no longer off the tourist radar, in large part because it is now touted as the Las Vegas of the East. Whereas only 7.4 million tourists visited Macau in 1999, 27 million tourists crossed its borders in 2007, a number that surpasses—and this is what I find most astonishing—the number of tourists entering Hong Kong during the same year. More than 90% of visitors are from mainland China (which relaxed travel restrictions in 2003 and where gambling is illegal), Hong Kong, and Taiwan. While casinos were always a part of Macau's draw, especially for Hong Kong Chinese, deregulation of the gaming industry in 2002 paved the way to an explosion of ritzier, more conspicuous casinos, including big-name imports from the United States like the Venetian and MGM Grand. The former Portuguese territory's transformation into Asia's Las Vegas has played nicely with Macau's vigorous policy of land reclamation, which has more than doubled its size over the last couple decades and added high-rises, superhighways, housing complexes, and huge entertainment and shopping complexes. Compared to the real Las Vegas, however, Macau seems underdeveloped, with only 17,000 hotel rooms compared to Las Vegas's 130,000. And yet, Macau's annual gaming revenue now exceeds that of Las Vegas (in 2007, Macau's gambling revenues exceeded those of Las Vegas by more than US\$3 billion), and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize Macau's huge potential market just across the border. There are so many hotels coming onto the Macau scene, it's hard to say who is *not* opening property



ACCOMMODATIONS

- East Asia Hotel 5
- Grand Lisboa 15
- Holiday Inn Macau 19
- Hotel Guia 21
- Hotel Ko Wah 6
- Hotel Lisboa 33
- Hotel Sun Sun 13
- Mandarin Oriental Macau 20
- MGM Grand 31
- Pousada de Mong-Ha 1
- Pousada de São Tiago 39
- Rocks Hotel 26
- Sintra 14
- Starworld Hotel 18
- Wynn Macau 32

DINING

- A Lorch 36
- Afrikan BBQ Restaurant and Lounge 25
- Antica Trattoria da Ise 30
- Aux Beaux Arts 31
- Caravela 16
- Carlos 29
- Clube Militar de Macau 17
- Fat Siu Lau 7, 28
- IFT Educational Restaurant 1
- Il Teatro 32
- La Bonne Heure 12
- Long Kei 8
- O Porto Interior 34
- Restaurante Litoral 35

ATTRACTIONS

- A-Ma Temple 37
- Fisherman's Wharf 24
- Grand Prix Museum 23
- Guia Fort and Lighthouse 22
- Kun Lam Temple (Temple of the Goddess of Mercy) 2
- Lou Lim Lok Garden 3
- Macau Museum of Art 27
- Macau Tower 40
- Maritime Museum 38
- Museum of Macau 11
- Pawnshop Museum 9
- Ruins of St. Paul's Church 4
- Wine Museum 23

- Robuchon a Galera 33
- 360 Café 40
- Wong Chi Kei Congee & Noodle 10

278 here, with Shangri-La, Hilton, Conrad, Sheraton, Raffles, Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, Ritz-Carlton and InterContinental all signing on.

In short, Macau bears almost no resemblance to the laid-back town I first laid eyes on in the 1980s. A sleepy backwater just 2 decades ago—when the local populace got from place to place unhurriedly by pedicab and the road from the ferry to downtown was a lonely stretch of potholes—Macau is changing so rapidly that old-timers are right when they complain that the place isn't what it used to be. In fact, Macau is *more* than it used to be, with land reclamation and new construction dramatically altering the city's skyline in just 20 short years, with no end in sight. The small downtown, built in the era of pedicabs with its narrow lanes, is ill-equipped to deal with Macau's ever-increasing traffic. Indeed, city planners seem so intent on expansion, I fear that much of Macau's unique architectural legacy and charm will be lost in an ever-growing concrete jungle.

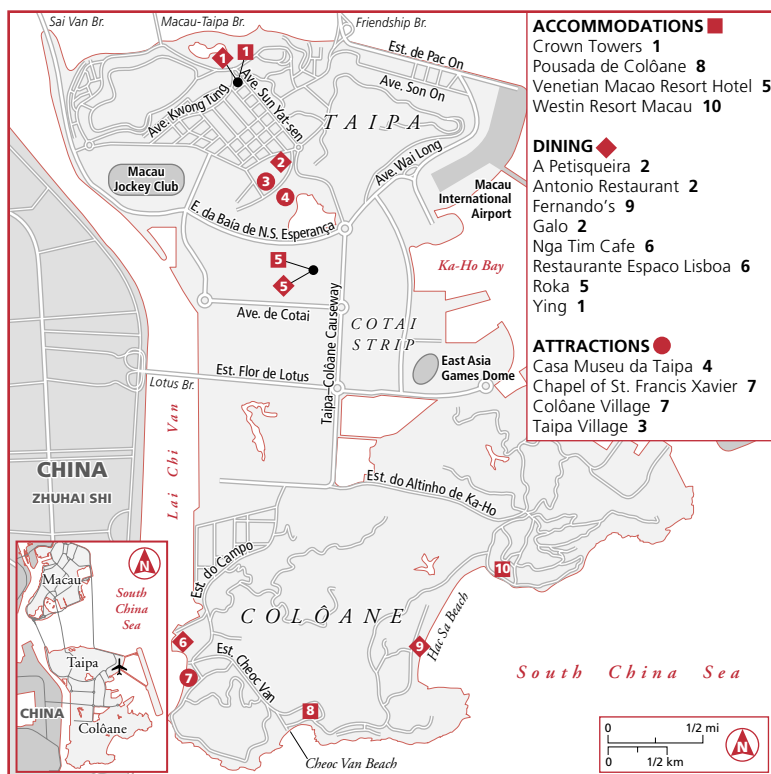
Needless to say, the influx of new capital, new businesses, and new jobs has dramatically altered the lives of local residents. A labor shortage has brought intense competition, with many employees poached from existing Macau businesses or the service industry in Hong Kong, the Philippines, and other Asian countries. Small, family-owned establishments, unable to compete with salaries offered by the big casinos and rising real-estate prices, are especially feeling the economic squeeze. With more and more workers moving to Macau, housing prices have exploded.

Still, there have been many positive developments. When I first came to Macau, its downtown was crumbling and neglected, and there were few attractions beyond its casinos and a couple of ruined forts and churches. In the 1990s, however, the small downtown underwent a major renovation, with the restoration of its main plaza and its Mediterranean-influenced, colonial-era buildings with their arched, shuttered windows. In 2005, Macau's historic center was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with 25 temples, churches, mansions, squares, fortresses, and other buildings and monuments now restored or undergoing restoration.

The things that drew me to Macau in the first place—the unique blend of Chinese and Portuguese culture, architecture, and food—remain irresistible. It's as though two Macaus now exist: the sterile new developments and glitzy casinos on reclaimed land; and the old downtown of candy-colored colonial buildings, banyan trees, narrow hilly streets, and low-key neighborhood restaurants.

The only pedicabs driven today are after the tourists' dollar, but Macau still possesses a lifestyle that is way less frenetic than that of Hong Kong. In fact, compared to the former British colony, Macau is downright Lilliputian, and, with its mixture of Portuguese and Chinese elements, feels different from Hong Kong, different from China—different from anywhere else. Maybe it's the jumble of Chinese signs and stores mixed in with freshly painted colonial-style buildings, or the Buddhist and Taoist temples alongside Catholic churches. Maybe it's because people smile here more readily than they do in Hong Kong, seem more relaxed, and friendlier. It's an attractive mix—Portuguese flair blended with Chinese practicality—all in a setting found nowhere else in the world.

There is no doubt in my mind that the world will be hearing more about Macau. It has clearly set its sights to become Asia's top gambling, conference, resort, and shopping destination, making it a fascinating study if you want to see what the new China is all about. Though I'm not sure whether Macau will be able to retain its historic charm as it strives to become Asia's major leisure destination, that's a gamble this former Portuguese enclave is clearly willing to take.



2 FROMMER'S FAVORITE MACAU EXPERIENCES

- **Following the Mosaic Pathway to St. Paul's Church:** From Largo do Senado, Macau's main, colonial-era square, follow one of the wavy-patterned mosaic tiled streets through the old city uphill to the ruins of St. Paul's Church, Macau's most photographed facade. See p. 306.
- **Exploring Macau's Historic Center:** I love Macau's old, twisting, narrow streets that lead past historic churches, temples, forts, and mansions. If you don't take at least a few hours to roam its historic center, you haven't really seen Macau. See my recommended stroll (p. 311).
- **Dining on Local Macanese and Portuguese Specialties:** African chicken, spicy prawns, sole, and codfish are just some of the culinary treats for the visitor to Macau, all available at very reasonable prices. Portuguese wine, the perfect accompaniment to both Macanese and Portuguese food, is also a bargain. See the "Where to Dine" section, later in this chapter.

A Brief History of Macau: A Blending of Cultures

Macau (also called Macao) was born centuries before Hong Kong was even conceived. The first settlers were farmers from Guangdong and fishermen from Fujian, but even in ancient times, its strategic location at the mouth of the Pearl River, downriver from Guangzhou (Canton), made it a port of call for ships laden with goods from the Silk Road on their way to Rome.

Portuguese ships first landed in southern China in 1513; in 1557, Portugal acquired Macau from China with permission from Guangdong's mandarins. The Portuguese adopted the name for their new city from the Chinese *A Ma Gao*, which translates as the "Place of A Ma" and refers to the temple honoring the Goddess of Seafarers, which still stands at the entrance to the sheltered Inner Harbor (p. 307). Before long, Macau had achieved a virtual monopoly on trade among China, Japan, India, and Europe, making the city Portugal's most important trading center in Asia and the greatest port in the East in the early 1600s.

As the only Europeans engaged in trade in Asia, the Portuguese made a fortune acting as middlemen. Every spring, Portuguese ships laden with Indian goods and European crystal and wines sailed out of Goa, anchored in Malacca to trade for spices, stopped in Macau for silk brought down from China, and then traveled on to Nagasaki to trade the silk for silver, swords, and lacquerware. Using the monsoon winds, the ships returned to Macau to trade silver for more silk and porcelain, and then sailed back to Goa where the exotic Asian goods were shipped to eager customers in Europe. The complete circuit from Goa and back took several years.

As Macau grew and prospered, it also served as an important base for the attempt to introduce Christianity to China and Japan, becoming a springboard for Jesuit missionaries to China and a refuge for Asian Christians, including Japanese Christians who faced persecution and death at home. Many churches dotted Macau's hills (many of which still stand), and a Christian college was built beside what is now the ruins of St. Paul's. Many Portuguese married local Chinese, creating a new community of Macanese (Eurasian) families with a blend of the two cultures. This blending is still evident today in the Macanese population, cuisine, and architecture.

Needless to say, because of Macau's obvious prosperity, it attracted jealous attention from other European nations. Dutch invasions were repelled several times in the first decades of the 1600s. In response to the threat of invasion, the Portuguese built a series of forts, foundations of which, like Guia Fortress and

- **Splurging for a Room at a Resort Hotel:** After the traffic and crowds of Hong Kong, there's nothing more relaxing than gazing at the sea from your hotel room, sunning at an outdoor pool surrounded by greenery, and feeling tension and aches melt away under the expert care of a masseuse. See the "Where to Stay" section, later in this chapter.
- **Learning about Macau's History:** The Museum of Macau is a delight, built into the ruins of a fortress and highlighting not only the history of Macau but also unique Macanese traditions, culture, architecture, and cuisine. See p. 305.

Monte Fortress, still exist. Despite growing competition from the Dutch and British, Macau survived as a trading center thanks to its preferred status with the Chinese, prompting many large trading houses, like the British East India Company, to set up shop in Macau and rent elegant mansions like the Casa Garden. European merchants working in Guangzhou often traveled to Macau for recreation and leisure.

In the 1630s, Japan closed its doors to foreign trade, granting a limited admittance only to the Dutch. This was a great blow for Macau, but the coup de grace came in 1841 when the British established their own colony on Hong Kong Island, only 64km (40 miles) away. As Hong Kong's deep natural harbor attracted trading ships, Macau lost its importance as a base for trade and slowly sank into obscurity.

It wasn't until the 1970s that Macau gained a new foothold in the world of trade by producing electronics, clothing, toys, and other items for export. At the same time, tourism began to grow, and with the establishment of casinos, Macau attracted a large number of Chinese gamblers from Hong Kong. In 1995, Macau opened an airport, making the colony easily accessible for the first time in its history.

On December 20, 1999, Portugal's 442 years of rule came to an end, with Macau's transition to a Special Administrative Region of China. Like Hong Kong, Macau is permitted its own internal government and economic system for another 50 years. In addition, after the handover two independent developments came together that would radically change Macau's outlook for the future: the liberalization of its gaming industry, thus ending gaming operator Stanley Ho's 40-year monopoly, and mainland China's 2003 implementation of its Individual Visit Scheme, thereby allowing mainlanders to visit Hong Kong and Macau on their own. Several mega-developments have opened in Macau in recent years, including Fisherman's Wharf and the Venetian Macao-Hotel-Resort, with even more scheduled to open in the coming years.

Today, 94% of Macau's 543,400 residents are Chinese (almost half of whom were born in China). There are about 2,500 Portuguese and an additional 20,000 Macanese, of mixed Chinese and Portuguese heritage. Tourism and gambling are the economic mainstays of the economy, with visitors from mainland China accounting for almost half of Macau's annual 27 million tourists.

- **Visiting Lou Lim Iok Garden Early in the Morning:** Get to this Chinese garden early in the morning, when you're apt to see locals practicing tai chi, playing traditional Chinese music, and taking birds for walks in cages. See p. 309.
- **Strolling through Macau's Fisherman's Wharf:** This huge combination entertainment/shopping destination features restaurants, souvenir shops, a small amusement park, a man-made volcano, street performances, and more, nestled in a village-like setting along the waterfront. See p. 309.

- 282** • **Swimming on Colôane Island:** Two public beaches, Cheoc Van and Hac Sa (p. 310), feature lifeguards on duty, dining facilities, and public swimming pools. Afterward, retire for a drink or a Portuguese meal at Fernando's (p. 301), a beach shack on Hac Sa.
- **Gambling on a Stroke of Luck at a Casino:** Even if you don't gamble, it's a jaw-dropping experience to wander through Macau's big casinos, packed with Chinese visitors and with gaming tables and slot machines designed specifically for the Asian market. The biggest to date? The Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel in Cotai with 3,400 slot machines and 800 tables, which together with its 3,000-suite hotel, Grand Canal Shoppes, convention facilities, and huge arena, comprises the second-largest building in the world. See p. 291.
 - **Watching the Sun Set from Macau Tower:** This 220m-high (722-ft.) Space Needle wannabe looks out of place in tiny Macau, but you can't beat it for its views: 360° and 55km (34 miles) on clear days. Come for a drink in its lounge or dinner in its revolving restaurant. Or, for the truly daring, there are adventure tours *outside* the tower, including a climb up its mast. See p. 304.
 - **People-Watching After Midnight:** After the sun goes down, Macau's nighttime revelers head to the Docks, a string of bars and discos with sidewalk seating. But the action doesn't really start hopping until after midnight. See p. 319.

3 ESSENTIALS & ORIENTATION

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entry procedures into Macau are very simple. If you are American, Canadian, Australian, or New Zealander, you do not need a visa for Macau for stays of up to 30 days—all you need is your passport. Residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland can stay up to 90 days without a visa.

VISITOR INFORMATION

ONLINE Visitor information is available on the Macau Government Tourist Office's website at www.macautourism.gov.mo.

OVERSEAS The **Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO)** maintains the following tourist offices:

- **United States:** 501 5th Ave., Ste. 1101, New York, NY 10017 (☎ **646/227-0690**; fax 646/366-8170; macau@myriadmarketing.com), and 1334 Parkview, Ste. 300, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 (☎ **866/OK-MACAU** [866/656-2228] or 310/545-3464; fax 310/545-4221; macau@myriadmarketing.com).
- **Australia:** Level 17, Town Hall House, 456 Kent St., Sydney NSW 2000 (☎ **02/9264-1488**; fax 02/9267-7717; macau@worldtradetravel.com).
- **New Zealand:** Level 5, Ballantyne House, 101 Customs St. E., P.O. Box 3779, Auckland (☎ **09/308-5206**; fax 09/308-5207; macau@aviationandtourism.co.nz).

IN HONG KONG Your first stop for information about Macau should be as soon as you arrive in Hong Kong, at the Hong Kong International Airport. In the arrivals lobby, at counter A06, you'll find the **Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO)** information office (☎ **852/2769 7970**), open daily from 9am to 10pm (closed for lunch 1–1:45pm and dinner 6–6:45pm). Stop here for a wealth of printed material about hotels and sightseeing in Macau. Another MGTO information bureau is located in Hong

Kong's Macau Ferry Terminal, the departure pier for most jetfoils and other craft bound for Macau. You'll find it on the third-floor Departure Floor, in room 336 of the Shun Tak Centre, 200 Connaught Rd., in Central (☎ **852/2857 2287**). It's open daily from 9am to 1pm and 2:15 to 5:30pm. Be sure to pick up a map of Macau; the hefty *Macau Guide Book*, with useful information on attractions; *Where*, a quarterly with information on cultural activities, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment; and *What's On*, a monthly leaflet with information on festivals, exhibitions, and events.

IN MACAU Once in Macau, you'll find an **MGTO** at the Macau Ferry Terminal, located just outside Customs and open daily from 9am to 10pm; there is also an MGTO at Macau International Airport, open for all incoming flights. For complete information, however, your best bet is the **main Macau Government Tourist Office**, Largo do Senado (Senado Sq.), located in the center of town on the main plaza just across from the water fountain; it's open daily from 9am to 6pm. Other MGTO counters are located at Fisherman's Wharf, open daily from 10am to 1pm and 2 to 6pm; at Guia Fortress and Lighthouse, open daily from 9am to 1pm and 2:15 to 5:30pm; the Border Gate (also called Barrier Gate and serving visitors from mainland China), open daily from 9:15am to 1pm and 2:30 to 6pm; and the Taipa Ferry Terminal, open daily 9:30am to 1pm and 2:30 to 6:15pm. For information by telephone, call the Tourist Hotline at ☎ **853/2833 3000** 24 hours a day. Finally, a number of publications are distributed free to hotel rooms, restaurants, and tourist locales, including *Macau Talk*, a bi-monthly with restaurant reviews, a calendar of events, and other useful information. Look also for *Destination Macau*, a glossy magazine with information on shopping, dining, sightseeing, and nightlife.

GETTING THERE

BY BOAT Located only 64km (40 miles) from Hong Kong across the mouth of the Pearl River, Macau is most easily accessible from Hong Kong by high-speed jetfoil, with most departures from the **Macau Ferry Terminal**, located just west of the Central District in the Shun Tak Centre, 200 Connaught Rd., on Hong Kong Island. Situated above the Sheung Wan MTR station, the Shun Tak Centre houses booking offices for all forms of transportation to Macau, as well as the Macau Government Tourist Office (Room 336, on the same floor as boats departing for Macau). If you're staying in a hotel on the Kowloon side, the **China Ferry Terminal** on Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, also provides limited service to Macau, as well as to other parts of China. The nearest MTR station for this terminal is Tsim Sha Tsui. If you plan to travel on a weekend or holiday, it's wise to buy round-trip tickets well in advance.

From the Macau Ferry Terminal on Hong Kong Island, the fastest, most convenient way to travel to Macau is via **TurboJET** (☎ **852/2859 3333** in Hong Kong, **853/790 7039** in Macau; www.turbojet.com.hk). Jetfoils depart every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day, with the trip to Macau taking approximately 1 hour. One-way fares Monday through Friday are HK\$236 (US\$31/£15) for super class and HK\$134 (US\$17/£8.70) for economy class; fares on Saturday, Sunday, and holidays are HK\$252 (US\$32/£16) in super class and HK\$146 (US\$19/£9.50) in economy. Fares for night service (6:15pm–6am) are HK\$267 (US\$35/£17) and HK\$168 (US\$22/£11), respectively. Fares from Macau to Hong Kong are an additional HK\$8 (US\$1.05/52p), a reflection of a higher departure tax, included in the price of the ticket. Seniors 61 and older and children 11 and under receive a HK\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) discount. Super class provides wider, more comfortable seats, better views from an upper deck (though there isn't much to see), drinks, and a snack.

284 Tickets can be purchased at either the Macau Ferry Terminal on Hong Kong Island or the China Ferry Terminal in Kowloon, as well as at all China Travel Service branches in Hong Kong (p. 274). You can also book by credit card by calling ☎ **852/2921 6688** in Hong Kong or booking online. All tickets are for a specific time and cannot be changed. If, however, you've purchased your ticket in advance and then decide you'd like to leave at an earlier time, head for the special queue for standby passengers available at both Shun Tak Centre and in Macau. There is often a good chance that you can get a seat, except during peak periods.

If your destination is Taipa, Cotai, or Colôane, you can also travel from the Macau Ferry Terminal directly to Taipa via **Cotai Waterjets** (☎ **852/2359 9990** in Hong Kong; **853/2885 0595** in Macau; www.cotaijet.com.mo). Ferries depart every half-hour between 9am and 5pm. One-way fares Monday through Friday are HK\$236 (US\$31/£15) for super class and HK\$134 (US\$17/£8.70) for economy class; fares on Saturday, Sunday, and holidays are HK\$252 (US\$32/£16) and HK\$146 (US\$19/£9.50), respectively. Tickets can be purchased at the Macau Ferry Terminal, China Ferry Terminal, and Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel.

Finally, **New World First Ferry** (☎ **852/2131 8181** in Hong Kong; **853/2872 7676** in Macau; www.nwff.com.hk) operates ferry service from Tsim Sha Tsui's China Ferry Terminal, convenient if you're staying in a Kowloon hotel. Departures are approximately every 30 to 60 minutes from 7am to 9pm, with later departures weekends and holidays. Fares run HK\$133 and HK\$168 (US\$17/£8.65 and US\$22/£11) for ordinary class, with the higher fares charged weekends and holidays and for night departures, while deluxe class runs HK\$238 and HK\$268 (US\$31/£15 and US\$35/£17).

If you plan to spend only 1 or 2 nights in Macau, consider leaving most of your luggage at your Hong Kong hotel, at the Luggage Services Centre on the ground floor of Shun Tak Centre (Shop G02, near the taxi stand), or in computer-monitored lockers located at both the Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Macau ferry terminals. Then travel to Macau with only a small, hand-carried bag. Otherwise, you could end up paying an extra charge. Passengers traveling on a TurboJET are officially allowed one piece of luggage, not to exceed 20 kilograms (44 lb.). Additional baggage must be checked, with charges ranging from HK\$20 to HK\$40 (US\$2.60–US\$5.20/£1.30–£2.60) depending upon weight, though in my experience authorities are somewhat lax about this and I've often traveled with two bags. In any case, baggage must be at the check-in counter, located just before Customs, 30 minutes before the jetfoil's departure. Obviously, your life will be easier if you leave heavy luggage in Hong Kong.

If you're arriving at Hong Kong International Airport and wish to travel directly to Macau, you can do so via TurboJET's **Sea Express** service (www.turbojetseexpress.com.hk) without passing through Hong Kong Customs and immigration formalities (if you do pass through Customs, you will not be allowed to take the Sea Express). Upon exiting your arrival gate, look for the FERRY TRANSFER DESK signs, where you can purchase your Sea Express ticket and produce your baggage identification tag for baggage reclaim (your luggage will be retrieved from baggage claim by a TurboJET employee). You will then board a bus for a 7-minute shuttle to the SkyPier, take the TurboJET directly to Macau, and go through Customs there. Baggage is limited to 20 kilograms (44 lb.) in economy class and 30 kilograms (66 lb.) in super class, except for passengers from or to North America, who are allowed two pieces of baggage, with each piece not to exceed 32 kilograms (71 lb.). There are seven sailings daily (at 10:50am and 12:45, 2, 3:30, 5:25, 7:10 and 10pm; check-in is 1 hr. before sailings), with fares costing HK\$180 (US\$25/£12) for

economy class and HK\$280 (US\$36/£18) for super class. Note that if you're returning from Macau to Hong Kong International Airport, you will pay HK\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30) extra to account for Macau's departure tax. On the plus side, since your departure point is considered Macau rather than Hong Kong, you will be refunded the HK\$120 (US\$16/£7.75) you paid for the Hong Kong airport departure, which was included in the price of your plane ticket.

BY PLANE Macau's **International Airport** (☎ 853/2886 1111; www.macao-airport.gov.mo) opened in November 1995, heralding the birth of Air Macau, the territory's fledgling carrier, followed in 2006 by low-cost airline Viva Macau. The airport is located on reclaimed land on Taipa Island and is conveniently connected to the peninsula by a bridge and bus service. The airport serves flights from China, including Beijing, Guilin, and Shanghai, as well as from several other Asian cities, including Taipei, Singapore, Jakarta, Manila, Seoul, Tokyo, and Bangkok, and from Sydney. Contact your travel agent or the Macau Government Tourist Office for more information.

ARRIVING IN MACAU

Passengers traveling by boat arrive at the Macau Ferry Terminal, located on the main peninsula, or at the Taipa Ferry Terminal near the International Airport. After going through Customs (which can take 30 min. or more, depending on the crowds), stop by the Macau Government Tourist Office for a map and brochures, including the useful *Macau Guide Book*. In the arrivals hall of the Macau Ferry Terminal, there's also a counter for hotel reservations, open daily 10am to 2am, where you can book rooms free of charge after paying a deposit. Outside the terminal to the left are hotel shuttle buses. Most expensive and moderately priced hotels operate **free shuttle** services, including Holiday Inn, Mandarin Oriental, Lisboa, Pousada de São Tiago, Westin Resort Macau, MGM Grand, Wynn, Starworld, and Sintra. Otherwise, **city bus** nos. 3, 3A, and 10 travel from the terminal to Avenida Almeida Ribeiro, the main downtown street. The fare is MOP\$2.50 (US\$0.40/15p).

From the airport, the **airport bus**, AP1, travels to the ferry terminal, Holiday Inn, Lisboa Hotel, and the Border Gate. The fare for this is MOP\$3.30 (US\$0.52/21p). A **taxi** from the airport to the Lisboa costs approximately MOP\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60). From the Taipa Ferry Terminal, a free shuttle operates to the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel.

CURRENCY

Macau's currency is the **pataca**, composed of 100 *avos*. Coins come in 10, 20, and 50 avos and 1, 2, 5, and 10 patacas. Banknotes are issued for 10, 20, 50, 100, 500, and 1,000 patacas. Even though the pataca (ptc; also referred to as MOP\$) is Macau's official currency, you can use your Hong Kong dollars everywhere, even on buses and for taxis (though you are likely to receive change in patacas). The pataca is pegged to the Hong Kong dollar at the rate of MOP\$103.20 to HK\$100; however, on the street and in hotels and shops, the Macau pataca and Hong Kong dollar are treated as having equal value. I suppose, therefore, that you could save a minuscule amount by exchanging your money for patacas (US\$1 equals MOP\$8; £1 equals MOP\$15.4), but I rarely have done so and don't consider it worth the hassle for short stays in Macau. You may wish to exchange a small amount—say, HK\$20 (US\$2.55/£1.30), but keep in mind that the pataca is *not* accepted in Hong Kong. If you do exchange U.S. dollars or U.K. pounds (which you can do at banks, generally open weekdays from 9am to 5pm; at hotels; or at ATMs throughout the city), you'll receive approximately MOP\$8 for each US\$1, MOP\$15 for each £1.

286 There are also money exchange counters at seemingly every corner. The exchange rate is not as favorable as at banks, but they usually don't charge a commission.

In addition, most Macau hotels and their restaurants, as well as restaurants catering largely to tourists, list room rates and menu items in Hong Kong dollars. For the sake of simplicity, the hotel rates given later are quoted in HK\$, but this could just as well read "patacas." Outside of hotels, restaurants are more likely to give prices in MOP\$, but sometimes they use HK\$, too. Attractions, however, always use patacas. To mirror the most common pricing practices in Macau, I use HK\$ for hotels but patacas (MOP\$) for restaurants and attractions listed later. ATMs are located at the ferry terminal and throughout the city and accept American Express, MasterCard, Visa, and cards operating on the Plus and Cirrus systems.

GETTING AROUND

Because the peninsula is only 8.9 sq. km (about 3½ sq. miles), you can walk to most of the major sights (be sure to get a free map from MGTO). If you get tired, you can always jump into one of the licensed metered **taxis**, all painted black and beige and quite inexpensive. To overcome the language barrier, MGTO has supplied most taxis with a destination guide listing most destinations in both English and Chinese. The charge is MOP\$11 (US\$1.45/70p) at flag fall for the first 1.5km (1 mile) and then MOP\$1 (US15¢/6p) for each subsequent 180m (594 ft.). A taxi from the peninsula all the way to Hac Sa Beach on Colôane Island costs about MOP\$85 (US\$11/£5.50). Luggage costs MOP\$3 (US40¢/20p) per piece, and there's a surcharge of MOP\$5 (US65¢/35p) if you go all the way to Colôane, MOP\$2 (US25¢/13p) if you travel between Taipa and Colôane. There is no surcharge, however, for the return journey to Macau. To order a taxi by phone, call ☎ **853/2893 9939** or 853/2851 9519.

Public buses run daily from 7am to midnight, with fares costing MOP\$2.50 (US30¢/15p) for travel within the Macau peninsula, MOP\$3.30 (US45¢/21p) for travel to Taipa, and MOP\$4 to MOP\$5 (US50¢–US65¢/30p–35p) for travel to Colôane. Bus nos. 3, 3A, 10, and 10A travel from the ferry terminal past the Lisboa Hotel to the main street, Avenida Almeida Ribeiro, in the city center and then continue to the Inner Harbour. Buses going to Taipa and Colôane islands stop for passengers at the bus stop in front of the Hotel Lisboa, located on the mainland near the Macau-Taipa Bridge. Bus nos. 11, 22, 28A, 33, and 34, as well as the airport bus no. AP1, travel between Macau and Taipa; bus nos. 15, 21, 21A, 25, 26, and 26A connect Macau, Taipa, and Colôane. The MGTO has a free map with bus routes.

For my hotel recommendations below, I provide a list of buses that travel only from the ferry terminal to each individual hotel, but for restaurants and attractions, I list all the buses from throughout the city that travel to each destination.

You can also hail a **pedicab**, a tricycle with seating for two passengers. Even as late as the early 1980s, this used to be one of the most common forms of transportation in Macau for the locals. But increased traffic and rising affluence have rendered pedicabs almost obsolete, and I suppose they will eventually vanish from the city scene much like the Hong Kong rickshaw. Today, pedicab drivers vie mostly for the tourist dollar, charging about MOP\$150 (US\$20/£10) for an hour of sightseeing, but keep in mind that there are many hilly sights you can't see by pedicab. The most popular route is along the Praia Grande Bay around the tip of the peninsula, and back via Rue do Almirante Sérgio. Be sure to settle on the fare, the route, and the length of the journey before climbing in. You'll find them parked outside the ferry terminal and Lisboa Hotel.

CITY LAYOUT

Macau comprises a small peninsula and Taipa and Colôane, two former islands that are now merged due to a massive land reclamation called Cotai and are linked to the mainland by bridges. The peninsula—referred to as Macau—is where you'll find the city of Macau, as well as the main ferry terminal and most hotels, shops, and attractions. The ferry terminal is located on what is called the Outer Harbour, which faces Taipa and connects to the South China Sea. On the opposite side of the peninsula is the Inner Harbour, which faces China. Although I used to love the Outer Harbour for its dreamy view of boats plying the Pearl River waterway and the tree-shaded Avenida da República, which ran along the waterfront, land reclamation, including new highways, high-rises, the Macau Tower, mega casinos, hotels, and Fisherman's Wharf, has rendered the Outer Harbour a horror zone. I advise fleeing this side of the peninsula as hastily as possible for downtown and the more colorful Inner Harbour. Walking along the Inner Harbour from Avenida Almeida Ribeiro to the Maritime Museum, you will see an unchanged Macau, with decaying buildings, small family businesses, and, occasionally, fish laid out on sidewalks to dry. The side streets on either side of Almeida Ribeiro and running downhill from the ruins of St. Paul's are also goldmines for atmosphere. In the evening, however,

Car Races & Fireworks—The Heat Is On!

Of Macau's several annual events, none are as popular or draw as many crowds as the Macau Grand Prix, held in mid- to late November, and the Macau International Fireworks Display Contest, held every Saturday in September.

The **Macau Grand Prix**, first staged in 1954, features motorcycle, production cars (international group A), and Formula Three races, and attracts drivers from all over the world. Very similar to the famous circuit in Monaco, the 6.2km (3³/₄-mile) Guia Circuit, which snakes through town near the ferry terminal and is lined with grandstands along the way, includes the winding roads of Guia Hill, hard corners around the waterfront, and the straightaway along the Outer Harbour. Champion drivers can complete a lap in as little as 2 minutes and 20 seconds. Tickets for stands during the 2 practice days cost MOP\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25) each day, while race-day tickets range from MOP\$200 (US\$26/£13) for standing room on the first day of races to MOP\$900 (US\$117/£58) for the best seats the second day. For ticket inquiries, call **853/2879 62268** or refer to www.macau.grandprix.gov.mo. Note, however, that ferry tickets and hotel accommodations in Macau are tight during the races.

Macau's other major competition, the **Macau International Fireworks Display Contest**, has a more universal appeal with its dazzling displays of fireworks spread over Saturday nights in September. Begun in 1989, it is now the world's biggest fireworks contest, with more than 100 international teams competing. Displays are judged using criteria such as the height reached by the fireworks, the explosive bang and spread of each firework, color and variety, and the overall choreographic effect of each display. The best place to view the fireworks is along the waterfront near Macau Tower.

288 you may want to return to the Outer Harbour, where Macau's nightlife district, called the Docks, spreads along the waterfront near the Statue of Kun Iam.

Near the middle of the peninsula is Guia Hill, the highest natural point of Macau. Because of its strategic location, a fort was constructed atop the hill in the 1630s, followed in 1865 by a lighthouse, the first of its kind on the China coast. Also on the grounds of Guia Fortress are a small chapel and a tourist information counter (open daily 9am–1pm and 2:15–5:30pm). A jogging path, complete with exercise stations, circles the top of the hill. Although there's not much to do on Guia Hill, it does provide a good overview of Macau. You can reach it by taking bus no. 2, 9, 9A, or 28C to Flora Garden and then boarding what must be the world's shortest ropeway to the top of the hill.

Connecting the two harbors is Macau's main road, Avenida Almeida Ribeiro (nicknamed San Ma Lo by locals), remarkably with only a few traffic lights despite nightmarish traffic. About halfway down its length is the attractive Senado Square (Largo do Senado), Macau's main plaza. Lined with colonial-style buildings painted in hues of yellows and pinks, it is paved in a wave pattern of colored mosaic tiles, which lead from the square through the neighborhood and to the ruins of St. Paul's Church crowning the crest of a hill. On the other side of the square is Leal Senado, Macau's most outstanding example of Portuguese colonial architecture. Radiating from Avenida Almeida Ribeiro in all directions is old Macau, a fascinating warren of narrow streets, street markets, open-fronted family shops, and a cacophony of sounds, sights, and smells.

Taipa, closest to the mainland and connected by three bridges, has witnessed a construction boom over the past decades, with the addition of high-rise apartments and Macau's airport. In its midst, now enveloped by surrounding development, is the picturesque Taipa Village with its many restaurants. Connected to Taipa by reclaimed land (called Cotai) is Colôane, largely undeveloped and the site of Macau's best beaches. Although Taipa and Colôane are still referred to as individual islands, in reality Cotai is so extensive (5.2 sq. km/more than 2 sq. miles) that the two are now one fused island. Cotai is being developed as a resort and entertainment destination, with the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel as the biggest player. Once completed, which is still several years down the road, Cotai will boast more than a half-dozen resorts, convention space, and a light rail that will whisk visitors to downtown Macau.

Fast Facts **Macau**

American Express American Express does not have an office in Macau.

Area Code The international telephone country code for Macau is 853. From Hong Kong, dial **001/853** before the number. When dialing an international number from Macau, you must first dial **00**, followed by the country code. However, when calling Hong Kong from Macau, you need only dial the prefix **01**.

Emergencies Dial ☎ **999** for medical emergencies and ☎ **110** or **112** for the police's special tourist hotline, all free calls. For the fire department, dial ☎ **853/2857 2222**; for non-emergencies you can also reach the police at ☎ **853/2857 3333**, both toll calls. However, you can also just call ☎ **999** and the operator will transfer you to the police or fire departments.

Hospitals If you need to go to a hospital, contact the S. Januario Hospital, Estrada do Visconde de S. Januario (☎ **853/2831 3731**), or Kiang Wu Hospital, Estrada Coelho do Amaral (☎ **853/2837 1333**), both with 24-hour emergency service.

For non-emergencies, Metro International Clinic, Av. Da Praia Grande 405 (☎ **853/2835 5522**; www.metroclinic.com.mo), has English-speaking staff.

Internet The Macau Museum of Art (p. 306) has a Media Library on the ground floor, with 37 computers you can use for free Tuesday through Sunday from 2 to 7pm. Otherwise, several public libraries offer free Internet facilities, including the Central Library of Macau, 89 A–B Av. Conselheiro Ferreira da Almeida (☎ **853/2856 7567**), open daily 10am to 8pm (closed holidays). If all you want is to quickly check e-mail, there are also two computers at the main MGTO office, Largo do Senado, which you can use free for 30 minutes from 9am to 6pm.

Language Both Portuguese and Chinese are official languages, with Cantonese the most widely spoken language. However, hotel and restaurant staffs usually understand English.

Mail Mailboxes are red in Macau. The main post office (☎ **853/2832 3666**), located in the city center on Largo do Senado, is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 6pm and Saturday from 9am to 1pm. It costs MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p) to send a postcard or letter weighing up to 10 grams via airmail to the United States. By the way, Macau is famous for its themed series of stamps, including the “Chinese Zodiac” and “Legends and Myths,” which you can purchase at philately counters at all post offices.

Taxes Hong Kong levies a HK\$19 (US\$2.45/£1.25) tax for boat departures for Macau, while the Macau government levies a MOP\$20 (US\$2.50/£1.30) departure tax, but note that the tax is already included in the price of the ticket. Hotels levy a 5% government tax and a 10% service charge on room rates. Restaurants also levy a 10% service charge, but government tax has been waived on the consumption of food and beverages.

Telephone For local calls made from public phone booths, it costs MOP\$1 (US\$15¢/7p) for every 5 minutes. Most local telephone numbers in Macau are eight digits, now that 28 has been added to the beginning of most—but not all—numbers. The additional 28 may not be reflected in old pamphlets listing six-digit phone numbers. Telephones in Macau also offer international direct dialing, though in your hotel room you may have to go through the hotel operator. For calls to the United States, it costs MOP\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) for every 182 seconds (approximately 3 minutes) from a public phone. In the busy tourist sections of town there are also credit card phones. If you think you'll be making a lot of international telephone calls, purchase a prepaid phone card for MOP\$50, \$100, or \$150 (US\$6.50/£3.25, US\$13/£6.50, or US\$19/£9.75) at **Edifício CTM**, 25 Rua Pedro Coutinho, (☎ **853/1000**), where you can also check whether your own mobile phone will work in Macau and buy a SIM card starting at MOP\$50 (US\$6.50/£3.25). A vending machine at the ferry terminal also sells SIM cards for MOP\$50. For international directory assistance, dial ☎ **101**; for local directory inquiries, dial ☎ **181**.

Water Macau's water is from China and is purified and chlorinated. However, distilled water is supplied in restaurants and hotel rooms. Many hotels also provide free bottled water in their guest rooms.

Weather For weather information, call ☎ **853/8898 6276** or go online to www.sm.gov.mo.

Most of Macau's hotels are located in the city of Macau on the peninsula, providing convenient access to most of Macau's sights, though Cotai, reclaimed land between Taipa and Colôane, will eventually overtake it as a slew of hotels open over the next few years. For a more relaxed getaway, seek out the resort hotels on Colôane.

Big spenders will have many new options over the next few years in addition to the hotel recommendations below. Muscling in on the action will be a Hilton, Conrad, Shangri-La, two Hyatts, Four Seasons, Hard Rock Hotel, Sheraton, St. Regis, Ritz-Carlton, Traders Hotel, W Hotel, InterContinental, Fairmont, Raffles, and a boutique hotel by David Tang. In all, the Macau government expects the current 17,000 rooms now available to increase over the next decade by some 40,000 more rooms in more than 50 new hotels. For updated information on the rapidly changing hotel scene, contact the Macau Government Tourist Office.

In addition to the room rates given below (which are the same whether you pay in Hong Kong dollars or in patacas), you will also be charged a 10% hotel service charge and a 5% government tax. Except for some of the moderate and inexpensive hotels, most charge the same price for single or double occupancy. However, as in Hong Kong, the prices given below are rack rates; you should be able to bargain for a better rate, especially in the off season. Weekends are busier than weekdays, not to mention more expensive, as many hotels have higher weekend rates. If you plan on visiting Macau during Chinese New Year, Easter, summer holidays (July/Aug), the two major holidays for mainland Chinese (the so-called Golden Week following May 1 and in autumn for up to 10 days from Oct 1), or the Grand Prix in November, you should book well in advance and expect to pay top dollar. Otherwise, you shouldn't have any difficulty securing a room even on short notice. (A hotel reservations desk is located in the Macau Ferry Terminal, where you can book rooms for free by paying a deposit toward your room rate). Because some hotels have reservations facilities in Hong Kong, I've included the Hong Kong reservation telephone numbers when available.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Crown Towers ★★★ Australian-owned Crown's first venture in the Asian market is the most conspicuous proof yet that Macau has arrived. Its lobby, on the 38th floor of Taipa's tallest building (at least for now), exudes class, with contemporary decor holding second candle to the views, visible through sheer glass even behind the front desk. Views are integral also to guest rooms, which boast floor-to-ceiling windows facing Macau peninsula with its colorful night lights. Walk-in closets, 42-inch plasma TVs with Internet, free beer and soft drinks in the fridge, and spacious bathrooms featuring double sinks, circular stone-crafted tubs, and LCD TVs built right into the mirror, make this a stylish home-away-from-humble-home. For diversions, the Crown offers a casino with natural lighting, a top-floor lounge with outdoor seating, an interesting array of restaurants, and an indoor infinity pool, complete with sound system so you can listen to music while swimming laps. This is a great hotel, but unless you look out the window, you may forget you're in Macau.

Crown Macau, Avenida de Kwong Tung, Taipa, Macau. ☎ **853/2886 8888** or 852/2918 9812 in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2886 8866. www.crown-macau.com. 216 units. HK\$5,380 (US\$699/£349) single or double; from HK\$8,800 (US\$1,143/£571) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus 28A from the ferry terminal.

Amenities: 4 restaurants, including Cantonese restaurant Ying (p. 299); 24-hr. lounge; 2 bars; 24-hr. casino; 25m indoor pool; health club and spa; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi, iPod docking station.

Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel ★★ **Kids** Opened in 2007, this is the biggest development to hit Macau so far, twice as big as its Las Vegas sister property and comprising the second-largest building in the world. The Venice-themed resort, with replicas of famous landmarks like St. Mark's and three indoor canals complete with singing gondoliers, is such a tourist draw (an estimated 66,000 to 86,000 people pass through its doors daily) its lobby resembles Hong Kong Central Station during rush hour; be sure to pick up a map at the concierge, because you're going to need it. Although its Renaissance-style rooms are billed as suites, most are actually 70-sq.-m. (753-sq.-ft.) split-levels with all the amenities you'd expect and then some, including canopied beds and bathrooms with sit-down vanities, two sinks, and separate tub and shower areas. In addition to the world's largest casino, the property boasts 350 specialty shops, a dizzying array of dining options (including a 1,000-seat food court), a 15,000-seat arena with big-name acts, a Cirque du Soleil theater, and entertainment for kids, from an 18-hole minigolf course to four outdoor pools, including wave pool and wading pools. Clearly, this is a destination in itself; some guests check in and go nowhere else.

Estrada da Baía de N. Senhora da Esperança, Cotai Strip, Macau ☎ **853/2882 8877**. Fax 853/2882 8822. www.venetianmacao.com. 3,000 units. HK\$5,500 (US\$714/£357) single or double; from HK\$8,000 (US\$1,039/£519) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus from ferry terminal (including the Taipa ferry terminal). **Amenities:** 30 restaurants and bars, including Japanese restaurant Roka (p. 299); 24-hr casino; arena/theater; 4 outdoor pools; Jacuzzi; minigolf (for a fee); gym; spa; concierge; huge shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, Wi-Fi, fax/scanner/printer.

EXPENSIVE

Grand Lisboa **Overrated** Stanley Ho may have lost his gaming monopoly, but he's back with a vengeance with this 50-story monolith, dominating the Macau landscape with what is said to resemble a lotus flower but to me looks like a marooned starship. The cavernous lobby, too, is meant to put mere mortals in their place, with lots of marble, crystal, and brass, as well as priceless Chinese antiques from Ho's private collection. Facilities run the gamut from Macau's longest buffet spread to a strip show featuring Japanese performers. Guests wishing to recover from the rigors of the casino can do so in comfortable and well-planned rooms and luxurious bathrooms, complete with steam shower rooms (some even have saunas), whirlpool tubs, and two TVs (one at the sink, the other in front of the toilet). In short, this flashy hotel was clearly built to impress a high-rolling Chinese market, but those looking for a quaint Macau stay will want to steer clear from here.

Avenida de Lisboa, Macau. ☎ **853/2828 3838**. Fax 853/2871 6360. www.grandlisboa.com. 431 units. HK\$3,800–HK\$5,700 (US\$493–US\$740/£247–£370) single or double; HK\$5,800–HK\$7,200 (US\$753–US\$935/£377–£468) executive floors; from HK\$7,800 (US\$1,013/£506) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 28A, 28B, 28BX, or 32 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 7 restaurants; bar; nightclub; 24-hr. casino; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/free movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, free high-speed Internet access.

MGM Grand ★★ ★ Of all the big casino-hotels to open the past couple years, this collaboration between MGM Mirage and Pansy Ho (daughter of Stanley Ho) is probably my favorite. The otherwise Spartan lobby features glass art by Dale Chihuly—clearly all it needs—but the real attention-grabber lies beyond, in a huge glass-ceilinged conservatory modeled after a Portuguese square, complete with a replica facade of a Lisbon train station, restaurants that spill onto terraces, fountains, and trees. Pluses include top-notch dining options, champagne and vodka/caviar bars, a classy shopping center, extensive

292 recreational facilities, and smart-looking rooms that have all the expected features. This hotel is much more than its casino, making it a good gamble even if you don't care to hit the gaming tables.

Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen, NAPE, Macau. ☎ **853/8802 8888**. Fax 853/8802 3333. www.mgmgrandmacau.com. 600 units. HK\$3,680–HK\$4,370 (US\$478–US\$568/£239–£284) single or double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 12 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, including Aux Beaux Arts (p. 298); 4 bars; lounge; 24-hr. casino; outdoor pool/children's pool; gym; spa; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies on demand, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Pousada de São Tiago ★★ **Finds** Built around the ruins of the Portuguese Fortress da Barra, which dates from 1629, this charming inn on the tip of the peninsula is perfect for travelers looking for a romantic getaway (its small chapel is popular for weddings). The entrance is dramatic: A flight of stone stairs leads through a cavelike tunnel that was once part of the fort. Once inside, guests are treated to the hospitality of a Portuguese inn, with a delightful Spanish restaurant complete with a terrace shaded by banyan trees, a great place to while away an afternoon, as is the nearby outdoor swimming pool. Rooms, however, all of which are two-room suites, don't live up to expectations (the crocodile-skin-covered desk can only be described as odd), but most have balconies facing the Inner Harbor and all have spa-like bathrooms with steam-room showers, Jacuzzi tubs, bidets, and TVs. Although lacking the resort facilities or polished staff of other hotels in this category, this is great hideaway. The Maritime Museum and A-Ma Temple are nearby; a stroll through historic neighborhoods brings you to the city center in about a half-hour.

Avenida da República, Fortaleza de São Tiago da Barra, Macau. ☎ **853/2837 8111** or 800/969 153 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2855 2170. www.saotiago.com.mo. 12 units. HK\$3,000 (US\$390/£195) single or double weekdays, HK\$3,600 (US\$468/£234) Sat–Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus (on request) or bus 28B from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; outdoor pool; room service 7:30am–11pm. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/150 channels, DVD player w/DVDs, minibar, coffeemaker (but no coffee), hair dryer.

Wynn Macau ★★ Opened in 2006 as Macau's first Las Vegas-style casino resort, the Wynn is much more low-key than the Grand Lisboa across the street but lacks the design pizzazz of the MGM. Still, it has attractions that wow the crowds: Performance Lake with its synchronized dancing fountains, colored lights, and music (chosen by Mr. Wynn himself); and the Tree of Prosperity, which rises out of the floor to meet a descending chandelier. The Wynn is most well known, however, for its upscale shopping esplanade—a Who's Who of designer names—and its landscaped courtyard pool, visible from the small lobby through a glass wall and from many public areas, making it an exhibitionist's dream. Rooms, decorated in simple brown and white, have views toward the sea (and rival MGM) or city lights (better), and large bathrooms sport sit-down vanities separating the double sinks. This is a solid choice, but to keep up with competition, an expansion will add 300 more rooms by 2010.

Rua Cidade de Sintra, NAPE, Macau. ☎ **853/2888 9966**, or 800/966 963 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2832 9966. www.wynnmacau.com. 600 units. HK\$3,000–HK\$3,700 (US\$390–US\$480/£195–£240) single or double; from HK\$7,800 (US\$1,013/£506) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 28A, 28B, 28BX, or 32 from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants, including Il Teatro (p. 298); bar; lounge; 24-hr. casino; outdoor pool; gym (fee charged); spa; concierge; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/pay on-demand movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi, iPod docking station.

MODERATE

Hotel Lisboa ★ **Finds** Although overshadowed by newer properties (including the Grand Lisboa across the street), the Lisboa remains in a class by itself. Built in 1969, it's a Chinese version of '60s Las Vegas on acid: big, flashy (check out the peacock-like decoration on its roof), and with a bewildering array of facilities. I always get lost in this hotel. The hotel has numerous restaurants (even the front-desk staff is unsure how many), shops, display cases of owner Stanley Ho's private art collection, and nighttime diversions, including, you might say, the countless women roaming the shopping complex's halls, hoping for some short-term business from a lucky gambler. Ah, the Lisboa. As for rooms, they're located in an older east wing and a 1993 tower, the latter of which offers the best—and most expensive—harbor views, including Royal Tower deluxe rooms with either traditional Chinese architecture or Western decor. Otherwise, small standard rooms have some recommendable perks, including Jacuzzi tubs and free local calls. In short, this is a unique, retro choice in the thick of it (though don't expect any personal time with the busy staff). Buses to the outlying islands stop nearby, and downtown Macau is only a 5-minute walk away.

2–4 Avenida de Lisboa, Macau. ☎ **853/2888 3888** or 800/969 130 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2888 3838. www.hotelisboa.com. 927 units. HK\$1,850–HK\$3,400 (US\$240–US\$442/£120–£221) single or double; from HK\$4,400 (US\$571/£286) suite. Children 12 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 28A, 28B, 28BX, or 32 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 18 restaurants, including Robuchon a Galera (p. 298); bar; lounge; 24-hr. casino; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/free movies, minibar w/free drinks, coffeemaker, hair dryer, free high-speed Internet access, safe.

Mandarin Oriental Macau ★★★★★ **Kids** Probably the best fallout from Macau's rash of new mega-properties is that older but wonderful hotels like this one seem downright affordable. Sister hotel of the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong and a 7-minute walk from the ferry terminal, it boasts a gorgeous state-of-the-art resort facility, which includes a free-form outdoor swimming pool (heated in winter, chilled in summer) and a water slide, pool, playground, and children's center. As for the hotel, although its exterior is nondescript, if not downright ugly, the interior is beautifully decorated throughout with imports from Portugal, including blue-and-white tiles, chandeliers, tapestries, and artwork; guest rooms are decorated in Portuguese fabrics and natural teak. The cheapest rooms face inland, while those on the top four Club executive floors have large balconies overlooking the resort. For families, a huge plus are the baby-care amenities provided free of charge on request, including diapers, wipes, and baby shampoo.

956-1110 Avenida da Amizade, Macau. ☎ **800/526-6566** in the U.S. and Canada, 853/2856 7888, or 852/2881 1288 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2859 4589. www.mandarinoriental.com/macau. 416 units. HK\$2,000–HK\$2,600 (US\$260–US\$338/£130–£169) single or double; HK\$3,300–HK\$3,900 (US\$429–US\$506/£214–£253) Club floors; from HK\$5,300 (US\$688/£344) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 10A or 10B from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; bar; lounge; 24-hr. casino; outdoor heated pool year-round; kids' pool; 4 outdoor floodlit tennis courts; 2 indoor squash courts; playground; health club and spa; outdoor Jacuzzi; children's day-care center for ages 3–12; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Rocks Hotel ★ **Finds** Fisherman's Wharf is pure fantasy, so a Victorian-style boutique hotel doesn't seem out of place here. In fact, because it's located on a spit of land, with water on most sides, it has a breezy, resort-like feel, far from Macau's density just a short walk away. All the rooms take advantage of this location with balconies (the priciest

294 directly face the sea), and, keeping in character, boast claw-foot tubs and period furniture. I also like the rooftop lounge, and the ground-floor restaurant, specializing in seafood and Australian beef, has an outdoor terrace. Those searching for a relaxed, convenient 1-night getaway from Hong Kong can find refuge here, though the Mandarin offers more facilities for a similar price.

Fisherman's Wharf, Macau. ☎ **853/2878 2782** or 800/962 863 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2872 8800. www.rockshotel.com.mo. 72 units. HK\$1,880–HK\$2,580 (US\$244–US\$335/£122–£168) single or double; from HK\$4,080 (US\$530/£265) suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus from the ferry terminal or a 10-min. walk. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; small gym; business center; room service 7am–10pm; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, free Wi-Fi.

Sintra With a prime spot in the heart of Macau, the Sintra, under the Lisboa group, is within easy walking distance of Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro (Macau's main street) and Senado Square, the heart of the city. Built in 1975 but completely overhauled in the 1990s, it looks good for its age and the staff is friendly. Though the standard rooms are large, they face another building. Even roomier are the higher-priced rooms occupying higher floors; individual bookings (not through a travel agency) are often upgraded to one of these rooms if space is available. Of note for night owls is the hotel's restaurant, open 24 hours and offering free Wi-Fi to those ordering a meal.

Av. de D. João IV, Macau. ☎ **853/2871 0111** or 800/969 145 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2851 0527. www.hotelsintra.com. 240 units. HK\$1,480–HK\$2,480 (US\$192–US\$322/£96–£161) single or double; HK\$2,280–HK\$3,280 (US\$296–US\$426/£148–£213) executive floor; from HK\$3,680 (US\$478/£239) suite. Children 12 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10A, from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; business center; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Starworld Hotel This medium-range hotel is well situated for gamblers, with the hotel's own casino, the two Lisboas, MGM Grand, and Wynn all within a few minutes' walk, but it's also an easy walk to Macau's historic district. The ostentatious lobby, bathed in gold, is most noted for its army of very tall hostesses in very short dresses, their only function seemingly to look good and greet incoming guests (and, perhaps, to subtly incite gamblers to spend more). Rooms are a cut above, with 42-inch plasma TVs, good views from higher floors (best are considered those facing the lake and Macau Tower), and wonderful bathrooms, though why glass walls separating bathrooms from bedrooms is such the rage beats me (one explanation: so you can watch the big-screen TV from the tub). In any case, this is a comfortable, though rather characterless, hotel with a good location, great rooms, and a good range of facilities.

Avenida da Amizade, Macau. ☎ **853/2838 3838**. Fax 853/2838 3888. www.starworldmacau.com. 509 units. HK\$1,900–HK\$2,100 (US\$247–US\$273/£123–£136) single or double; HK\$2,500–HK\$2,700 (US\$325–US\$351/£162–£175) executive floor; from HK\$3,500 (US\$455/£227) suite. Children 12 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 28A, 28B, 28BX, or 32 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 2 lounges; bar; 24-hr. casino; outdoor pool; outdoor Jacuzzi; massage room; business center; 24-hr. room service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, high-speed Internet access.

Westin Resort Macau ★★ ★ **Kids** Located on Colôane Island near Hac Sa Beach (with its popular Fernando's restaurant, p. 301), this Mediterranean-style hotel is a bit far from the center of town (about a 20-min. ride from the ferry pier on the hotel's complimentary shuttle bus, with departures every 30 min.), but management is betting that most prospective guests are those who want to get away from it all. It offers beautifully landscaped grounds, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a health club with free yoga

and aerobics classes, Macau's first golf course (accessed from the resort's top floor), and facilities geared toward families, including a child-care center and Westin Kids' Club with a multitude of activities for children. Each of the eight-storied hotel's very spacious, vibrantly colored rooms faces either the South China Sea or the beach (sea views are better, with higher floors costing more) and features glass sliding doors opening onto—I love this—a huge 25-sq.-m (269-sq.-ft.) private terrace with plants and patio furniture; for real luxury, you can succumb to an outdoor Chinese-style massage here.

1918 Estrada de Hac Sa, Colôane, Macau. ☎ **800/WESTIN-1** (800/937-8461) in the U.S. and Canada, 853/2887 1111, or 852/2803 2333 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/28871122. www.westin.com/macau. 208 units. HK\$2,200–HK\$2,700 (US\$286–US\$350/£143–£175) single or double; from HK\$5,000 (US\$649/£325) suite. Children 18 and under stay free in parent's room. Spa, dining, and golf packages available. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; lounge; outdoor swimming pool year-round; outdoor children's pool; indoor pool; 18-hole golf course; golf-driving range; minigolf; 8 outdoor floodlit tennis courts; basketball court; croquet; jogging lanes; health club and spa; indoor and outdoor Jacuzzis; solarium; rental bikes; children's day-care center; Westin's Kids Club (ages 3–12) and playground; game room; small business center; 24-hr. room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/ pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, high-speed Internet access.

INEXPENSIVE

East Asia Hotel This is one of Macau's better choices for backpacker accommodations in the heart of the city (I've seen some pretty grim hotels and guesthouses in this category), located near the Inner Harbour just off Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro in an area filled with local color and atmosphere. Some of that local color extends to a room just off the lobby where I sometimes see a bevy of beauties awaiting phone calls or customers, which may admittedly be a bit too atmospheric for some (maybe that's why the hotel brochure promises that “your nights with us will be the most enjoyable”). Still, the 70-some-year-old hotel features a polite staff and large, perfectly fine rooms with clean, tiled bathrooms and complimentary Chinese tea. The least expensive rooms are windowless and a bit depressing. Best are rooms on top floors offering good views, including some of the Inner Harbour.

1 Rua da Madeira (corner of Rua Cinco de Outubro), Macau. ☎ **853/2892 2433** or 852/2540 6333 for reservations in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2892 2431. 98 units. HK\$290–HK\$390 (US\$39–US\$51/£18–£25) single; HK\$400–HK\$500 (US\$52–US\$65/£26–£32) twin. MC, V. Bus: 3, 3A, 10, or 10A from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Holiday Inn Macau Situated in a drab area of high-rises between the ferry terminal and downtown (only a 10-min. walk away), this well-known chain will be familiar to North American guests, except like most moderately priced Macau hotels, it caters largely to gamblers and tour groups, especially because of its on-site casino. Rooms, all with two double beds or queen- or king-size beds and LCD TVs, are simple and unimaginative and are tiny compared to their U.S. counterparts. Steer clear of the standard rooms, which are on lower floors and face another building. Splurge instead on a renovated Premier room on the 26th floor (all nonsmoking), with duvet-covered beds, ergonomic chairs at long desks, and the popular glass partition between the bedroom and bathroom. Like most Macau hotels, rates depend on availability and day of the week—the cheapest rate listed below is for Sunday through Thursday.

82–86 Rua de Pequim, Macau. ☎ **800/465-4329** in the U.S. and Canada, or 853/2878 3333. Fax 853/2878 2321. www.macau.holiday-inn.com. 323 units. HK\$850–HK\$1,980 (US\$110–US\$257/£55–£129) single or double; HK\$1,580–HK\$2,080 (US\$205–US\$270/£103–£129) executive floor. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 28A, 28B, 28BX, or 32 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; 24-hr. casino; small indoor pool; exercise room;

Hotel Guia ★ Located on the slope of Guia Hill, below Guia Fortress and Lighthouse (with a park popular with joggers) and surrounded by traditional colonial architecture, this is one of Macau's more secluded inexpensively priced hotels. It's small with a friendly staff, though tour groups from the mainland can disrupt the tranquillity and I don't even want to know what goes on in PlayMate's nightclub. Spotless rooms range from those facing inland to those with little balconies facing the distant sea. By far the best are those with a view of Guia Lighthouse and the harbor in the background—request a room with a balcony on the highest (fifth) floor, where you also have a ringside view of the annual Grand Prix. The main drawback is that it's a bit far from the action, but a free shuttle bus makes runs every half-hour or so to and from the ferry pier.

1-5 Estrada do Engenheiro Trigo, Macau. ☎ **853/2851 3888**. Fax 853/2855 9822. www.hotelguiamacau.com. 90 units. HK\$650–HK\$1,100 (US\$84–US\$143/£42–£71) single or double; from HK\$1,680 (US\$218/£109) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free shuttle bus or bus no. 28C from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; nightclub/disco; room service 8am–2am. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

Hotel Ko Wah (Value) Despite its name, this seems more like a guesthouse. The many guesthouses around the Inner Harbour, Macau's oldest district, are of very low standard. This one, on picturesque Rua da Felicidade, is better than most. Some of the rooms have windows, others don't, but all have the basics including tiled bathrooms. If all you're looking for is cheap accommodations in the heart of Macau's most colorful old town, this place fits the bill.

71 Rua da Felicidade, Macau. ☎ **853/2893 0755**. 27 units. HK\$300–HK\$350 (US\$39–US\$45/£19–£23) single; HK\$350–HK\$450 (US\$45–US\$58/£19–£29) double. No credit cards. Bus: 3, 3A, 10, or 10A from ferry terminal. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Sun Sun ★★ (Finds) With a charming location near the Inner Harbour, across from a small square with a fountain and exercise equipment, this Best Western offers nondescript motel-like rooms with tired-looking decor. However, the highest-priced rooms have views of the Inner Harbour with its boat traffic, and executive floor rooms have been redone in modern chic. Although pricey, a beach package is available for HK\$400 (US\$52/£26), which provides transportation to Colôane beaches, towels, chairs, and drinks. But what I love most about this hotel is its location in Old Macau, making it highly recommendable despite its modest rooms.

14–16 Praça Ponte E. Horta, Macau. ☎ **800/780-7234** in the U.S. or Canada, 853/2893 9393, or 800/0013 1779 in Hong Kong. Fax 853/2893 8822. 175 units. HK\$800–HK\$1,250 (US\$104–US\$162/£52–£81) single or double; HK\$1,400 (US\$182/£91) executive floor; HK\$2,280 (US\$296/£148) suite. One child 12 and under stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 3, 3A, 10, or 10A from ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Bar; business center; room service 7am–11pm; laundry service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV w/ DVD player and rental DVDs, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, free Wi-Fi.

Pousada de Colôane ★★★ (Finds) This small, family-owned gem, perched on a hill above Colôane's Cheoc Van Beach with views of the sea, is a great place for couples and families in search of a reasonably priced isolated retreat. Opened in 1977 as Macau's first beach property, it's a relaxing, rather rustic place, with modestly furnished rooms, nothing fancy but all with Portuguese-style furnishings, Jacuzzi bathtubs, and balconies facing the sea and popular public beach. For some visitors it awakens memories of beach-side vacations from childhood. The outdoor terrace is perfect for relaxing with a view of the sunset and a drink; the inn's Portuguese restaurant is especially popular for its Sunday lunch buffet offered during peak season. The main drawback is one of access, but buses

pass by frequently; when arriving at the Macau ferry terminal, you're best off traveling to the hotel by taxi (fares average HK\$110/US\$15/£7.15).

Praia de Cheoc Van, Colôane, Macau. ☎ **853/2888 2143**. Fax 853/2888 2251. www.hotelcoloane.com. mo. 30 units. HK\$750–HK\$880 (US\$97–US\$114/£49–£57) single or double. Sun–Thurs discounts available. MC, V. Bus: 21A, 25, or 26A from Lisboa Hotel (tell the bus driver you want to get off at the hotel). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; children's pool; lobby computers w/Internet access (fee charged); babysitting. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, minibar, hair dryer, free Wi-Fi.

Pousada de Mong-Ha ★★ **Finds** You're performing a good deed by staying here, since this hostelry is run by students attending the adjacent Institute for Tourism Studies, but you're by no means sacrificing comfort. Located above the old town on a hill once dominated by a fortress, this *pousada* offers simple but traditionally decorated rooms, with carved wooden headboards and all the usual amenities. After breakfast (included in hotel rates, which do not have a tax or service charge since this is a government-owned facility; the rates below reflect weekend and weekday charges), be sure to roam through campus grounds with an herb garden used by ITF's student-run restaurant (p. 303) and the adjacent park on old fortress grounds. Although a bit far from the usual action (you should take a taxi from the ferry terminal since it's an uphill climb from the bus stop), Kun Iam Temple and Red Market are within walking distance. This is surely one of Macau's best-kept secrets.

Instituto de Formacao Turistica, Colina de Mong-Ha, Macau. ☎ **853/2851 5222**. Fax 853/2855 6925. www.ift.edu.mo/pousada. 20 units. HK\$600–HK\$800 (US\$78–US\$104/£39–£52) single; HK\$800–HK\$1,000 (US\$104–US\$130/£52–£65) double; HK\$1,000–HK\$1,400 (US\$130–US\$182/£65–£91) suite. Long-staying packages available. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Bus: 12 from the ferry terminal. **Amenities:** Restaurant (p. 303); bar; gym; business center. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, free Internet access.

5 WHERE TO DINE

As a former trading center for spices and a melting pot for Portuguese and Chinese cultures, it's little wonder that Macau developed its own very fine cuisine. The Portuguese settlers brought with them sweet potatoes, peanuts, and kidney beans from Brazil, piri-piri peppers from Africa, chiles from India, and codfish, coffee, and vegetables from Europe. In turn, the Chinese introduced rhubarb, celery, ginger, soy sauce, lychees, and other Asian foods. The result is Macanese cuisine. One of the most popular dishes is African chicken, grilled or baked with chiles and piri-piri peppers, but I also love *minchi*, a Macanese dish of minced beef prepared with fried potatoes, onion, and garlic. Other favorites include Portuguese chicken (chicken baked with potatoes, tomatoes, olive oil, curry, coconut, saffron, and black olives), Macau sole, *caldeirada* (seafood stew), spicy giant shrimp, baked quail and pigeon, curried crab, and *feijoada* (a Brazilian stew of pork, black beans, cabbage, and spicy sausage). Several restaurants also specialize in traditional Portuguese cuisine—don't pass up the Portuguese sausage, clams, green vegetable soup, or *bacalhau* (codfish, served hundreds of ways). Of course, Macau has countless Chinese restaurants, and in recent years fine dining has also burst onto the scene in the form of mostly Italian, French, and Japanese restaurants, thanks largely to the gaming industry (which supplements the high costs of running a restaurant with casino profits). Many restaurants have extensive wine cellars, but for a bargain, try one of the inexpensive Portuguese imports. Most famous is the *vinho verde*, a young wine served very cold that is refreshing on hot summer days and goes great with seafood. And for a tasty snack, be sure to sample a Portuguese egg tart, yolk-filled pastries topped with caramelized sugar.

298 Restaurants will add a 10% service charge to your bill, but as you'll discover, even the "moderate" restaurants in Macau would be a bargain in Hong Kong.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Robuchon a Galera ★★ FRENCH Despite stiff competition, this remains one of Macau's most exclusive—and expensive—restaurants, with an elegant decor and a polished staff. Although it seemed odd back in 2001 when renowned French chef Joel Robuchon chose Macau to showcase his talents (he passed over Maxim's on New York's Times Square in favor of Macau), the subsequent explosion of resort casinos in this Asian boomtown now makes Robuchon's choice almost prophetic. Robuchon flies in four times a year to supervise the seasonal menu, which in the past has included such offerings as pan-seared Wagyu beef with cèpes and capers, souffléed potato and baby spinach leaves; or lobster cocotte with black truffle and asparagus. Beautifully presented, main courses sometimes fall short, making them too highly priced for what they are, but other times they're a foodie's dream. Appetizers are wonderful; the cheese, dessert, and after-dinner drink trolleys are hard to pass up; and the wine list is probably the best in town. Still, I recommend coming for the more reasonable lunch or spending your money elsewhere, unless, of course, you strike it big at the casino.

In the Hotel Lisboa, 3rd floor of Lisboa Tower, Av. da Amizade. ☎ **853/2888 3888**. Reservations recommended. Main dishes MOP\$480–MOP\$830 (US\$62–US\$108/£31–£54); 12-course tasting menu MOP\$1,850 (US\$240/£120); fixed-price lunch MOP\$328–MOP\$538 (US\$43–US\$70/£21–£35). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm (last order). Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 8, 8A, 9, 9A, 10, 10A, 10B, 11, 12, 21A, 22, 23, 25, 26A, 28A, 32, 33, or AP1.

12 EXPENSIVE

Aux Beaux Arts ★★ FRENCH Sadly, Macau never really developed a sidewalk cafe culture, but you can pretend otherwise while dining on the terrace here, which overlooks MGM Grand's faux Lisbon square and is protected from the elements by a glass ceiling. A quartet or pianist serenades from a corner of the square in the evenings, but I think the interior of the restaurant is more romantic, done up in 1930s Art Deco brasserie style. Start with the seafood platter, which includes lobster, prawns, mussels, and oysters served on a bed of ice, followed by the wild lobster bisque or traditional French onion soup and a main course like beef filet served with foie gras, potatoes, and salad. Before or after dinner, stop by the dramatically lit Champagne Bar or, for caviar and vodka, the Russian Room. Alternatively, come for the tea buffet, served Monday to Saturday from 1 to 5pm for MOP\$180 (US\$23/£12), or the Sunday set lunch for MOP\$280 (US\$36/£18).

MGM Grand, Av. Dr. Sun Yat Sen, NAPE. ☎ **853/8802 8888**. www.mgmgrandmacau.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses MOP\$228–MOP\$380 (US\$30–US\$49/£15–£25). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–5pm; Sun noon–2:30pm; daily 6–10:30pm. Bus: 8, 12, 17, or AP1.

Il Teatro ★★★ SOUTHERN ITALIAN This newcomer lives up to its name, with theatrics supplied by an open kitchen and dancing fountains in the Wynn Macau's Performance Lake. Although there are three outdoor tables bringing you closer to the choreographed displays (which includes balls of fire), you'll get more bang for your buck if you book one of the comfy, elegant ringside tables inside. Everything is wonderful, from the handmade pastas and gourmet pizzas to artichoke-crusted black cod or prime beef tenderloin with porcini cannelloni. The dessert sampler is a great choice for those who want it all.

Wynn Macau, Rua Cidade de Sintra, NAPE. ☎ **853/8986 3663**. www.wynnmacau.com. Reservations required. Pizza and pasta MOP\$90–MOP\$190 (US\$12–US\$25/£5.85–£12); main courses MOP\$220–MOP\$425 (US\$29–US\$55/£14–£28). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 5:30pm–12:30am. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 8, 8A, 9, 9A, 10, 10A, 10B, 11, 12, 21A, 22, 23, 25, 26A, 28A, 32, 33, or AP1.

Roka ★★ JAPANESE I never thought I'd be recommending a Japanese restaurant in Macau (and one imported from London no less), but that just goes to show how rapidly the Macau dining scene is changing. Located off the main gaming floor of the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel, this hip venue centers on an open *robata* charcoal grill with both counter and table seating, where sharing is the name of the game as members of your party make selections from displays of fresh produce or order sashimi, tempura, or grilled foods like scallop skewers with wasabi and shiso from the extensive contemporary menu. Though the adjacent walk-in wine cellar has 1,400 bottles from around the world, I'd suggest starting your meal with a shochu infusion or one of the hand-crafted sakes from various regions around Japan.

Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel, Estrada da Baía de N. Senhora da Esperança, Cotai Strip. ☎ **853/2882 5666**. www.rokarestaurant.com. Robata main dishes MOP\$160–MOP\$490 (US\$21–US\$64/£10–£32); tasting menu MOP\$888 (US\$114/£58). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6:30–11pm. Bus: 26A, MT3, or MT4.

Ying ★★ CANTONESE You don't have to spend a fortune to enjoy great Chinese food in Macau, but in case you want to this is one of the best. Perched on the 11th floor of one of Macau's most expensive hotels, with views toward the Macau skyline, this small venue caters to the well-heeled with a menu that emphasizes healthy and organic foods, used to create both traditional and modern interpretations of Cantonese cuisine (chef Tam Kwok Fung honed his skills in Bangkok, where he also cooked for the royal family). Recommendations include the hot and sour seafood soup (one of the best I've had), scallops steamed with black bean sauce, Iberico pork, or any of the Wagyu stir fries. Or, come for lunch, when in addition to pricey set meals there's an à la carte menu for dim sum.

Crown Towers, Avenida de Kwong Tung, Taipa. ☎ **853/2886 8868**. www.crown-macau.com. Reservations recommended. Main dishes MOP\$78–MOP\$180 (US\$10–US\$23/£5–£12); fixed-price lunches MOP\$450–MOP\$750 (US\$58–US\$97/£29–£49); dim sum MOP\$20–MOP\$36 (US\$2.60–US\$4.70/£1.30–£2.35). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–4:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. Bus: 11, 21A, 22, 25, 26A, 28A, 30, 33, 35, or AP1.

MODERATE

Afrikaná BBQ Restaurant and Lounge AFRICAN Come for the atmosphere, since you won't find any Macau restaurant as far-fetched as this one, located in the mock village of Fisherman's Wharf and featuring thatched-roof pavilions spread throughout a garden compound. Popular with groups (which can render it noisy yet happily chaotic) for its buffet of grilled meats (whole-grilled lamb is its signature item), seafood, Chinese dishes, salads, soups, and desserts (including New Zealand ice cream)—much of it not even remotely related to African cuisine. Still, it's a good choice for semi-alfresco dining and reasonable prices.

Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ **853/8299 3678**. Reservations recommended. Buffet lunch MOP\$88 (US\$11/£5.70); buffet dinner MOP\$168 (US\$22/£11) Mon–Thurs, MOP\$188 (US\$24/£12) Fri–Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6–11pm. Bus: 1A, 3, 3A, 8, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 17, 23, 28A, 28B, 28BX, 28C, or 32.

A Lorchá ★ PORTUGUESE Just a stone's throw from the Maritime Museum and A-Ma Temple, this is the best place to eat if you find yourself hungering for Portuguese food in this area. Look for its whitewashed walls, an architectural feature repeated in the interior with an arched, low ceiling. Casual yet often filled with businesspeople, it offers *feijoada*, codfish in a cream sauce, chargrilled king prawns, clams prepared in garlic and olive oil, grilled pork chops, baked minced beef potato pie, and other traditional dishes that are consistently good. Its name, by the way, refers to a type of Portuguese boat, which is appropriate for a colony founded by seafaring explorers.

289 Rua do Almirante Sérgio. ☎ **853/2831 3193**. Reservations recommended. Main courses MOP\$82–MOP\$158 (US\$11–US\$21/£5.30–£10). AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 12:30–3pm and 6:30–11pm. Bus: 1, 1A, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 21, 21A, 26, 28B, or 34.

300 Antonio Restaurant ★ **Find** **PORTUGUESE** People in the know head to this small, traditionally styled restaurant in Taipa Village, done up with blue-and-white tiled walls, carved wooden chairs, and heavy wood beams. Be sure to make a reservation in order to sample the good food here, since it seats only 24 diners on the main floor and another dozen on the rooftop terrace. You might want to start with the roasted home-made Portuguese sausage, assorted Portuguese cheeses, Portuguese green cabbage soup, or the yummy stuffed crab meat, followed by African chicken, black pork imported from Portugal, or tenderloin steak Portuguese style, fried with garlic and white wine and served with Portuguese smoked ham, fried egg, potatoes, and pickles. You'll want to linger here, inspired, perhaps, by the Spumanti sparkling wine.

3 Rua dos Negociantes, Taipa Village. ☎ **853/2899 9998**. Reservations required. Main courses MOP\$102–MOP\$179 (US\$13–US\$23/£6.60–£12). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm; Sat–Sun 11am–11pm. Bus: 11, 15, 22, 28A, 30, 33, or 34.

A Petisqueira **PORTUGUESE** A small, unpretentious restaurant just off Taipa Village's main road, on the corner of Rua de S. João and Rua das Virtudes, A Petisqueira offers typical Portuguese fare, including charcoal grilled, roasted, or boiled codfish; grilled sole with lemon butter sauce; grilled king prawns; paella; fried tenderloin steak Portuguese-style; grilled sea bass; and curried crab. The fresh cheeses are especially recommended. Of course, everything tastes better with Portuguese wine.

15 Rua S. João, Taipa Village. ☎ **853/2882 5354**. Main courses MOP\$95–MOP\$185 (US\$12–US\$24/£6.15–£12). AE, MC, V. Tues–Fri noon–2:15pm; Sat–Sun and holidays noon–2:45pm; Tues–Sun 7–10:15pm. Bus: 11, 15, 22, 28A, 30, 33, or 34.

Clube Militar de Macau ★★ **Find** **MACANESE/PORTUGUESE** This is certainly one of Macau's most atmospheric and historic dining halls, located in the Macau Military Club, built in 1870 as a private cultural and recreation center for military officers. Painted a bright pink, this striking colonial building behind the Hotel Lisboa opened its restaurant to the public in 1995, offering nonmembers the chance to dine in style in its old-fashioned dining hall with its tall ceilings, whirring ceiling fans, arched windows, wood floor, and displays of antique Chinese dishware. As for the food, it's best to stick to the classics, such as roasted codfish with hot olive oil and garlic, roasted beef filet with Portuguese sauce, or African chicken. The lunch buffet, which gives a choice of a main course along with a buffet for appetizers and desserts, is a downtown favorite, and the list of Portuguese wines is among the best in town.

795 Av. da Praia Grande. ☎ **853/2871 4009**. Reservations recommended for lunch. Main courses MOP\$123–MOP\$188 (US\$16–US\$24/£8–£12); fixed-price lunch or dinner MOP\$118 (US\$15/£7.65). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 7–11pm. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 8, 8A, 9, 9A, 10, 10A, 10B, 11, 12, 21A, 22, 23, 25, 26A, 28A, 32, 33, or AP1.

Fat Siu Lau **MACANESE** This is Macau's oldest restaurant (dating from 1903), but its three floors of dining have been renovated in upbeat modern Art Deco. Its exterior matches all the other storefronts on this renovated street—whitewashed walls and red shutters and doors—which used to serve as Macau's red-light district. The Macanese cuisine here includes roast pigeon marinated according to a 105-year-old secret recipe; spicy African chicken; curried crab; garoupa stewed with tomatoes, bell pepper, onion, and potatoes; and grilled king prawns. A branch is located at the Docks nightlife district, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen (☎ **853/2872 2922**), open daily noon to 3pm and 6:30pm to 11:30pm.

64 Rua da Felicidade. ☎ **853/2857 3580**. www.fatsiulau.com.mo. Main courses MOP\$85–MOP\$180 (US\$11–US\$23/£5.50–£12). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–11pm. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 5, 6, 7, 8A, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 19, 21A, 26A, or 33.

Fernando's ★★ **Finds** PORTUGUESE Although outwardly there is nothing to distinguish it from the other shacks on Hac Sa Beach (it's the brick one closest to the beach, below the vines), Fernando's, with a pavilion out back and an adjacent open-air bar with outdoor seating, is *the* place to dine on the beach and a destination in itself. Everyone knows Fernando's, and even the lack of air-conditioning (that goes for the kitchen as well) doesn't seem to deter the faithful who pilgrimage here, especially on weekends, when you'll probably have to wait for a table. Outspoken Fernando is usually on hand, holding court. The menu is strictly Portuguese and includes Portuguese chorizo, clams, crabs, mussels, codfish, *feijoada*, chargrilled chicken, pork ribs, suckling pig, beef, and salads. The bread all comes from the restaurant's own bakery, and the vegetables are grown on the restaurant's own garden plot across the border in China. Only Portuguese wine is served, stocked on a shelf for customer perusal (there is no wine list). It's all very informal, and not for those who demand pristine conditions.

9 Praia de Hac Sa, Colôane. ☎ **853/2888 2531**. Reservations not accepted. Main courses MOP\$80–MOP\$160 (US\$10–US\$21/£5.20–£10). No credit cards. Daily noon–9:30pm (last order). Bus: 15, 21A, 25, or 26A.

La Bonne Heure ★ **Finds** FRENCH With the exception of Portuguese restaurants, most of Macau's Western eateries are ensconced in casino/hotel complexes, so it's nice to find an independent establishment centrally located in Old Macau. Near Senado Square, on a small side street catty-corner from S. Domingos Church, La Bonne Heure offers a cozy ambiance, with low, arched ceilings and candles on the tables of its split-level dining area. The food, prepared by a former chef at Robuchon, eschews fancy preparations in favor of simple yet delicious creations, such as crunchy roasted lamb in sesame crust served with mashed potatoes, or duck's leg confit with braised cabbage and sherry vinegar dressing. This hideaway is a great place for a romantic dinner or a relaxed evening with friends.

12AB Travessa de S. Domingos. ☎ **853/2833 1209**. Reservations recommended. Main courses MOP\$86–MOP\$248 (US\$11–US\$32/£5.60–£16). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; Mon–Thurs 6–10pm; Fri–Sat 6–11pm. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 4, 5, 7, 8A, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 19, 21A, 26A, or 33.

O Porto Interior ★ **Value** MACANESE/PORTUGUESE Located on the Inner Harbour not far from the Maritime Museum and A-Ma Temple, this comfortable, classy restaurant decorated in colonial style with woodwork carvings, a brick floor, and decorative birdcages offers surprisingly inexpensive fare. You might wish to start with the codfish cakes, stuffed crab Macau style, or seafood supreme soup, served inside a bread bowl. Main dishes range from Macau curry crab and Macanese garlic king prawns to African chicken, black pepper steak, and *minchi*.

259B Rua do Almirante Sérgio. ☎ **853/2896 7770**. Main courses MOP\$75–MOP\$180 (US\$9.75–US\$23/£4.85–£12). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–11:30pm. Bus: 1, 1A, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 21, 21A, 26, 28B, or 34.

Restaurante Espaco Lisboa ★★ **Finds** PORTUGUESE This is a tiny two-story restaurant, popular with the locals for its traditional, country-style Portuguese food. Located in a Chinese village house just off the main square in Colôane Village (Vila Colôane), it offers so many great choices it's hard to know where to start. Fried codfish cakes, an assortment of Portuguese sausages, or the sautéed clams with garlic and coriander are a good launch to a feast here, followed, perhaps, by the traditional Portuguese cabbage soup. For the main course, which comes with side dishes, you might opt for the roast codfish served with potatoes and hot olive oil and garlic or the tenderloin steak Portuguese-style, fried with garlic and white wine and served with Portuguese honey

302 ham, fried egg, and potatoes. And to top it all off? How about banana ice cream, served with rum *au flambe*? In nice weather, you may want to sit at one of the three tables outside on the tiny balcony, where you can look upon ancient tiled roofs and listen to the clicking of mah-jongg.

8 Rua das Gaivotas, Colôane Village. ☎ **853/2888 2226**. Reservations recommended Sat–Sun. Main courses MOP\$105–MOP\$295 (US\$14–US\$38/£6.80–£19). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6:30–10pm; Sat–Sun noon–10:30pm. Bus: 15, 21A, 25, 26, or 26A.

Restaurante Litoral ★★ MACANESE Exactly which restaurant serves the most “authentic” Macanese food in town is a hotly contested subject, but this attractive entrant, with its dark-gleaming woods, whitewashed walls, and stone floor, can easily lay claim to the title. All the traditional favorites are here, including curry crab, African chicken, *feiçoada*, and *minchi*, but Portuguese specialties like codfish baked with potato and garlic, roast Portuguese sausage, and Portuguese green soup are not overlooked. Wash it all down with Portuguese wine or beer. It’s located along the covered sidewalk not far from the Maritime Museum and A-Ma Temple.

261A Rua do Almirante Sérgio. ☎ **853/2896 7878**. Main courses MOP\$128–MOP\$200 (US\$17–US\$26/£8.30–£13). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6:30–10:30pm. Bus: 1, 1A, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 21, 21A, 26, 28B, or 34.

360 Cafe INTERNATIONAL This is Macau’s most conspicuous restaurant, more than 219m (719 ft.) above reclaimed ground in the soaring Macau Tower. Opened in 2001, the tower contains an observation deck and lounge, with an admission of MOP\$80 (US\$10/£5.20). Head instead to the tower’s revolving restaurant, where for the price of a buffet meal you’ll get an equally good view. It takes 1½ hours for a complete spin, giving you ample time to sample the various Portuguese, Southeast Asian, Indian, Chinese, Macanese, and Continental dishes as you soak in the view. Note that there are two sittings for lunch and for teatime. Safety precautions make this Macau’s only nonsmoking restaurant.

In the Macau Tower, Lago Sai Van. ☎ **853/8988 8622**. www.macautower.com.mo. Reservations recommended Sat–Sun. Buffet lunch MOP\$168 (US\$22/£11); teatime MOP\$108 (US\$14/£7); buffet dinner MOP\$228 (US\$30/£16) weekdays, MOP\$248 (US\$32/£18) Sat–Sun and holidays. Daily 11:30am–1pm and 1:30–3pm for lunch; 3:30–4:15pm and 4:30–5:15pm for teatime; 6:30–10pm for dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 9A, 18, 21, 23, or 32.

INEXPENSIVE

Antica Trattoria da Ise ITALIAN This casual, upstairs restaurant, located near the Docks nightlife district, is always crowded. Simply decorated with cast-iron chandeliers, plants, and palm trees, it offers 18 different kinds of pizza and more than 30 pasta dishes, as well as main courses like grilled steak or sole with garlic and lemon sauce, along with Portuguese and Italian wines to wash it all down. Owned by the same family is **Pizzeria Toscana**, 2A Calçada da Barra (☎ **853/2872 6637**), also with pizza, pasta and meat dishes like steaks and pork chops. It’s open daily from 11:30am to 3:30pm and 6:30 to 11:30pm (closed the first Tues of the month).

40–46 Av. Sir Anders Ljungstedt, Edifício Vista Magnifica Court. ☎ **853/2875 5102**. Reservations recommended. Pizza MOP\$80–MOP\$95 (US\$10–US\$12/£5.20–£6.15); main dishes MOP\$105–MOP\$145 (US\$14–US\$19/£6.80–£9.40). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–11pm. Closed 2nd Tues of every month. Bus: 1A, 8, 12, 17, 23, or AP1.

Caravela Finds PORTUGUESE This local Portuguese hangout serves as a bakery, cafe, restaurant, and informal gathering spot for friends, with both sidewalk seating and

a small dining room. Professionals stop by for breakfast on their way to work, old men peruse newspapers over cups of Portuguese coffee, and office workers take advantage of the MOP\$55 (US\$7.15/£3.55) breakfast or the daily set meal for MOP\$70 (US\$9.10/£4.55) including soup, a main dish, and dessert. The menu itself is limited, offering a few dishes like chargrilled codfish and steak, but the bread is homemade, the pastries are irresistible (a typical Christmas dessert that resembles French toast is always on offer), and the atmosphere is a slice of Portugal in the heart of Asia. It's located in downtown Macau but is a bit hard to find, on an alley 1 block northeast of Avenida Do Infante D. Henrique, between Avenida Da Praia Grande and Avenida D Joao IV.

7 Mata e Oliveira. ☎ **853/2871 2080**. Main dishes MOP\$55–MOP\$95 (US\$7.15–US\$12/£3.55–£6.15). No credit cards. Mon–Sat 8am–8pm; Sun 9:30–1:30pm. Bus: 3, 3A, 8A, 10, 10A, 22, 21A, 26A, or 33.

Carlos PORTUGUESE Just a block inland from the Docks nightlife district, this bare room with a tall ceiling offers no-nonsense, home-cooked Portuguese food at very reasonable prices, assuring it a faithful clientele. The menu is extensive and includes all the classics, but standouts include the shrimp in garlic sauce, the clams and pork stewed in white wine and herbs, and the *Bacalhau a Bras* (fried codfish, potatoes, onions and egg).

Rua Cidade de Braga. ☎ **853/2875 1838**. Main dishes MOP\$75–MOP\$100 (US\$9.75–US\$13/£4.85–£6.50). MC, V. Tues–Sun 11am–3pm and 6–11pm. Bus: 1A, 8, 12, 17, 23, or AP1.

Galo ★ PORTUGUESE/MACANESE A delightful, two-story house in Taipa Village was converted long ago into this informal and festively decorated restaurant specializing in local cuisines and unique creations of the talented owner/chef. *Galo* means rooster in Portuguese; look for the picture of the rooster outside the restaurant, on a corner of the main pedestrian street. Its menu, which includes photographs of each dish, offers such house specialties as Macau crabs, prepared with a mixture of Shanghaiese and Macanese ingredients, rather than curry. You might also want to try African chicken, Portuguese broad beans, or beef stew with mushrooms. In any case, be sure to start out with the *sopa da casa* (house soup), made from potatoes, red beans, onions, and vegetables simmered in broth from boiled beef and sausages. Delicious!

45 Rua dos Clérigos, Taipa Village. ☎ **853/2882 7423** or 853/2882 7318. Main courses MOP\$45–MOP\$85 (US\$5.85–US\$11/£2.90–£5.50). MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–3pm and 6–10:30pm; Sat–Sun 11:30am–10:30pm. Bus: 11, 15, 22, 28A, 30, 33, or 34.

IFT Educational Restaurant ★ **Value** MACANESE/INTERNATIONAL Its name is uninspiring, but this is a very unique restaurant, run by students receiving hands-on training in the restaurant and hotel business while attending the adjoining Institute for Tourism Studies. Even better, it looks like a real restaurant, with contemporary furnishings, candles on the tables, and even live music Friday nights, when a popular Macanese buffet dinner is available for MOP\$160 (US\$21/£10). Otherwise, the changing menu, which pairs entrees with wine recommendations, offers Macanese and international fare, as well as IFT originals, with past dishes like grilled sole with a red wine, Portuguese bacon, mushroom, and parsley sauce; roast pigeon with braised red cabbage, apple, and Portuguese black ham; and grilled king prawns with chili, citrus, and mung bean salad. The only drawback is you'll probably want to take a taxi here (it's located on a hill, site of former Mong-Ha Fortress), but inexpensive prices make this a bargain nonetheless.

Colina de Mong-Ha. ☎ **853/5983 077**. Main courses MOP\$70–MOP\$90 (US\$9.10–US\$12/£4.55–£5.85); fixed-price lunch MOP\$140 (US\$18/£9.10). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–3pm and 7–10:30pm. Bus: 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, or 28C.

304 Long Kei CANTONESE Located on Senado Square near the tourist office, this is one of Macau's oldest Cantonese restaurants, open since 1945. It's nothing fancy, filled with loyal patrons and serving a long list of local favorites, including grilled pigeon, roasted chicken, grilled prawn, fried garoupa, and sweet and sour pork.

7B Largo do Seal Senado. ☎ **853/2857 3970**. Main dishes MOP\$50–MOP\$110 (US\$6.50–US\$14/£3.25–£7.15). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11pm. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 4, 5, 7, 8A, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 19, 21A, 26A, or 33.

Nga Tim Cafe ★ **Finds** CANTONESE/MACANESE/PORTUGUESE This lively, open-air, pavilion restaurant is on the tiny main square of Colôane Village, dominated by the charming Chapel of St. Francis Xavier. Its popularity with the locals on weekends and holidays lends it a festive, community-affair atmosphere; it's a great place for relaxing and people-watching. The food, which combines Chinese, Macanese, and Portuguese styles of cooking and ingredients, is in a category all its own, with many unique dishes not available anywhere else. Try the salt-and-pepper prawns, baked chicken in a fresh coconut, grilled prawns with curry, or the barbecued spring chicken, accompanied by Portuguese wine or fresh fruit juice. This is a good place to rub elbows with the natives, and when the weather is perfect, there's no finer place in Macau.

8 Rua Caetano, Colôane Village. ☎ **853/2888 2086**. Main courses MOP\$48–MOP\$118 (US\$6.25–US\$15/£3.10–£7.65). MC, V. Daily 11:30am–1am. Bus: 15, 21A, 25, 26, or 26A.

Wong Chi Kei Congee & Noodle **Value** CANTONESE Opening its first shop in mainland China in 1946, this inexpensive eatery on Senado Square has been a Macau mainstay for 40 years. It's a noisy, busy place, with several floors of dining for people pouring in to sample wonton in noodle soup, barbecue duck in noodle soup, fried noodle with shrimp, fried noodle with shredded chicken, and *congee*. It doesn't get any more local than this.

17 Largo do Seal Senado. ☎ **853/2833 1313**. Main dishes MOP\$20–MOP\$68 (US\$2.60–US\$8.85/£1.30–£2.40). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8am–11pm. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 4, 5, 7, 8A, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 19, 21A, 26A, or 33.

6 EXPLORING MACAU

You'll need a minimum of 2 days to see most of what Macau offers, spending 1 day in the historic center and the next on Taipa, Cotai, and Colôane. Although it's easy enough to get around on your own, if you're pressed for time a handful of guided tours are offered by **Gray Line** (☎ **853/2833 6611**) in conjunction with MGTO. The 6-hour Macau Highlights Tour, for example, with pickup and drop-off at the Macau Ferry Terminal, takes in the ruins of St. Paul's Church, Lenado Square, A-Ma Temple, Macau Tower, the Taipa House Museum, and Fisherman's Wharf, among other places, and costs MOP\$118 (US\$15/£7.65) for adults and MOP\$108 (US\$14/£7) for children and seniors. Other tours concentrate on historic sites, Taipa and Colôane, cuisine, and shopping. For more information, contact Gray Line or MGTO (☎ **853/2833 3000**; www.macautourism.gov.mo).

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Macau Tower **Overrated** Does the world really need more towers? Local authorities apparently thought so, opening the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre in 2001. In addition to exhibition and convention space, it contains restaurants and

Tips Museum Mania

If museums are your passion, save money by purchasing the Museums Pass, valid for 5 days and allowing entry to six museums, including the Grand Prix Museum, Wine Museum, Museum of Macau, Maritime Museum, and Macau Museum of Art. Passes, which cost MOP\$25 (US\$3.25/£1.60) for adults and MOP\$12 (US\$1.55/80p) for children and seniors, can be purchased at any of the museums. (The sixth museum is Lin Zexu Museum of Art, which is not as conveniently located and is not covered below; it centers on Lin Zexu, who was commissioned by Beijing in the 1830s to abolish the opium trade and remains somewhat of a local hero.)

shops, but the crowning glory is the 330m (1,083-ft.) tower, with an observatory about 219m (719 ft.) high—the equivalent of 61 stories. Since admission to the outdoor observation deck and indoor lounge is rather exorbitant by Macau standards, I personally think you are best off coming for a meal in the revolving **360 Cafe** (p. 302). However, thrill seekers take note: The indoor observation lounge has a glass-floored section that gives the illusion of standing on thin air. But real daredevils will want to tour the observation deck's *outside* ramparts with the safety of harnesses and ropes, which costs MOP\$388 (US\$50/£25) including a T-shirt, MOP\$198 (US\$26/£13) for children and seniors. Other ways to have fun with Macau Tower: climbing the mast (a 2-hr. ordeal) or bungee jumping 233m (764 ft.; listed in the Guinness World Records as the “highest commercial decelerator descent”).

Lago Sai Van. © **853/8988 8895**. www.macautower.com.mo. Admission to observatory MOP\$80 (US\$10/£5.20) adults, MOP\$40 (US\$5.20/£2.60) children and seniors. Mon–Fri 10am–9pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 9am–10pm. Bus: 9A, 18, 21, 23, or 32.

Museum of Macau ★★ Located in the bowels of ancient Monte Fortress, this ambitious museum provides an excellent overview of Macau's history, local traditions, and arts and crafts. If you see only one museum in Macau, it should be this. Entrance is via an escalator located next to St. Paul's Church. Arranged chronologically, the first floor depicts the beginnings of Macau and the arrival of Portuguese traders and Jesuit missionaries. Particularly interesting is the room comparing Chinese and European civilizations at the time of their encounter in the 16th century, including descriptions of their different writing systems, philosophies, and religions. The second floor deals with the daily life and traditions of old Macau, including festivals, wedding ceremonies, and industries ranging from fishing to fireworks factories. Displays include paintings and photographs of Macau through the centuries, traditional games and toys, an explanation of Macanese cuisine and architecture, and a re-created Macanese street lined with colonial and Chinese facades and containing tea, pastry, and traditional Chinese pharmacy shops. The top floor, the only one above ground, is of modern Macau and its plans for the future. From here you can exit to the wall ramparts of the fort, which was built by the Jesuits about the same time as St. Paul's and largely destroyed by the same fire. You'll want to spend at least an hour here.

112 Praceta do Museu de Macau (St. Paul Monte Fortress, next to St. Paul's). © **853/2835 7911**. www.macaumuseum.gov.mo. Admission MOP\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) adults, MOP\$8 (US\$1.05/50p) seniors and children. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm.

306 Ruins of St. Paul's Church ★★ The most famous structure in Macau is what's left of St. Paul's Church. Crowning the top of a hill in the center of the city and approached by a grand sweep of stairs, only its ornate facade and some excavated sites remain. It was designed by an Italian Jesuit and built in 1602 with the help of Japanese Christians who had fled persecution in Nagasaki. In 1835, during a typhoon, the church caught fire and burned to the ground, leaving only its now-famous facade. The facade is adorned with carvings and statues depicting Christianity in Asia, a rather intriguing mix of images: a Virgin Mary flanked by a peony (representing China) and a chrysanthemum (representing Japan), and a Chinese dragon, a Portuguese ship, and a demon. Beyond the facade is the excavated crypt, where in glass-fronted cases are the bones of 17th-century Christian martyrs from Japan and Vietnam. Here, too, is the tomb of Father Allesandro Valignano, founder of the Church of St. Paul and instrumental in establishing Christianity in Japan. Next to the crypt is the underground Museum of Sacred Art, which you can tour in about 20 minutes. It contains religious works of art produced in Macau from the 17th to 20th centuries. Included are very interesting 17th-century oil paintings by exiled Japanese Christian artists, crucifixes of filigree silver, carved wooden saints, and other sacred objects. To the left of the church's ruins are tiny Na Tcha Temple and a remnant of Macau's old city wall, which, along with St. Paul's Church, are among 25 historic structures protected as World Heritage Sites.

Rua de São Paulo. ☎ **853/2835 8444**. Free admission. Grounds daily 24 hr.; museum daily 9am–6pm. Bus: 8A, 17, 18, 19, or 26 or a 10-min. walk northwest of Senado Sq. (off Av. Almeida Ribeiro).

MORE MUSEUMS

Grand Prix Museum One of two museums located in the Tourism Activities Centre (see the Wine Museum, below), a 10-minute walk from the Macau Ferry Terminal, the Grand Prix Museum opened in 1993 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Macau Grand Prix. Its display hall is filled mainly with cars and motorcycles that have competed in the race through the years. There are also simulator games, which cost MOP\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) extra and give visitors the thrill of “experiencing” high speeds down a racetrack (participants must be at least 150 centimeters/59 in. tall). Together with the Wine Museum (see below), you'll spend less than an hour here.

Centro de Actividades Turísticas Macau, 431 Rua Luis Gonzaga Gomes. ☎ **853/8798 4108**. Admission MOP\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults, MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p) children 11–18, free for seniors and children 10 and under. Combination ticket to Grand Prix Museum and Wine Museum MOP\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30). Wed–Mon 10am–6pm. Bus: 1A, 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 17, 23, 28A, 28B, 28C, or 32.

Macau Museum of Art ★ Located in the Macau Cultural Centre on reclaimed land in the Outer Harbour, this small but interesting museum displays historical paintings, Chinese calligraphy, pottery, and works by contemporary local artists. Particularly fascinating are paintings by Western artists such as British painter George Chinnery and others, who painted scenes, people, and customs of Macau and Guangdong, including depictions of the port town as it looked long ago. Their works were often copied and then sold to visiting foreigners as souvenirs. Also impressive is the collection of Shiwan ceramic figurines. There are also temporary exhibitions. Depending upon your interest, you'll spend anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes here. Incidentally, on the ground floor is the Media Library, with computers you can use for free from 2 to 7pm.

Centro Cultural de Macau, Av. Xian Xing Hai, NAPE. ☎ **853/8791 9814**. www.artmuseum.gov.mo. Admission MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p) adults, MOP\$2 (US\$25¢/12p) students and children 11 and over, free for seniors; free admission Sun. Tues–Sun 10am–7pm. Bus: 1A, 8, 12, 17, 23, or AP1.

Maritime Museum ★ **Kids** Macau's oldest museum, ideally situated on the waterfront of the Inner Harbour where visitors can observe barges and other boats passing by, does an excellent job of tracing the history of Macau's lifelong relationship with the sea. It's located at the tip of the peninsula, across from the A-Ma Temple, in approximately the same spot where the Portuguese first landed. The museum begins with dioramas depicting the legend of A-Ma, protectress of seafarers and Macau's namesake, and continues with displays of sea-related festivals (like the A-Ma Festival in Apr, similar to Hong Kong's Tin Hau Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival in May/June). There are also models of various boats, including trawlers, Chinese junks, Portuguese sailing boats, and even modern jetfoils, as well as life-size original boats from the sampan to an ornate festival boat. Various fishing methods are detailed, from trawling and gill netting to purse seining, as well as various voyages of discovery around the world. The museum also has a model of Macau in the 17th century, nautical equipment, navigation instruments used by the Portuguese and Chinese, and—a hit with small children—a one-room aquarium. You'll spend about 45 minutes here.

1 Largo do Pagode da Barra. ☎ **853/2859 5481**. www.museumaritimogov.mo. Admission MOP\$10 (US\$1.30/65p) adults, MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p) children 11–18, free for seniors and children 9 and under. Sun half-price. Wed–Mon 10am–5:30pm. Bus: 1, 1A, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 21, 21A, 26, 28B, or 34.

Pawnshop Museum Located on Macau's main street between Senado Square and the Inner Harbour (look for the sign “Clube Culture”), this historic building opened as a traditional pawnshop in 1917 and today serves as a museum outlining the pawnshop business in Macau. Unlike pawnshops in the West, this pawnshop held personal possessions for up to 3 years, safeguarded against fires, floods, and theft in a thick-walled tower in the back. A screen at the entrance to the shop shielded customers pawning their belongings from curious glances of passersby. There isn't a lot to see here (you can tour the entire building in about 10 min.), so be sure to stop by the adjoining shop selling local souvenirs, some antiques, and reproductions and stop for refreshment at the third-floor tearoom.

Clube Cultural, 396 Av. Almeida Ribeiro. ☎ **853/2892 1811**. www.culturalclub.net. Admission MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p). Daily 10:30am–7pm. Closed 1st Mon of every month. Bus: 2, 3, 3A, 5, 6, 7, 8A, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 19, 21A, 26A, or 33.

Wine Museum Located in the same building as the Grand Prix Museum (see above), this is Asia's first museum dedicated to wine. Modeled like a wine cellar, it begins with a brief history of winemaking, starting with its discovery by Egyptians and Phoenicians in 6000 to 4000 B.C. and its spread from Greece through the rest of Europe, reaching Portugal around A.D. 1100. On display are wines (the oldest is an 1815 Madeira), wine presses, storage barrels, harvesting tools, and other winemaking equipment, as well as descriptions of every winegrowing region in Portugal. Wine production in China is also presented. A museum highlight is the free wine tasting of red, white, or verde wine. Portuguese wine is available for purchase.

Centro de Actividades Turisticas Macau, Rua Luis Gonzaga Gomes. ☎ **853/8798 4188**. Admission MOP\$15 (US\$1.95/£1) adults, MOP\$5 (US\$65¢/35p) children 11–18, free for seniors and children 10 and under. Combination ticket to Grand Prix Museum and Wine Museum MOP\$20 (US\$2.60/£1.30). Wed–Mon 10am–6pm. Bus: 1A, 3, 3A, 10, 10A, 10B, 12, 17, 23, 28A, 28B, 28C, or 32.

TEMPLES

A-Ma Temple ★★ Macau's oldest Chinese temple is situated at the bottom of Barra Hill at the entrance to the Inner Harbour, across from the Maritime Museum. Parts of this temple, dedicated to A-Ma, goddess of seafarers, date back more than 600 years.

308 According to legend, a poor village girl sought free passage on a boat but was refused until a small fishing boat came along and took her onboard. Once the boat was at sea, a typhoon blew in, destroying all boats except hers. Upon landing at what is now Barra Hill, the young girl revealed herself as A-Ma, and the fishermen repaid their gratitude by building this temple on the spot where they came ashore. The temple was already here when the Portuguese arrived; they named their city A-Ma-Gao (Place of A-Ma) after this temple, now shortened, of course, to Macau.

At the entrance is a large rock, with a picture of a traditional sailing junk engraved more than 400 years ago to commemorate the Chinese fishing boat that carried A-Ma to Macau. The temple, spreading along the steep slope of a hill with views of the water, has good feng shui. Several shrines set in the rocky hillside are linked by winding paths through moon gates. The uppermost shrine honors Kun Iam, the Goddess of Mercy, and affords good views of the Inner Harbour. If you happen to be here on the 23rd day of the third moon (Apr or May), you'll be treated to the A-Ma Festival (similar to the Tin Hau Festival in Hong Kong), with its throngs of worshippers and Cantonese opera performed on a temporary stage in front of the temple. At the very least, your visit may coincide with an explosion of fireworks, traditionally set off to scare away evil spirits and now a popular demonstration for visiting tour groups (avoid mornings, however, when most tour buses come here).

Rua de S. Tiago da Barra. Free admission. Daily 6:30am–6pm. Bus: 1, 1A, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 18, 21, 21A, 26, 28B, or 34.

Kun Iam Temple (Temple of the Goddess of Mercy) ★★ Of the many temples in Macau, one of the most important is the Temple of Kun Iam Tong, founded in the 13th century. Its present buildings, with ornate porcelain figurines adorning its roofs, date from 1627. The most significant historical event that took place at this largest and wealthiest of Macau's Buddhist temples was the 1844 signing of the first treaty of trade and friendship between the United States and China; the round granite table where the treaty was signed is still here, in the back garden. The temple houses images of Buddha, representing the past, present, and future, as well as the goddess of mercy (Kun Iam) dressed in the costume of a Chinese bride. She is attended by 18 gold-lacquered figures lining the walls that represent the 18 wise men of China. Curiously enough, the figure on the left with bulging eyes and mustache is identified here as Marco Polo, who, having embraced Buddhism, came to be viewed as one of China's 18 wise men. Behind the temple to the right is a landscaped Chinese garden; it has four banyan trees with intertwined branches, popularly known as the Lovers' Tree and considered symbols of marital fidelity. According to local legend, the trees grew from the burial site of two lovers who committed suicide when they were forbidden to marry. Although the original trees died, new ones have taken their place.

As you wander through the various buildings on the temple grounds, you will notice small funeral rooms with altars dedicated to the newly deceased, complete with photographs, offerings of fruit and other food, and paper money to assist the departed in the afterlife. You may even chance upon a funeral service, in which participants are dressed in white. Please show respect by being quiet, and refrain from taking photographs. It is also considered bad manners—not to mention bad luck—to take a picture of a monk without his permission. In any case, a visit to this temple is like going back in time; allow 20 minutes in this time capsule.

Av. do Coronel Mesquita. Free admission. Daily 7am–6pm. Bus: 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, or 28C.

East Meets West

The Historic Centre of Macao, a World Heritage Site, celebrates more than 400 years of cultural exchange between the East and the West. Encompassing most of the historic old town, it ensures the preservation of both traditional Chinese architecture and the oldest western structures on Chinese soil, with forts, temples, churches, mansions, squares, a library, cemetery, and a garden among 25 protected sites. Several of the most famous attractions are described above and in my walking tour below, but for a complete list of protected structures and a map, stop by the Macau Government Tourist Office for its *Macau World Heritage* pamphlet. Among my favorites: the A-Ma Temple, Moorish Barracks, Mandarin's House, Leal Senado Building, Senado Square, Lou Kau Mansion, the Protestant Cemetery, and Guia Fortress.

At the other end of the spectrum is another "town," the newly fabricated **Fisherman's Wharf** (📍 **853/2899 3300**; www.fishermanswharf.com.mo), which opened in 2004 on reclaimed land in the Outer Harbour, just a few minutes' walk from the ferry terminal. It's divided into three themed zones: Tang Dynasty, with architecture and decor typical of the era; East Meets West, a fairy-tale rendition of history, with a man-made "active" volcano, Aladdin's Fort (with thrill rides for the little ones open daily 10:30am–6:30pm, with rides costing MOP\$20/US\$2.60/£1.30, and an underground game center, open daily noon to 2am), and a 2,000-seat Roman Amphitheatre for concerts and performances; and Legend Wharf, with replica European, North American, and South African historic architecture. Mostly, Fisherman's Wharf is an excuse to shop and eat, with plenty of upscale opportunities for both. With regularly scheduled street performances and other events, it makes for an interesting stroll.

A GARDEN

Lou Lim Iok Garden (📍 **Find**) Macau's most flamboyant Chinese garden was built in the 19th century by a wealthy Chinese merchant and modeled after the famous gardens in Suzhou, China. Tiny, with narrow winding paths, bamboo groves, rock grottoes, a nine-turn zigzag bridge (believed to deter evil spirits), and ponds filled with carp, it's a nice escape from the city. If possible, come in the morning, when the garden is filled with Chinese doing tai chi exercises, musicians practicing traditional Chinese music, and bird lovers strolling with their birds in ornate wooden cages.

Estrada de Adolfo Loureiro. 📍 **853/2835 6622**. Free admission. Daily 6am–9pm. Bus: 2, 5, 9, 9A, 12, 16, 22, 25, or 28C.

TAIPA

Closest to the mainland, Taipa was accessible only by ferry until 1974, when the Macau-Taipa Bridge was finally completed. Two additional bridges have led to increased development on Taipa, including unsightly new apartment blocks and booming suburbs that have pushed the population on this small, 6.5-sq.-km (2½-sq.-mile) island to almost 50,000. Still, Taipa is worth a visit for quaint Taipa Village with its popular restaurants

310 and colonial architecture. Taipa is also home of the United Chinese Cemetery with its blend of Confucianist, Taoist, and Buddhist influences, a university, Macau Stadium, Macau's airport, and the Macau Jockey Club for horse racing.

For architecture buffs and those looking for atmospheric restaurants, the first stop should be **Taipa Village** ★, a small traditional community of narrow lanes, alleys, squares, and two-story colonial buildings painted in hues of yellow, blue, and green. Although now almost completely engulfed by nearby housing projects, village life remains in full view here, with women sorting the day's vegetables on towels in the street, children playing, and older residents sunning themselves on benches. On or near Rua do Cunha, the picturesque pedestrian-only main street, are a number of fine, inexpensive restaurants, making dining reason enough to come (see "Where to Dine," earlier in this chapter).

But for sightseeing, the best place to visit is the **Casa Museu da Taipa (Taipa House Museum)**, on Avenida da Praia (☎ **853/2882 7088**). It is one of five colonial-style buildings lining the street—homes that belonged to Macanese families in the early 1900s. Combining both European and Chinese design as a reflection of the families' Eurasian heritage, the Casa Museu has a dining and living room, study, kitchen, and upstairs bedrooms all filled with period furniture, paintings, art, and personal artifacts reflective of a dual heritage. The large verandas face banyan trees and what was formerly the sea (now reclaimed land), reflecting the fact that most entertaining in this small colonial outpost—a boat ride from Macau—took place at home. The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10am to 6pm, and admission is MOP\$5 (US\$4/35p). A couple of the other colonial buildings on the banyan-shaded Praia, which used to be on the shoreline but now faces unsightly reclaimed land, contain displays relating to the history of Taipa and its inhabitants and traditional regional costumes and musical instruments of Portugal. Next to the buildings, on a hill, is Our Lady of Carmel Church, built in the 19th century for the devout Macanese Catholics.

The easiest way to reach Taipa Village is to board one of the buses that stops in front of the Lisboa hotels near the bridge on the mainland. Bus nos. 11, 15, 22, 28A, 30, 33, or 34 all go to Taipa Village.

COLÔANE

Farther away and connected to Taipa via a huge added strip of reclaimed land called Cotai, which has essentially made the two islands one, Colôane once served as a haven for pirates who preyed upon the rich trading ships passing by. The last pirate raid was as late as 1910, when bandits kidnapped 18 children and demanded ransom. Government forces eventually overpowered the pirates, freeing all the children. Colôane today, measuring 7.8 sq. km (3 sq. miles) but with a population of only 4,000, is far less developed than Taipa and is known for its beaches, pine trees, eight marked hiking trails, golf course, and traditional village. The trails are accessible from Seac Pai Van Park, from various picnic parks on the island, and from both Cheoc Van and Hac Sa beaches. Trail maps are available at the information booth at the entrance to Seac Pai Van Park (bus: 15, 21, 25, 26) and at the trail heads. At its center, on Colôane Hill and visible from miles away, is a 20m (65-ft.) white marble statue of A-Ma. Two of the most popular **beaches** are Cheoc Van and Hac Sa (which means "black sand"). Both beaches have lifeguards on duty in the summer, restaurants, and nearby public swimming pools that are open until 10pm. To reach them, take bus no. 21A or 26A from Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro in the city center or from the Lisboa Hotel; bus no. 25 also runs from the Lisboa Hotel to both beaches. Bus no. 15 connects the beaches with Taipa Village.

Now that Taipa Village has suffered so much surrounding development, I find **Coloane Village** ★★ much more picturesque and a worthy destination if exploring the islands. Located on the southwestern tip of the island, it is so close to China that it almost seems like you can reach out and touch it. Boats headed to and from the mainland pass through the narrow waterway. The social center of the village revolves around a small, tiled square, which is lined on two sides with cloistered cafes. In its center is a monument erected in 1928 to commemorate those who fought in the 1910 battle against the pirates. At its end is the small but sweet **Chapel of St. Francis Xavier**, built in 1928 and dedicated to Asia's most important and well-known Catholic missionary. The church, built in classic Portuguese style, would seem rather plain if it weren't for its exuberant Asian artwork. For a snack, head to **Lord Stow's Bakery**, Coloane Town Square (☎ 853/2888 2534), serving what some contend are Macau's best Portuguese egg tarts, best when eaten fresh from the oven, as well as sandwiches and bread.

7 HISTORIC CITY STROLLS

Two walks are described below, but because they connect at Senado Square, they can easily be combined into one stroll. Together, they take in about half of the World Heritage Site's 25 historic structures.

WALKING TOUR 1 AROUND ST. PAUL'S

START:	Senado Square (Largo do Senado).
FINISH:	Senado Square.
TIME:	Allow approximately 3 hours, including museum stops.
BEST TIMES:	The streets are lively any day of the week!
WORST TIMES:	Monday, when the Museum of Macau and Lou Kau Mansion are closed.

If anything remains of old Macau, this is it. Declared a World Heritage Site in 2005, the Historic Centre of Macao celebrates Macau's dual heritage with architectural treasures ranging from temples and Chinese mansions to churches and plazas. With their narrow, hilly streets, diminutive squares shaded by ancient banyan trees, family-owned shops, and unique buildings, the slopes and neighborhoods below the ruins of St. Paul's offer colorful snapshots of Macau's long past. This is also the vibrant heart of the city, with children's laughter drifting from schoolyards, shopkeepers gossiping in the street, worshippers filing in for Mass, and friends playing mah-jongg right in the middle of a store. And don't worry if you get lost—Macau is too small to be truly lost for long, and the back streets and alleys make for fascinating exploring.

① Senado Square (Largo do Senado)

This large plaza, paved with mosaics, dominated by a fountain, and encircled by pastel-colored neoclassical buildings, has been the center of Macau's commercial life for centuries. It's always packed with

tourists, families, and passersby, giving it a festive atmosphere even when no public events—and there are plenty—are staged. If you haven't already done so, stop off at the MGTO tourist office on Senado Square to pick up a map and the *Macau World Heritage* brochure.

② St. Dominic's Church (Igreja de São Domingos)

Founded in 1587 by three Spanish Dominican priests who came to Macau from Acapulco, Mexico, the present yellow-and-white church with green shutters dates from the early 17th century. Its baroque altar, with a statue of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, is the picture of serenity today, belying an act of violence that occurred in 1644 during Mass: A military officer sympathetic to the Spanish rushed inside to escape a street mob but was murdered at the altar. If you take the stairs at the end of the right corridor, you'll arrive at the Treasure of the Sacred Heart museum, open daily 10am to 6pm, with three floors of woodcarvings, vestments, and other religious artifacts (the top floor is especially interesting, since its soaring ceiling allows you to see something of the building's architecture). Admission is free.

Upon exiting the church, head for the small side street catty-corner across the square to the right (beside McDonald's), called Travessa de S. Domingos. It leads uphill, where, to the right, it opens onto:

③ Largo da Sé

This handsome square, recently renovated and boasting a big cross at its center, is most famous for the Cathedral (Igreja da Sé), which has stood here in various forms for several centuries. Once serving as the mother church of a diocese that stretched from China and Korea to Japan, it was last rebuilt in 1937 and boasts fine stained-glass windows. If time permits, soak up the local atmosphere from one of the square's benches, where you have a front-row seat of Macau's laid-back urban life and the parade of people walking by.

Head back downhill to the right of the cross, on Travessa da Sé, where almost immediately on the right, at no. 7, you'll come to what I consider one of the highlights of this stroll, the:

④ Lou Kau Mansion

Built in 1889 by a prominent Chinese merchant, this is a handsome two-story

house centered on a courtyard, one of only a few Chinese mansions remaining in Macau. Be sure to explore upstairs. As an interesting side note, before the mansion was renovated in 2002, it had fallen into acute neglect, with as many as 20 families living here at one time. It's open Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 7pm; admission is free.

Continuing on Travessa da Sé, you'll find yourself back at St. Dominic's. To the right of the church is Rua da Palha, which you should follow shortly before veering uphill on Rua da S. Páolo. This is one of Macau's most interesting old streets, with open-fronted shops selling antiques, souvenirs, and local foodstuffs, including slices of barbecued beef jerky. You'll also see stores specializing in reproduction Chinese furniture, some of which is so good that many visitors commission pieces to be shipped back home. In fact, this area has long been famous for its craftsmen; centuries ago, many from this neighborhood helped build St. Paul's Church. At the top of Rua da S. Páolo is a grand flight of stairs, always packed with tourists and leading to Macau's most famous landmark, the Ruins of St. Paul's. First, however, at the top of the stairs, turn right for the:

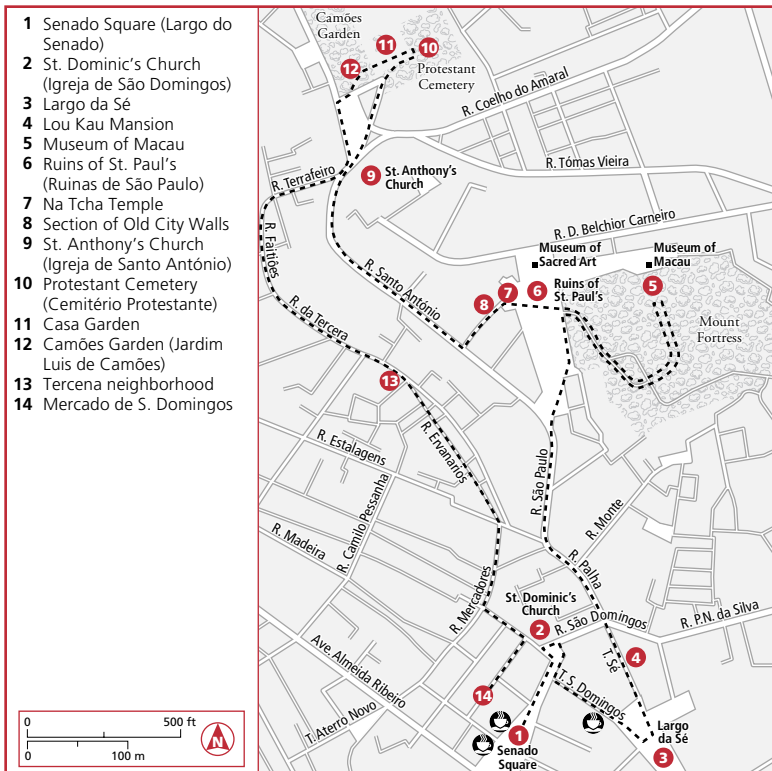
⑤ Museum of Macau

Occupying the foundations of a former fortress, the Museum of Macau does a good job depicting Macau's colorful history, traditions, and architecture, making it well worth a spin (p. 305). After touring the museum, be sure to exit from the top floor, which takes you to the fortress ramparts with its cannons and good views of the Inner Harbour with its busy boat traffic.

Exit the ramparts by following the sign for the "Snack Bar" and continuing on around to the right, which will bring you back to Macau's most famous landmark, the:

⑥ Ruins of St. Paul's (Ruínas de São Paulo)

Constructed in 1602 but destroyed by fire in 1835, leaving only its facade punctuated by reliefs and statues, this is Macau's top tourist attraction. Its facade, with a curious mix of Asian and Western symbols, has been called a "sermon in stone." Its grounds contain a viewing platform



behind the facade, archaeological pits, a crypt containing bones of Japanese and Vietnamese martyrs, and a museum of sacred art (p. 306).

On the other side of St. Paul's is:

7 Na Tcha Temple

Another protected structure of the World Heritage Site, this tiny temple was built in 1888 to honor Na Tcha, the patron saint of children and—well, this is Macau—of lotteries and gambling. It stands next to a:

8 Section of the Old City Walls

The Portuguese invariably constructed walls around their port settlements, including those in India and Africa. Built of clay,

soil, sand, rice straw, crushed rocks, and oyster shells, the chunk you see today was once part of a defensive wall first built by the Portuguese in 1569.

Follow the wall onto Calçada de S. Francisco Xavier, turning right on Rua de Santo António, where you'll find more shops selling antiques, reproduction furniture, and pottery. After a 5-minute walk or so, following signs for Camões Square, you'll come to:

9 St. Anthony's Church (Igreja de Santo António)

Macau's first church, made of wood and bamboo, was built here in 1558. After many fires and reconstructions, this latest reincarnation dates from 1930. It's dedicated to St. Anthony, a military saint and a captain in the Portuguese army.

314 Take a right out of the church, where, across the small square with its minibus station, is the old:

10 Protestant Cemetery (Cemitério Protestante)

A good illustration of Macau's religious diversity, this picturesque graveyard with about 160 graves provides a visual record of Macau's earliest Protestant community, with many prominent citizens buried here, including artist George Chinnery (buried in the upper row at the end; you can see his works in the Macau Museum of Art), Robert Morrison (who wrote the first Chinese-English dictionary and translated the Bible into Chinese), Joseph Adams (grandson of George Washington), and—they were considered respectable at the time—opium traders.

Upon exiting the cemetery, you'll see a gate to the right with the sign *Fundacao Oriente*. Headquarters of the Oriental Foundation, this attractive pink and white building is the old:

11 Casa Garden

Built in 1770 as the private mansion of a wealthy Portuguese merchant, it was later rented out to officials of the East India Company, which maintained an office in Macau. You're welcome to enter the small gallery, which holds changing exhibitions.

Next to Casa Garden is:

12 Camoes Garden (Jardim Luis De Camoes)

Once part of Casa Garden's private estate, this public park is dedicated to Portugal's most famous poet, often referred to as Portugal's Shakespeare and thought to have lived in Macau in 1557. A natural grotto contains a bust of Camoes, but I like walking beyond the grotto to the end of the park, where there's a good view of the Inner Harbour and tables where men play Chinese games. If you come in early morning, you may also see men walking their pet birds in cages and people going through their daily exercise regimen. The garden is open daily from 6am to 10pm.

Walking back toward St. Anthony's Church, turn right onto *Calçada do Botelho* and then left near the bottom of the hill onto *Rua dos Fatiões*. This soon turns into *Rua da Tercena*, heart of the:

13 Tercena Neighborhood

A typical old Macau street, *Rua da Tercena* is noted for its shops selling everything from antiques to coconut products. At the end of *Rua da Tercena*, take the tiled street to the right, *Rua dos Ervanarios*. This is a wonderful, narrow pedestrian lane, where you'll see small ma-and-pa shops, some with back tables where women are busy in that favorite pastime, mah-jongg. Yet towering above the lane, in the far distance, is modern Macau's new landmark, the 50-story Grand Lisboa.

After *Rua dos Ervanarios* ends, continue on *Rua dos Mercados*, turning left on a tiled street (there's no street sign here) and the first right onto *Rua Oeste do Mercado de S. Domingos*, site of the:

14 Mercado de S. Domingos

This street market, with stalls and open-fronted shops, sells inexpensive casual attire, mostly overruns and seconds from Macau's couple hundred garment factories. You'll find inexpensive children's clothing, knitwear, jeans, and Chinese jackets, at prices much cheaper than Hong Kong's, making it fun to browse. At the end of the lane, turn left and you'll end up back at Senado Square.



WINDING DOWN

If you're hungering for Chinese, two of Macau's oldest Cantonese restaurants are **Long Kei** (☎ 853/2857 3970; p. 304), which has been offering inexpensive fare since 1945; and **Wong Chi Kei** (☎ 853/2833 1313; p. 304), always packed with patrons hungering after its noodles and congee. For French fare, head to **La Bonne Heure** (☎ 853/2833 1209; p. 301), serving lunch and dinner in a cozy setting.

START:	Senado Square (Largo do Senado).
FINISH:	A-Ma Temple.
TIME:	Allow approximately 2 hours.
BEST TIMES:	You can do this walk any day of the week.
WORST TIMES:	Tuesday, when the Maritime Museum is closed.

In contrast to the commercial neighborhoods around Senado Square and St. Paul's with their many shops and restaurants, Penha Peninsula is more residential, sprinkled with many fine churches, squares, and other architectural treasures that are part of the World Heritage Site's Historic Centre of Macao. Still, it's off the beaten path for most tourists, despite the fact that Penha Peninsula boasts Macau's grandest examples of Portuguese colonial architecture.

1 Leal Senado

This neoclassical masterpiece, Macau's most striking example of Portuguese colonial architecture, was built in 1784 and renovated following a typhoon in 1875. Since its founding, this building has housed Macau's municipal chamber. Its name means "Loyal Senate," derived from a title Portuguese King Dom John IV bestowed in 1654: "City of Our Name of God Macao, There is None More Loyal." Inside the foyer to the right is a small gallery with changing exhibitions, often mounted without much advance notice but interesting since they relate to Macau and are free. Up the stairs is a pretty inner courtyard, lined with blue and white tiles typical of Macau's Portuguese buildings and with a bust of poet Camoes.

In front of Leal Senado is busy:

2 Avenida Almeida Ribeiro

Called San Ma Lo by the Chinese, this has long been Macau's main thoroughfare. Many old buildings from the early 20th century, with decorated facades on the upper floors and shops below, remain, though modern architecture is slowly encroaching. There are many shops selling jewelry here, with prices dependant on the daily market price for gold.

Cross to the other side of Avenida Almeida Ribeiro (Be careful! Cars don't always stop.) and turn left toward the Inner Harbour, looking for a sign on the right that reads "Clube Culture," at no. 396. It's home of the small:

3 Pawnshop Museum

For an interesting insight into the Chinese pawnshop business, which operates under different principles than pawnshops in the West, stop into this museum (p. 307). Be sure, too, to take a spin through the adjoining shop selling antiques and souvenirs.



TAKE A BREAK

On the third floor of the Pawnshop Museum is a traditional teahouse, offering various types of tea and tea ware for purchase. Or, you can choose to drink it here, in a private booth where the waitress will prepare the tea at your table.

Turn right out of the pawnshop, cross Avenida Almeida Ribeiro at the nearest crosswalk, and continue walking straight ahead a short block or so to a lively street with open-fronted shops selling sheets of barbecued beef jerky and other foodstuffs. This is the beginning of picturesque:

4 Rua da Felicidade

It's aptly named, since the Street of Happiness once served as the nightlife district.

316 Most of it was renovated some years back so that the traditional buildings all have the same whitewashed walls and red shutters and doors. Today they house a few shops, restaurants, and other businesses.

Walk all the way up Rua da Felicidade, turning right onto Rua da Alfandaga, where you'll pass Pac Cheong Tong, a traditional Chinese medicinal shop at no. 114. Turn left at Calçada Do Gamboa and walk uphill, at the top of which is St. Augustine's Square. This is one of Macau's loveliest squares (so architecturally intact, in fact, that it's one of the World Heritage Site's 25 protected structures). Immediately in front of you is:

5 St. Augustine's Church (Igreja de Santo Agostinho)

This pretty yellow church with green shutters was first established by Spanish Augustinians in 1591 and remains one of the city's most popular, with Sunday mass celebrated in Tagalog at 10:30am for Macau's large Filipino population and in English at 4:30pm. It also holds a very popular Easter Procession, with thousands of devotees.

Also on St. Augustine's Square is the:

6 Sir Robert Ho Tung Library

Built in 1894 as a residence, this building has since been donated to the city and now serves as a public library. There's a small open courtyard out back, good for a short break.

The other important building here is the:

7 Dom Pedro V Theatre

China's first Western-style theater was built in 1860 and attracted many international touring companies, making it a cultural centerpiece for the Macanese community. It's still used for concerts and public events, but otherwise isn't open to the public.

Take Calçada Do Teatro, the downhill slope curving to the right around Dom Pedro V Theater, and continue straight on to Rua Central, which in succession becomes de S. Lorenzo and then Rua Do Padre Antonio. To your left will soon be:

8 Lilau Square (Largo do Lilau)

Shaded by a large banyan tree and bordered by colorful old houses, this little square is probably my favorite in Macau. Because of a natural spring found here, this was the center of one of Macau's first residential areas. A local saying promises anyone who drinks from Lilau's spring will never forget Macau. The fountain became a popular drinking spot for visitors, who hoped that drinking the spring water would ensure their return. Nowadays, due to health reasons, the fountain is dry. Still, you can almost picture how lively this part of Macau used to be, with housewives coming to fetch water and children playing in the square.

The interwoven quality of the lives of the Chinese, Macanese, and Portuguese in old Macau is reflected by the imposing building across from Lilau Square, the:

9 Mandarin's House

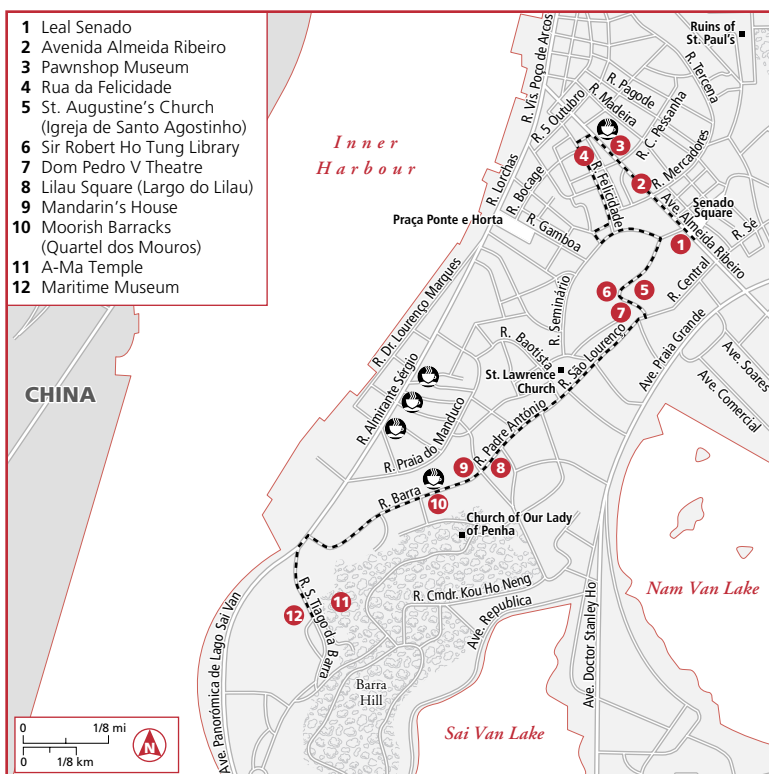
This magnificent traditional Chinese mansion, built around 1880, has been under painstaking renovation for several years, with no word yet on when it might finally be open to the public. When finished, it is sure to wow visitors with its courtyards and master's and servants quarters.

Continue on Rua Do Padre Antonio, which becomes Rua da Barra and then Calçada da Barra, where soon to your left you'll see the handsome:

10 Moorish Barracks (Quartel dos Mouros)

This brick and stone neoclassical structure, with distinct Mughal embellishments, was built in 1874 to house an Indian regiment brought in from Goa (which was also under Portuguese rule). Today it serves as headquarters of the Maritime Administration and is not open to the public.

Continue on Calçada da Barra to its end, which brings you to Macau's namesake:



11 A-Ma Temple

Already here when the Portuguese arrived, A-Ma Temple has grown over the years, with various pavilions and halls built along a steep slope (p. 307). The fact that so many deities are worshipped in a single complex is testimony to how much Chinese culture has been influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Across the square from A-Ma Temple is the:

12 Maritime Museum

Macau's long relationship with the sea is the focus of this small museum, with displays that cover both Portuguese and Chinese seafaring vessels (p. 307).



WINDING DOWN

Across from the Moorish Barracks is **Pizzeria Toscana** (☎ 853/2872 6637; p. 302), offering inexpensive pizzas and pastas. Not far from A-Ma Temple is a succession of restaurants on Rua do Almirante Sérgio: **A Lorch** (☎ 853/2831 3193; p. 299), serving Portuguese fare; **Restaurante Litoral** (☎ 853/2896 7878; p. 302), specializing in Macanese cuisine; and **O Porto Interior** (☎ 853/2896 7770; p. 301), which serves both.

GAMBLING

The Chinese so love gambling that it's often said that if two flies are walking on the wall, the Chinese will bet on which one will walk faster. It's not surprising, therefore, that mainland and Hong Kong Chinese together with Taiwanese make up more than 90% of the 27 million annual visitors to Macau.

In 2002, a 40-year monopoly on gambling ended, paving the way for grander casinos and an upsurge in Las Vegas-style entertainment. The number of casinos quickly grew from 11 in 2002 to about 30 today, approximately half of them owned by foreign investors. Many are located in hotels or large resort complexes. Some are fancy, others aren't, but none allow photographs to be taken, and shorts may not be worn. Admission is free, but you may be required to show a passport to enter. All are open 24 hours.

Macau's casinos offer a wide range of games, including blackjack, baccarat, roulette, boule, "big and small," fan-tan, and slot machines (known, appropriately enough, as "hungry tigers"), designed mostly for the Asian market. If you're interested in seeing the largest casino in the world, head to the **Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel** on Cotai (☎ 853/2882 8888; www.venetianmacao.com), a 50,725-sq.-m (546,000-sq.-ft.) space with more than 3,400 slot machines and 800 table games. More centrally located is the **MGM Grand Macau**, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen (☎ 853/8802 8888; www.mgmgrandmacau.com), with 386 table games and 1,000 slot machines. Nearby, the **Wynn Macau**, Rua Cidade de Sintra (☎ 853/2888 9966; www.wynnmacau.com), attracts crowds not only to its casinos but also its two attractions, Performance Lake with its choreographed dancing fountains and the Tree of Prosperity, which rises from the ground to the accompaniment of dazzling lights and music. Here also is the **Grand Lisboa**, Avenida de Lisboa (☎ 853/2828 3838; www.grandlisboa.com), the first to add Texas Hold'em in its casino. Other hotels with casinos include the **Mandarin Oriental**, **Holiday Inn**, **Hotel Lisboa**, **Starworld**, and **Crown**, with many more slated to open over the next few years.

SHOPPING

A duty-free port, Macau has long been famous for its jewelry stores, especially those offering gold jewelry along Avenida Horta e Costa, Avenida do Infante D. Henrique, and Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro. Many Chinese consider buying gold as an investment. Market prices per tael (1.2 oz.) of gold are set daily. When buying gold or jewelry, always request a certificate of guarantee.

After gold, Portuguese wines are another good bargain, as are Chinese antiques and leather garments. In recent years, a number of fashionable clothing boutiques have also opened in the center of town, similar to what you'd find in Hong Kong. More colorful are the clothing stalls near Largo do Senado square (circling the building that holds MGTO), many of which sell overruns and seconds from Macau's many garment factories. You can also pick up Chinese jackets here cheaper than at markets in Hong Kong. Another colorful local shopping experience is the **Red Market**, located on the corner of Avenida Almirante Lacerda and Avenida Horta e Costa. Built in 1936 in Art Deco style, it houses a lively food market open daily from 7:30am to 7:30pm. A street market extends from the Red Market to Rotunda de Carlos Maia, a district popularly dubbed the Three Lamps District and a fun place to browse for cheap clothing. To reach the Red Market, take bus no. 1, 1A, 3, 4, 5, 8, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 26A, 32, 33, or 34 to Mercado Vermelho.

A **weekly outdoor market** is held Sundays from 11am to 8pm in Taipa Village, with booths selling traditional crafts, souvenirs, clothing, toys, and food. In Colôane Village, check out **Asian Artefacts**, 9 Rua dos Negociantes (☎ 853/2888 1022), which sells restored antique furniture from North China, including trunks, chests, tables, chairs, and more, as well as handicrafts from Thailand, India, and other Asian countries. It's open daily from 10am to 6:45pm and can arrange shipping.

Macau, which didn't have one department store when I first visited in the 1980s, let alone boutiques or shopping malls, is on the verge of a shopping explosion, with most new developments tied to its gaming industry. These glitzy new shopping malls are filled with international designer names, making Macau a shopping mecca for mainland Chinese who can windowshop in Beijing or Shanghai but purchase the same goods in Macau at cheaper prices. The first large-scale addition to Macau's shopping and entertainment scene was **Fisherman's Wharf** (☎ 853/2899 3300; www.fishermanswharf.com.mo), which opened in 2004 just a few minutes' walk from the ferry terminal, and has a variety of souvenir, gift, and clothing stores. **Wynn Macau's** shopping esplanade, centrally located at Rua Cidade de Sintra (☎ 853/2888 9966; www.wynnmacau.com), houses some of the most exclusive names in designer wear and accessories, including Bulgari, Chanel, Dior, Armani, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Miu Miu, and Prada. But it's the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel's **Grand Canal Shoppes** in Cotai (☎ 853/2882 8888; www.venetianmacao.com) that boasts Macau's most ambitious shopping mall to date, with 1 million square feet of retail space housing 350 designer shops, designed around a Venetian theme complete with canals and gondoliers. It's just the start of many more retail complexes planned for Cotai.

NIGHTLIFE

For many years, Macau's only nighttime entertainment outside gambling centered on hotel bars and lounges. While these are still recommendable for a drink and live entertainment, one of the few benefits to have arisen from the otherwise hideously sterile reclaimed-land development on the Outer Harbour is the **Docks**, a string of sidewalk cafes and bars lining Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-sen near the Kun Iam Statue (locals also refer to it as Lan Kwai Fong, after Hong Kong's famous nightlife district). It's a great place for a drink and watching the parade of people file past. True to Macau's Mediterranean roots, the action doesn't start until after 10pm and is at its most frenetic after 1am. For a suggestion, try **Moonwalker** (☎ 853/2875 1326), open daily from 4pm to 4am (to 5am Fri and Sat) and offering live music Wednesday through Monday nights from 10pm. A great place to watch the sun go down is **180 Lounge and Grill** in the Macau Tower (☎ 853/8988 8659), open daily from noon to 1am and with live music nightly 7:30 to 8pm and 10 to 10:30pm.

If you've had dinner in Taipa Village, you might want to amble over to the **Old Taipa Tavern**, 21 Rua dos Negociantes (☎ 853/2882 5221), popular with the expat crowd. Open to the street with sidewalk seating, it offers a good selection of draft beers, cocktails, and snacks. It's open daily from noon to midnight, with happy hour from 5 to 8pm. For a more sophisticated setting, head to Crown Towers, Avenida De Kwong Tung, Taipa, where on the 38th floor you'll find the **Crystal Club** (☎ 853/8803 6868), with great views of the Macau skyline from its chic lounge and from its outdoor patio. It's open 24 hours.

Appendix: Fast Facts, Toll-Free Numbers & Websites

Your hotel concierge or guest relations manager is usually a valuable source of information. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) is also well equipped and eager to help visitors and answer their questions.

1 FAST FACTS: HONG KONG & MACAU

AMERICAN EXPRESS On Hong Kong Island, you'll find American Express on the first floor of the Henley Building, 5 Queen's Rd. Central, in the Central District (☎ 852/3192 7788). In Tsim Sha Tsui, an office is located at 48 Cameron Rd. (☎ 852/3191 3838). Both are open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm.

BUSINESS HOURS Although open hours can vary, banking hours are generally Monday through Friday from 9am to 4:30pm and Saturday from 9am to 12:30pm. Keep in mind, however, that some banks stop their transactions—including foreign currency exchange—an hour before closing time.

Most business offices are open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm, with lunch hour from 1 to 2pm; for those that have them, Saturday business hours are generally 9am to 1pm.

Most shops are open 7 days a week. Shops in the Central District in Hong Kong are generally open from 10am to 7:30pm; in Causeway Bay and Wan Chai, 10am to 9:30pm; and in Tsim Sha Tsui, 10am to 9 or 10pm (and some even later than that). As for bars, most stay open until at least 2am; some stay open until the crack of dawn.

DENTISTS & DOCTORS Many first-class hotels have medical clinics with registered nurses, as well as doctors, on duty at specified hours or on call 24 hours for emergencies. Otherwise, the concierge can refer you to a doctor or dentist. The U.S. consulate (see "Embassies & Consulates," below) can also provide information on English-speaking doctors. If it's an emergency, dial ☎ 999 (a free call) in both Hong Kong and Macau or contact one of the recommendations under "Hospitals," below. For Macau, see "Hospitals," in "Fast Facts: Macau," p. 288.

DRINKING LAWS The legal age for purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages (and tobacco) in Hong Kong and Macau is 18. The hours for bars vary according to the district, though those around Lan Kwai Fong and Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong stay open the longest, often until dawn. In Macau, most every casino has at least one bar that is open 24 hours. Beer is available at convenience stores, including 7-Eleven, while a larger selection of beer, wine, and liquor is available from the basement food emporiums of department stores.

DRUGSTORES Hong Kong does not have any 24-hour drugstores, so if you need something urgently in the middle of the night, you should contact one of the hospitals listed below. One of the best-known pharmacies in Hong Kong is **Watson's**, which dates back to the 1880s. Today, more than 100 Watson's are spread throughout Hong Kong, most of them open from 9am to 10pm. Ask the concierge at your hotel for the location of a Watson's or drugstore nearest you (only about half the Watson's dispense medicine; the rest deal only in cosmetics and toiletries). Note, however, that prescriptions can be filled only when ordered by a local doctor.

In Macau, look for signs that say, "drogaria" or "farmácia." Macau also does not have 24-hour drugstores. A conveniently located pharmacy is at 16 Largo do Seal Senado (☎ 853/2857 3739).

ELECTRICITY The electricity used in Hong Kong and Macau is 220 volts, alternating current (AC), 50 cycles (in the U.S. and Canada it's 110 volts and 60 cycles). Outlets are the British-style three-pin, rectangular plugs. Most hotels are equipped to fit shavers of different plugs and voltages, and higher-end hotels also have outlets with built-in plug adapters to fit foreign prongs. Most laptop computers nowadays are equipped to deal with both 110 and 220 volts. Otherwise, you'll need a transformer and plug adapter (ask your hotel whether it has a plug adapter you can use—many often do, for free).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES If you need to contact a consulate about an application for a visa, a lost passport, tourist information, or an emergency, telephone first to find out the hours of the various sections. The visa section, for example, may be open only during certain hours of the day. In addition, consulates are usually closed for their own national holidays and often for Hong Kong holidays as well.

The **American Consulate**, 26 Garden Rd., Central District (☎ 852/2523 9011; 852/2841 2211 for the American Citizens Service; www.hongkong.usconsulate.gov), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 12:30pm and 1:30 to 5:30pm.

The **Canadian Consulate**, 11th–14th floor of Tower One, Exchange Square, 8 Connaught Place, Central District (☎ 852/3719 4700; <http://geo.international.gc.ca/asia/hongkong>), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to noon.

The **British Consulate**, at 1 Supreme Court Rd., Central District (☎ 852/2901 3000; www.britishconsulate.org.hk), is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 3pm.

The **Australian Consulate** is on the 23rd floor of Harbour Centre, 25 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, on Hong Kong Island (☎ 852/2827 8881; www.hongkong.china.embassy.gov.au), and is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm.

The **New Zealand Consulate** is on the 65th floor of Central Plaza, 18 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2525 5044; www.nzembassy.com/hongkong), and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 1pm and 2 to 5pm.

For information on visa applications to mainland **China**, contact a tour operator such as China Travel Service (see "China," in chapter 11).

EMERGENCIES All emergency calls in Hong Kong and Macau are free—just dial ☎ 999 for police, fire, or ambulance.

HOLIDAYS Most Chinese festival holidays are determined by the lunar calendar, which changes each year, while national and Christian religious holidays, such as Labour Day, Easter, or National Day, are the same each year. Note, however, that if a public holiday falls on a Sunday, Monday becomes a holiday. For more detailed information on specific holidays and the way they're celebrated, see "Hong Kong Calendar of Events" in chapter 3.

Public holidays for 2009 are: New Year's Day (Jan 1); Lunar New Year (Jan 26–28); Ching Ming Festival (Apr 4); Easter (Good Friday through Easter Monday, Apr 10–14); Labour Day (May 1); Buddha's Birthday (May 2); Tuen Ng Festival (Dragon Boat Festival, May 28); Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day (Hong Kong's return to China, July 1); National Day (Oct 1); Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival (Oct 3); Chung Yeung Festival (Oct 26); Christmas (Dec 25–26). For 2010 lunar holidays, which had not yet been announced at the time this book went to press, go to www.info.gov.hk/about/abouthk/holiday/index.htm.

HOSPITALS Hong Kong has 40-some public hospitals. The following can help you round-the-clock: **Queen Mary Hospital**, 102 Pokfulam Rd., Hong Kong Island (☎ 852/2855 3838); and **Queen Elizabeth Hospital**, 30 Gascoigne Rd., Kowloon (☎ 852/2958 8888). For Macau, see "Hospitals," in "Fast Facts: Macau," p. 288.

INSURANCE Medical Insurance For travel overseas, most U.S. health plans (including Medicare and Medicaid) do not provide coverage, and the ones that do often require you to pay for services up front and reimburse you only after you return home.

As a safety net, you may want to buy travel medical insurance, particularly if you're traveling to a remote or high-risk area where emergency evacuation might be necessary. If you require additional medical insurance, try **MEDEX Assistance** (☎ 410/453-6300; www.medexassist.com) or **Travel Assistance International** (☎ 800/821-2828; www.travelassistance.com; for general information on services, call the company's **Worldwide Assistance Services, Inc.**, at ☎ 800/777-8710).

Canadians should check with their provincial health plan offices or call **Health**

Canada (☎ 866/225-0709; www.hc-sc.gc.ca) to find out the extent of their coverage and what documentation and receipts they must take home in case they are treated overseas.

Travelers from the U.K. should carry their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which replaced the E111 form as proof of entitlement to free/reduced cost medical treatment abroad (☎ 0845 606 2030; www.ehic.org.uk). Note, however, that the EHIC only covers "necessary medical treatment," and for repatriation costs, lost money, baggage, or cancellation, travel insurance from a reputable company should always be sought (www.travelinsuranceweb.com).

Travel Insurance The cost of travel insurance varies widely, depending on the destination, the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but expect to pay between 5% and 8% of the vacation itself. You can get estimates from various providers through **InsureMyTrip.com**. Enter your trip cost and dates, your age, and other information, for prices from more than a dozen companies.

U.K. citizens and their families who make more than one trip abroad per year may find an annual travel insurance policy works out cheaper. Check **www.money supermarket.com**, which compares prices across a wide range of providers for single- and multi-trip policies.

Most big travel agents offer their own insurance and will probably try to sell you their package when you book a holiday. Think before you sign. **Britain's Consumers' Association** recommends that you insist on seeing the policy and reading the fine print before buying travel insurance. The **Association of British Insurers** (☎ 020/7600-3333; www.abi.org.uk) gives advice by phone and publishes *Holiday Insurance*, a free guide to policy provisions and prices. You might also

shop around for better deals: Try **Columbus Direct** (☎ 0870/033-9988; www.columbusdirect.net).

Trip-Cancellation Insurance Trip-cancellation insurance will help retrieve your money if you have to back out of a trip or depart early, or if your travel supplier goes bankrupt. Trip cancellation traditionally covers such events as sickness, natural disasters, and State Department advisories. The latest news in trip-cancellation insurance is the availability of **expanded hurricane coverage** and the **“any-reason”** cancellation coverage—which costs more but covers cancellations made for any reason. You won’t get back 100% of your prepaid trip cost, but you’ll be refunded a substantial portion. **TravelSafe** (☎ 888/885-7233; www.travelsafe.com) offers both types of coverage. Expedia also offers any-reason cancellation coverage for its air-hotel packages. For details, contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (☎ 866/807-3982; www.accessamerica.com); **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800/826-4919; www.travelguard.com); **Travel Insured International** (☎ 800/243-3174; www.travelinsured.com); and **Traveler Insurance Services** (☎ 888/457-4602; www.traveler-insurance.com).

LANGUAGES Before the 1997 handover, English and Cantonese were Hong Kong’s two official languages. Now, however, English and “Chinese” are listed as the two official languages. However, there is no one Chinese language. Most Hong Kong and Macau Chinese speak Cantonese, but in Beijing, where the official language is Mandarin (*Putonghua*), Cantonese is a foreign language. In reality, Mandarin has also become the official language of the SAR and is being taught in Hong Kong schools. At any rate, while Mandarin and Cantonese differ widely, they use the same characters for writing. Therefore, while a Hong Kong Chinese and a mainland Chinese may not be able to communicate orally, they can

read each other’s newspapers. Chinese characters number in the tens of thousands; knowledge of at least 2,500 characters is necessary to read a newspaper. Chinese is difficult to learn primarily because of the tonal variations. Western ears may find these differences in pronunciation almost impossible to detect, but a slight change in tone changes the whole meaning. One thing you’ll notice, however, is that Chinese is spoken loudly—whispering does not seem to be part of the language.

Despite the fact that English is an official language and is spoken in hotels and tourist shops, few Chinese outside these areas understand it. Bus drivers, taxi drivers, and waiters in many Chinese restaurants do not speak English and will simply shrug their shoulders to your query. To avoid confusion, have someone in your hotel write out your destination in Chinese so that you can show it to your taxi or bus driver. Most Chinese restaurants in tourist areas—and almost all those listed in this book—have English menus. If you need assistance, try asking younger Chinese, since it’s more likely that they will have studied English in school.

If you’d like to learn some basic Cantonese before your trip, good choices are *Conversational Cantonese Chinese* (Pimsleur, 2006) and *Berlitz Cantonese Chinese CD Travel Pack* (Berlitz, 2003), since both include a CD so you can listen to the tonal differences.

LAUNDROMATS Laundromats in Hong Kong and Macau are generally not self-service. Rather, you drop off your laundry and come back a few hours later to fetch your clothes neatly folded. If that’s what you need, ask the concierge for the closest one. Hotels provide laundry service, though it’s expensive. Only a few modestly priced accommodations catering to families have coin-operated washers and dryers; see individual hotel listings in chapter 5 and 12.

324 LEGAL AID Contact your embassy if you find yourself in legal trouble. If you can't afford a solicitor (attorney), contact the Hong Kong government's **Legal Aid Department**, 24th to 27th floors of the Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway (☎ 852/2537 7677; www.lad.gov.hk), which provides legal aid to both residents and nonresidents who find themselves involved in court proceedings.

LOST & FOUND To report stolen or lost property, call the **police**: ☎ 852/2527 7177 in Hong Kong; ☎ 853/2857 3333 in Macau, or go to the nearest police station. If you've lost your passport, make a police report at the nearest station and then contact your embassy or consulate for a replacement. The minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, alert all of your credit card companies and file a report at the nearest police station. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. Visa's Hong Kong emergency number is ☎ 800/96 7025. American Express cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ☎ 852/2811 6122. MasterCard holders should call ☎ 800/96 6677. If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (☎ 800/325-6000 from the U.S.; www.westernunion.com). There are many Western Union locations in Hong Kong; ask the concierge for the one nearest you.

LUGGAGE & STORAGE LOCKERS

The best and most convenient place to store luggage is at your hotel, even if you plan on traveling to Macau or China for a couple of days. Otherwise, there are luggage-checking services ("left-luggage") at Hong Kong International Airport, Hong

Kong Station, Kowloon Station, the Macau Ferry Terminal on Hong Kong Island, and the China Hong Kong Terminal on Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

MAIL Postal service is cheap and reliable. Most hotels have stamps and can mail your letters for you. Otherwise, there are plenty of post offices throughout the SAR. Most are open Monday through Friday from 9:30am to 5pm and Saturday from 9:30am to 1pm. The main post office is on Hong Kong Island at 2 Connaught Place, in the Central District (☎ 852/2921 2222), where you'll find stamps sold on the first floor (what those from the U.S. would call the second floor). If you don't know where you'll be staying in Hong Kong, you can have your mail sent to the main post office as "Poste Restante." The post office will hold mail for 2 months; when you come to collect it, be sure to bring along your passport for identification. On the Kowloon side, the main post office is at 10 Middle Rd., which is 1 block north of Salisbury Road (☎ 852/2366 4111). Both are open Monday through Saturday from 8am to 6pm; in addition, the Central post office is open Sunday from 9am to 5pm, while the Tsim Sha Tsui post office is open Sunday from 9am to 2pm.

Mailboxes are green in Hong Kong. Airmail letters up to 20 grams and postcards cost HK\$3 (US\$40¢/20p) to the United States, Europe, or Australia. You can count on airmail letters to take about 5 to 7 days, sometimes longer, to reach the United States.

Prices for mailing packages vary as follows: Australia surface 5kg HK\$181 (US\$24/£12); 10kg HK\$213 (US\$28/£14); air 5kg HK\$384 (US\$50/£25), 10kg HK\$645 (US\$84/£42); U.K. surface 5kg HK\$233 (US\$30/£15), 10kg HK\$271 (US\$35/£18); air 5kg HK\$454 (US\$59/£29), 10kg HK\$784 (US\$102/£51); U.S. surface 5kg (11 lb.) HK\$251 (US\$33/£16), 10kg (22 lb.) HK\$441 (US\$57/£29); air

5kg HK\$419 (US\$54/£27), 10kg HK\$799 (US\$104/£52). For general inquiries, call ☎ 852/2921 2222 or check www.hongkongpost.com/eng/index.htm.

For information on mail in Macau, see p. 289.

NEWSPAPERS The *South China Morning Post* (www.scmp.com) and the *Standard* (www.thestandard.com.hk) are the two local English-language daily newspapers. The *South China Morning Post* is often delivered to guest rooms free or available for purchase at the front desk or hotel kiosk, at newsstands, and bookstores. The *Standard* is free. For a different perspective, you might also want to pick up the *China Daily*, from Beijing (or read it online at www.chinadaily.com.cn). The *Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, and *USA Today International* are also available.

PASSPORTS Allow plenty of time before your trip to apply for a passport; processing normally takes 3 weeks but can take longer during busy periods (especially spring). And keep in mind that if you need a passport in a hurry, you'll pay a higher processing fee.

The websites listed provide downloadable passport applications as well as the current fees for processing applications. For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the "International Travel" tab of the U.S. State Department at <http://travel.state.gov>.

For Residents of Australia You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ☎ 131-232, or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada Passport applications are available at travel agencies

throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office**, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ 800/567-6868; www.ppt.gc.ca). **Note:** Canadian children who travel must have their own passport. However, if you hold a valid Canadian passport issued before December 11, 2001, that bears the name of your child, the passport remains valid for you and your child until it expires.

For Residents of Ireland You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office**, Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (☎ 01/671-1633; www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (☎ 21/494-4700) or at most main post offices.

For Residents of New Zealand You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from the website. Contact the **Passports Office** at ☎ 0800/225-050 in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children 15 and under), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency, or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ☎ 0870/521-0410 or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

For Residents of the United States Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the U.S. State Department website at <http://travel.state.gov>. To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the **National Passport Information Center** toll-free number (☎ 877/487-2778) for automated information.

326 POLICE You can reach the police for an emergency by dialing ☎ **999**, the same number as for a fire or an ambulance in Hong Kong and Macau. This is a free call. There's also a 24-hour crime hotline in Hong Kong (☎ **852/2527 7177**).

SMOKING In 2007, Hong Kong became mostly smoke-free, rare in Asia. Smoking is prohibited in most public places, including restaurants, workplaces, shopping malls, and most outdoor areas like public beaches and large swaths of public parks. Hong Kong's smoking ban extends to bars, nightclubs, mah-jongg parlors, and other entertainment venues on July 1, 2009.

Smoking is still permitted in public places in Macau.

TAXES Hotels in Hong Kong will add a 10% service charge and a 3% government tax to your bill. Restaurants and bars will automatically add a 10% service charge, but there is no tax. There's an airport departure tax of HK\$120 (US\$16/£8) for adults and children older than 12, but this is almost always included in your ticket price. If you're taking the boat to Macau, a Hong Kong departure tax of HK\$19 (US\$2.45/£1.25) is already included in the price of your boat ticket.

In Macau, hotels levy a 5% government tax and a 10% service charge on room rates. Restaurants also levy a 10% service charge, but government tax has been waived on the consumption of food and beverages.

TIME Hong Kong and Macau are 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, 13 hours ahead of New York, 14 hours ahead of Chicago, 16 hours ahead of Los Angeles, and 2 hours ahead of Sydney. Since Hong Kong does not have a daylight saving time, subtract 1 hour from the above times if you're calling the United States in the summer. Because Hong Kong is on the other side of the international date line, you lose 1 day when traveling from North

America to Asia. Don't worry—you gain it back when you return, which means that you arrive back home the same day you left Hong Kong.

TIPPING Even though restaurants and bars will automatically add a 10% service charge to your bill, you're still expected to leave small change for the waiter (who may never see any of that automatic 10% service charge). A general rule of thumb is to leave 5%, but in most Chinese restaurants where meals are usually inexpensive (less than HK\$100/US\$13/£6.50), it's acceptable to leave change up to HK\$5 (US\$65¢/32p). In the finest restaurants, you should leave 10%. If you're paying by credit card, pay a cash tip, since a gratuity put on a credit card is likely to go to the restaurant and not the staff.

You're also expected to tip taxi drivers, bellhops, barbers, and beauticians. For taxi drivers, add a HK\$1 (US13¢/7p) tip or round up to the nearest HK\$5 (US65¢/32p); for a HK\$23 fare, for example, round up to HK\$25. Tip people who cut your hair 5% or 10%, and give bellhops HK\$10 to HK\$20 (US\$1.30–US\$2.60/65p–£1.30), depending on the number of your bags. Chambermaids and room attendants are usually given about 2% of the room charge.

TOILETS The best places to track down public facilities in Hong Kong and Macau are its many hotels, fast-food restaurants, and shopping malls. Attendants on duty nowadays rarely expect tips, but if you encounter one who does, HK\$2 (US25¢/12p) is sufficient. Note that the MTR subway stations do not have public facilities. Hotels and tourist sites usually have Western toilets, but you may encounter Chinese toilets on ferries and in rural areas. To use them, squat facing the hood. Since some public facilities may not have toilet paper, be sure to carry tissue (in rural areas, a communal roll of toilet paper may be hanging outside the stalls).

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS The Hong Kong Tourism Board's hotline is ☎ **852/2508 1234**, with service available daily from 8am to 6pm. The Police Crime Hotline is ☎ **852/2527 7177**. Other useful numbers are:

Hong Kong's Department of Health ☎ **852/961 8989**.

Hong Kong Telephone Directory Enquiries ☎ **1081**.

WATER It's considered safe to drink urban tap water, though most people prefer bottled water, which is widely available. In summer it's wise to carry bottled water with you. Some hotels have their own purification systems; many more provide a

free bottle of water in their rooms. I always drink the water and have never gotten ill. If you travel into rural Hong Kong or China, however, drink only bottled water.

WEATHER If you want to check the day's temperature and humidity level or the 2-day forecast, dial ☎ **187 8200** for a free weather report in English. Otherwise, if a storm is brewing and you're worried about a typhoon, tune in to one of Hong Kong's English-language TV channels, either TVB Pearl or ATV World.

For information on Macau's weather, call ☎ **853/8898 6276** or go to www.smg.gov.mo.

2 TOLL-FREE NUMBERS & WEBSITES

MAJOR U.S. AIRLINES FLYING TO HONG KONG

Continental Airlines

☎ 800/523-3273 (in U.S. or Canada)

☎ 084/5607-6760 (in U.K.)

www.continental.com

Northwest Airlines

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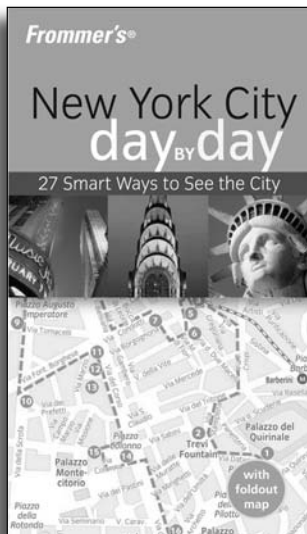
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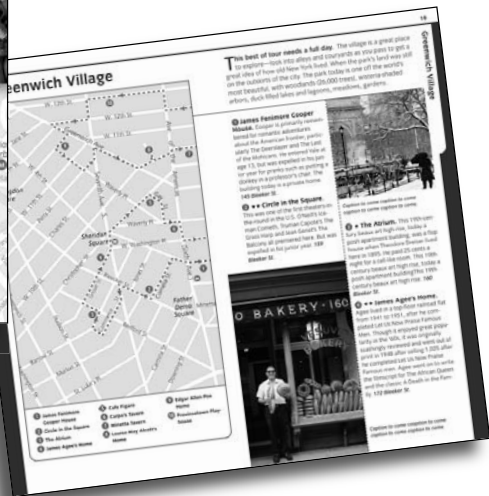
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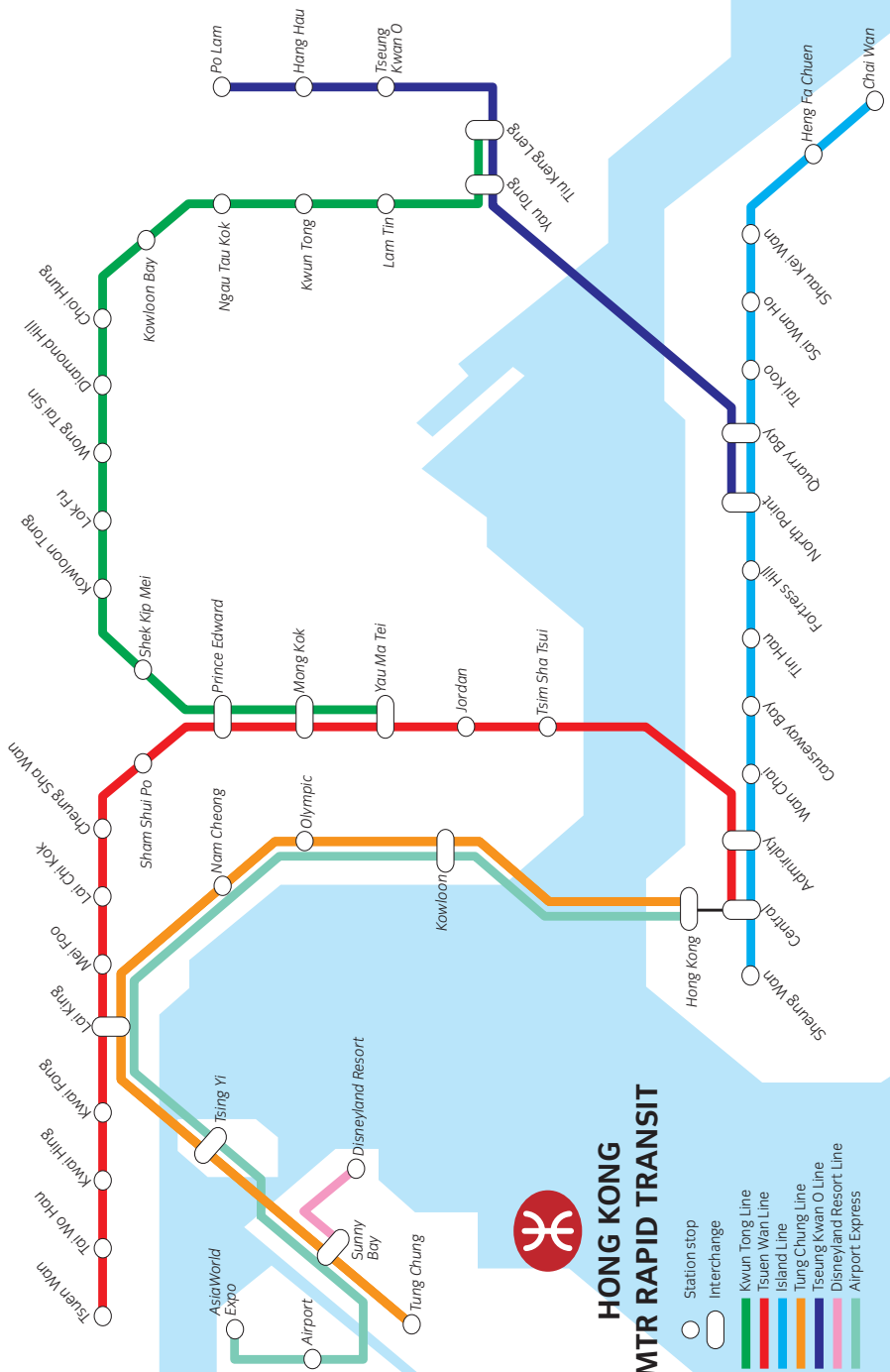
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