

The Best of Hong Kong

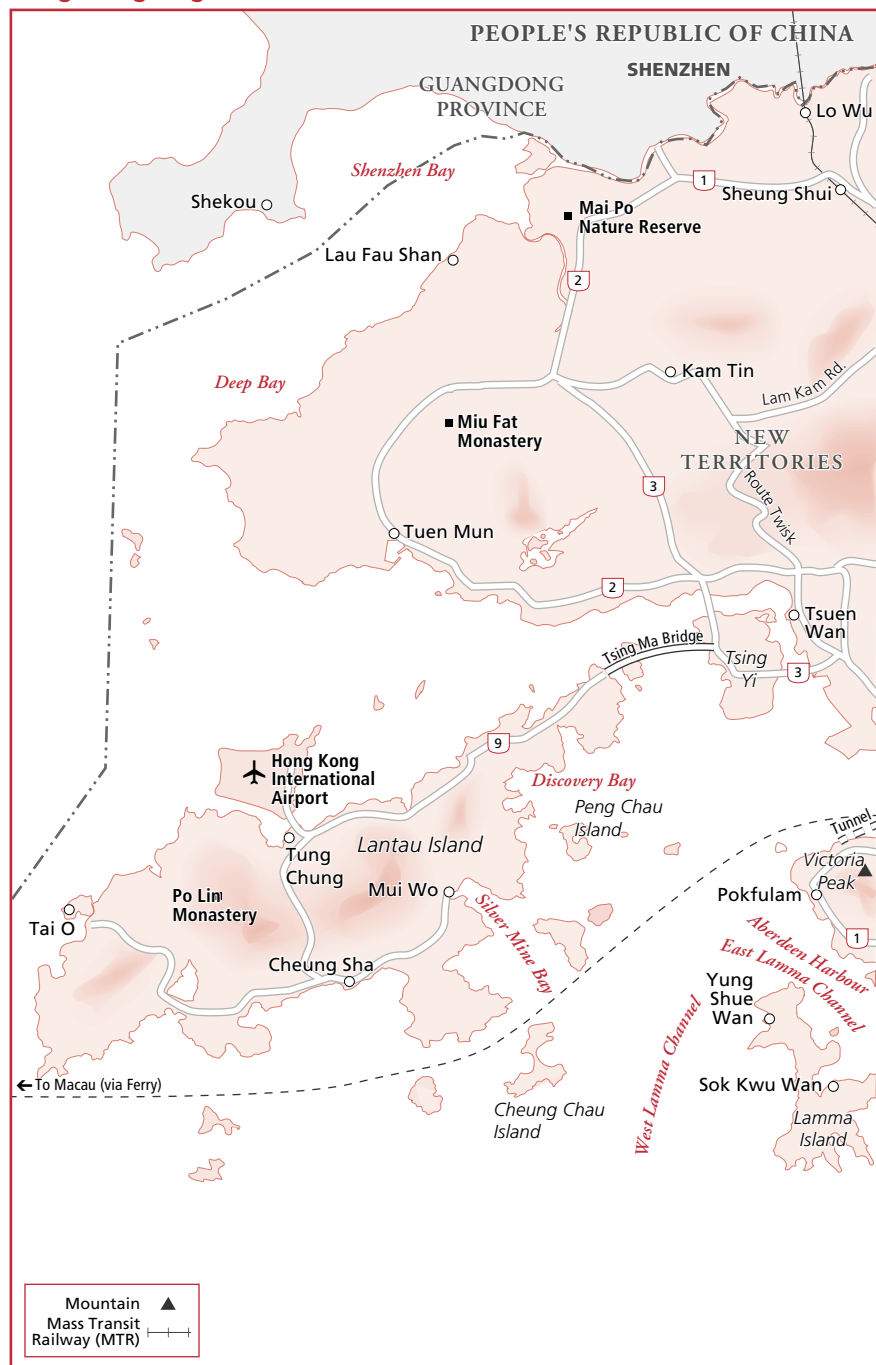
Every time I come to Hong Kong, I feel as though I've wandered onto a movie set. Maybe I'm an incurable romantic, but when I stand at the railing of the famous Star Ferry as it glides across the harbor, ride a rickety old tram as it winds its way across Hong Kong Island, or marvel anew at the stunning 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 ultramodern high-rises; squalid alleys behind luxury hotels; old Chinese people pushing wheelbarrows as Rolls-Royces glide by; market vendors selling chicken feet and dried squid while talking on cellular phones.

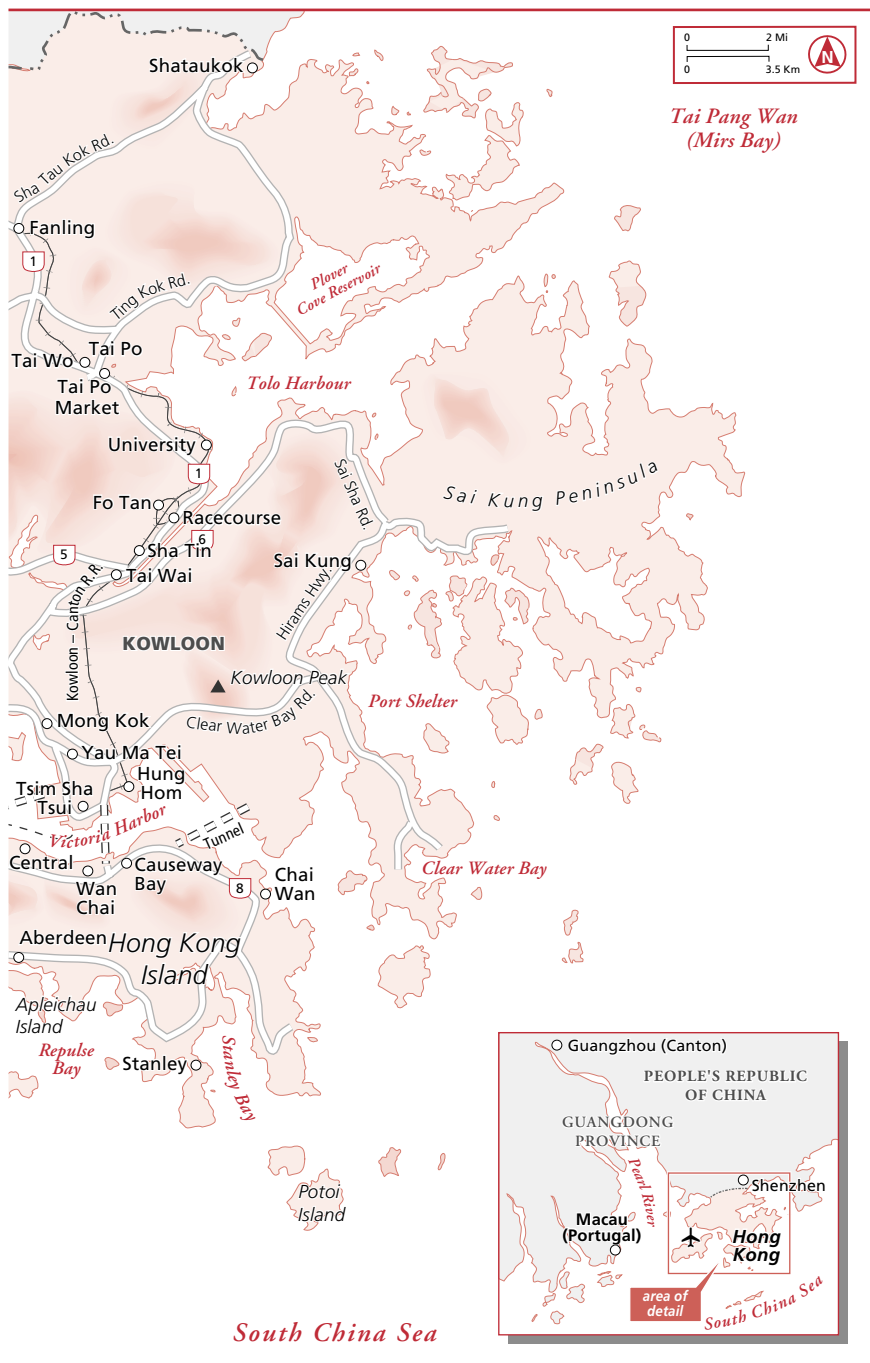
In fact, one of the most striking characteristics of Hong Kong is this interweaving of seeming contradictions and the interplay of the exotic and the technically advanced. There are as many skyscrapers here as you're likely to see anywhere, but they're built with bamboo scaffolding. Historic trams rumble 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 are waved over a scanner. 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 there are also lively street markets virtually everywhere.

Because of these dazzling contrasts, Hong Kong offers visitors something 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 its heart, Chinese, with Chinese medicine shops, street vendors, lively dim sum restaurants, old men taking their caged birds for walks in the park, and colorful festivals. Indeed, for the casual visitor, Hong Kong seems little changed since the 1997 handover. No doubt some visitors remain oblivious to even the most visible sign of that change: the replacement of the Union Jack and old flag of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong with the red, starred flag of China and the new red Hong Kong flag with its emblem of the bauhinia flower.

Hong Kong was founded as a place to conduct business and to trade, and it continues to serve that purpose both aggressively and successfully. The world's fourth-largest banking and financial center in terms of external assets, Hong

Hong Kong Region





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 14 million visitors a year, making tourism one of its leading industries despite a devastating downturn in tourism in 2003 due to an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Shopping is one of the main reasons people come here, and at first glance, the city does seem rather like one huge department store. But there’s much more to Hong Kong than shopping. There’s also wining, dining, and sightseeing, as well as isolated places to get away from it all.

For those who wish to journey farther afield, Macau, a former Portuguese colony handed back to China in 1999, is just an hour’s boat ride away; and vast China itself lies just beyond Hong Kong’s border, making it the perfect gateway for trips to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, and beyond.

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 Frommer’s Favorite Hong Kong Experiences

- **Dining on Dim Sum:** A great way to start your day, nothing conveys a sense of Chinese life more vividly than a visit to a crowded, lively Cantonese restaurant for breakfast or lunch, where trolleys of dim sum in bamboo steamers are wheeled from customer to customer. Simply peer into the passing bamboo baskets and choose what appears the most tempting. See section 7 of chapter 5, beginning on p. 153, for more on Hong Kong’s dim sum restaurants.
- **Getting 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, or shadow boxing. For the best viewing, go to Kowloon Park, Hong Kong Park, Victoria Park, or the Zoological and Botanical Gardens (see section 4 of chapter 6, beginning on p. 170, for more on these parks and gardens). You can even participate in free practice sessions, held 3 mornings a week on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront promenade. See p. 179.
- **Riding the Star Ferry:** To reacquaint myself with the city, one of the first things I do on each return trip is to hop aboard the Star Ferry for one of the most dramatic—and cheapest—5-minute boat rides in the world. Hong Kong’s harbor is one of the world’s busiest, and beyond it rises one of earth’s most breathtaking skylines. See p. 55.
- **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. 54.
- **Gazing upon Hong Kong from Victoria Peak:** You don’t know Hong Kong until you’ve seen it from here. Take the tram to Victoria Peak, famous for its views of Central, the harbor, 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. 47.

- **Visiting a Tailor:** Nothing beats the thrill 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. 220.
- **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. 218.
- **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. 198.
- **Shopping at Shanghai Tang:** This 1930s-style Chinese department store is oh-so-chic, with lime-green- or fuchsia-colored jackets, Mao watches, 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. 212.
- **Browsing for Chinese Souvenirs:** In addition to Shanghai Tang and Stanley Market, many Chinese emporiums sell vases, vase stands, porcelain figurines, chinaware, calligraphy brushes, birdcages, jade, silk jackets, teas, and various Chinese crafts and products. See chapter 8.
- **Strolling Tsim Sha Tsui's Waterfront:** There's a pedestrian promenade that stretches from the Star Ferry eastward along Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East, 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. And every evening at 8pm, Hong Kong puts on a spectacular laser and light show projected from skyscrapers on Hong Kong Island. The best place to see this colorful extravaganza? On the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront alongside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. See p. 198.
- **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 wooden birdcages, porcelain bird dishes, and other paraphernalia. See p. 171.
- **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. See the "Lantau" section of chapter 10, beginning on p. 246.
- **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 10, beginning on p. 252.
- **Expanding Your Cultural Horizons at the Hong Kong Museum**

- of Art:** Hong Kong's most important art museum is a must-see for its vast collection of Chinese antiquities, including ceramics, jade, and lacquerware, as well as its gallery of old paintings depicting Hong Kong through the ages and its changing exhibition of contemporary Hong Kong art—all against the dramatic backdrop of Hong Kong's harbor outside its windows. See p. 162.
- **Reliving the Past at the Hong Kong Museum of History:** For a quick 101 course on Hong Kong history, make a visit to the Hong Kong Museum of History one of your first priorities. A life-size diorama of a Neolithic settlement, replicas of fishing boats and traditional houses, ethnic clothing, recreated street scenes, displays of colorful festivals, and the Chinese take on the opium wars are just some of the visual feasts awaiting visitors. If you see only one museum during your stay, this should be it. See p. 164.
 - **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, or Wong Tai Sin temple and the Tin Hau Temple near the Temple Street Night Market. See p. 169, 170, and 200, respectively.
 - **Exploring the Western District:** Produce, bolts of cloth, live snakes, ginseng, dried seafood, Chinese herbs and medicines, a 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. 48.
 - **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. 194), Hong Kong's oldest temple, on Hollywood Road. See the "Antiques & Collectibles" section of chapter 8, beginning on p. 208.
 - **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. 58.
 - **Meeting the People:** Learn about pearls, Chinese antiques, *feng shui* (geomancy), tai chi (shadow boxing), and other cultural traditions on free, 1-hour tours and lectures given by local experts. Stop by one of the Hong Kong Tourism Board's Visitor Information & Services Centres for the *Cultural Kaleidoscope* brochure outlining HKTB's "Meet the People" program. See chapter 3's "Visitor Information" section, beginning on p. 43, for more information on the Hong Kong Tourism Board.
 - **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. 156.

- **Betting on the Horses:** Join thousands of spectators (between Sept and May) at Hong Kong's favorite sporting event. The city boasts two sophisticated racing tracks, and if you need help in wagering bets, consider joining a special tour of the races. See the "Spectator Sports" section of chapter 6, beginning on p. 180.
- **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; playgrounds just for kids; and a theater with seats that move with the action on the screen. 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 and butterfly dome, panda bears, and a dolphin and killer-whale show. A must for kids of all ages. See p. 174.
- **Escaping to the New Territories:** The New Territories is a vast area stretching from the densely populated area of 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. 237.
- **Imbibing at Happy Hour at a British Pub:** 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 9, beginning on p. 228, for more on Hong Kong's pubs and bars.
- **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" section of chapter 9, beginning on p. 228, for venues with especially good views.
- **Stuffing Yourself at a Buffet Spread:** If you have a big appetite or like variety in your meal, there's no better bargain than Hong Kong's countless all-you-can-eat buffet spreads. Almost all hotels offer buffet lunches and dinners; other restaurants may feature buffets for lunch. Many offer an assortment of international fare, from Japanese sushi and Chinese dishes to pasta and carveries. See chapter 5.
- **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. Favorite places include Lamma island and Sai Kung in the New Territories. See p. 253 and 245.
- **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, Shanghaiese, Hunanese, Beijing, Chiu Chow, and Pekingese dishes. See chapter 5.
- **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 "Victoria Peak" in the "Around Hong Kong Island" section of chapter 5, beginning on p. 149.

- **Spending Time at the Temple Street Night Market:** Highlights include shopping for casual clothing, music, toys, and accessories; enjoying a meal at a *dai pai dong* (roadside food stall); watching amateur street musicians; and having your fortune told. See p. 236.
- **Listening to the World's Largest Professional Chinese Orchestra:** Established more than 25 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. 224.

- **Partying Till Dawn at 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 till dawn. Other burgeoning nightlife districts include SoHo, Knutsford Terrace, and Wan Chai. See chapter 9.
- **Zippering Over to Macau:** Macau, a Portuguese colony 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 cuisine, colorful architecture, temples, churches, and handful of special-interest museums. Although you can "do" Macau in a day, I strongly urge you to spend at least a couple days in this tiny outpost. You'll save money doing so, too—Macau's hotels and restaurants cost a fraction of their Hong Kong counterparts. See chapter 11.

2 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 there are so many competitors. 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 full details on Hong Kong's hotels, see chapter 4.

- **Best Historic Hotel:** This category has no competition: **The Peninsula**, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 800/462-7899), 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 new tower, with high-tech rooms and a trendy rooftop restaurant, only adds to the general aura. See p. 71.

- **Best for Business Travelers:** If you can afford it, spring for a room at **The Ritz-Carlton**, 3 Connaught Rd., Central District (☎ 800/241-3333), conveniently located right in the heart of Central's financial district. Small and intimate and filled with art and antiques, it seems more like an

expensive apartment complex than a hotel; it offers rooms with sweeping harbor views; excellent service; a state-of-the-art business center; and a health club with a heated outdoor swimming pool. For those who like to stay connected, there are also rooms that come with a computer hooked up to the Internet, a fax, printer, and scanner. For even more pampering, executive floors offer special privileges, including a private lounge with complimentary snacks and drinks throughout the day. And for busy executives with no time for shopping, the hotel even offers personal shoppers. See p. 74.

- **Best for Business Travelers Paying Their Own Way:** The **Best Western Rosedale on the Park**, 8 Shelter St., Causeway Bay (☎ 800/528-1234), is making waves with its complimentary broadband Internet service and cordless phones in each room, in-house mobile phones that keep you connected even if you step out of your room, free drinks in your fridge, and—in case you left your laptop at home—a lounge with computers hooked to the Internet. Best of all, you won't go broke staying here. See p. 92.

- **Best for a Romantic Getaway:** Go to Macau, where the **Westin Resort Macau**, Estrada de Hac Sa on Colôane Island (☎ 800/228-3000), has the perfect and most idyllic setting for those who want to get away from it all, with large rooms (each with private terrace) overlooking the sea, landscaped grounds, indoor and outdoor pools, and a nearby beach for moonlit walks. See p. 270.

- **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 (such as Internet broadband access and Continental breakfast), rooms that are divided into distinct living, dining, and working areas, and monthly rates make this a shoo-in for fashion-conscious travelers ready to burrow in. See p. 85.

- **Best Lobby for Pretending That You're Rich:** The Peninsula has long been the favorite lobby for people-watching (no Japanese tourist misses it), but there's nothing that quite matches the overt extravagance of the **Grand Hyatt**, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 800/233-1234), which flaunts space and is decorated like a 1930s Art Deco ocean liner. Just walking down the curved staircase can make you feel like Greta Garbo. See p. 76.

- **Best Budget Hotel:** The overwhelming number-one choice has long been **The Salisbury YMCA**, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 800/537-8483), 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 cable TVs to wireless Internet access 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 convenience. See p. 98.

- **Best for Families:** Again, the number-one choice for families in terms of price, facilities, and location is **The Salisbury YMCA** (see

address and telephone above). It offers large suites great for families (and even views of the famous Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island), an inexpensive cafeteria serving buffet meals, two indoor swimming pools (including a children's pool), a play area on the fourth-floor terrace, and babysitting. See p. 98.

- **Best Service:** Other hotels may be just as good, but probably none can match the professional, unobtrusive service offered by **The Peninsula** (see address and telephone above); it has one of the highest staff-to-guest ratios in Hong Kong. See p. 71.

- **Best Location:** The **Mandarin Oriental**, 5 Connaught Rd., Central (☎ 800/526-6566), a long-time landmark in the heart of Central, is just a few minutes' walk away from the Star Ferry, trams, MTR, and Hong Kong Station with service to the airport. It's the best place to stay if you want to rub elbows with professionals who actually live and work in Hong Kong, but even better are its rooms with harbor views, which boast balconies and binoculars, making this also a good location for would-be spies pretending they're characters in a John Le Carré novel. See p. 72.

- **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. There's also an 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* (geomancy) and specializes in jetlag relief and Oriental treatments. And to top it off, this hotel even offers free tai chi classes for its guests. See p. 71.

- **Best Hotel Pool:** The **Grand Hyatt** (see address and telephone above) and **Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong**, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 800/228-9898), share one of Hong Kong's largest outdoor pools, surrounded by a lush, landscaped garden and with views of the harbor. See p. 76 and 85.

- **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 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. 71.

- **Best for Those Addicted to the Internet:** The **Grand Hyatt** (see address and telephone above) offers rooms with cordless keyboards that access the Internet and e-mail through an interactive TV at speeds 50 times faster than a conventional modem; views of the harbor are a bonus. The moderately priced **Kowloon Hotel**,

19–21 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 800/262-9467), impresses with its sophisticated “interactive telecenter,” allowing access to the Internet, interfacing with a fax machine (which also acts as a printer), and even containing video games. Best of all: Internet access is free. See p. 76 and 89, respectively.

- **Best for Art Lovers:** The **Island Shangri-La Hong Kong**, Pacific Place, Central (☎ 800/942-5050), is a gorgeous hotel with more than 700 Viennese chandeliers, lush Tai Ping carpets, flower arrangements, and more than 500 paintings and artworks. 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. 84.
- **Best for Ex-Pat Wannabes:** Mid-Levels has long been a favorite residential area for ex-pats 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. 91.

- **Best Hotel for Dining:** Hong Kong boasts some of the best hotel restaurants in the world, but for an all-around winner, **The Peninsula** (see address and telephone above) offers a variety of restaurants that never disappoint, from the longtime favorite Gaddi's, serving traditional French cuisine, to the over-the-top Felix, designed by Philippe Starck, as well as restaurants serving Cantonese, Swiss, and Japanese food. See p. 71.

3 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. For full details on Hong Kong's restaurants, see chapter 5.

- **Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner:** With views of Hong Kong's fabled harbor, 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. 132.

- **Best Spot for a Business Lunch:** Since 1963, business travelers have favored the **Mandarin Grill**, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central (☎ 852/2522 0111), conveniently located in the heart of Hong Kong's financial and business district. It offers drawing-room comfort and high-powered food, a winning combination for clinching those business deals. And since no children are allowed except for Sunday brunch, business deals won't have to compete with toddler theatrics. See p. 130.
- **Best Spot for a Celebration:** An elegant, colonial-age setting, attentive service, dependably good French haute cuisine, and an

- extensive wine list make **Gaddi's**, The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2315 3171), a natural for a splurge or special celebration. If, however, your idea of a celebration is more exuberant and youthful, you can do no better than **M at the Fringe**, 2 Lower Albert Rd., Central (☎ 852/2877 4000), a Hong Kong favorite for its quirky interior, artsy crowd, and always excellent creative cuisine. See p. 135.
- **Best Decor:** The avant-garde **Felix**, in The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2315 3188), was designed by Philippe Starck. 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. 116.
 - **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. 149.
 - **Best Wine List:** Not only does **SPOON by Alain Ducasse**, Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2313 2256), offer great harbor views, excellent contemporary French cuisine, and impeccable service, but it also boasts a selection of 3,000 bottles of wine, on view at the restaurant's entrance. See p. 113.
 - **Best Cantonese Cuisine:** With some of the world's best Cantonese restaurants located in Hong Kong, this is obviously a tough call, but you can't go wrong at the very sophisticated and classy **Yan Toh Heen**, Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2721 1211), where the emphasis is on stark simplicity, a view of the harbor, and traditional and creative dishes that border on Chinese nouvelle cuisine. See p. 118.
 - **Best Chinese for the Uninitiated:** If you're unfamiliar with Chinese food beyond sweet-and-sour pork and feel—perhaps reluctantly—that Hong Kong is the place to widen your horizons, **Shang Palace**, Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2733 8754), is a good introduction to the almost limitless variety of Cantonese food, all listed on an English menu. It's also a good place to try dim sum for the first time. The helpful staff is happy to make recommendations. The elaborately decorated lacquered walls and Chinese lanterns all fit the fantasy of a Chinese restaurant in Asia. See p. 118.
 - **Best Chinese Hot Spot:** Make reservations early for **Hutong**, on the 28th floor of an office building at 1 Peking Road, 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 innovative northern Chinese cuisine. Dining here will want to make you live forever, if only to see what can possibly top this; this being Hong Kong, something eventually will. See p. 122.
 - **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. 139.

- **Best American Cuisine:** There's no better place in town for a Caesar salad than **Napa**, Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2733 8752), where you can follow your salad with Californian cuisine that includes pastas and seafood. The great harbor views make it a perfect place for a relaxed lunch or dinner. See p. 117.
- **Best French Cuisine:** **Petrus**, Island Shangri-La (see "Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner," above) is the top French restaurant in more ways than one: It's located on the 56th floor and offers breathtaking harbor views. Decorated like a French castle, it features contemporary French creations and one of Hong Kong's most definitive wine lists, delivered by a professional and discreet staff. See p. 132.
- **Best Italian Cuisine:** There are a lot of contenders in this category, but the harbor views, airy palatial setting, and traditional northern Italian home-style cooking combine to make **Griisini**, Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (☎ 852/2588 1234), a favorite choice for lunch or dinner. See p. 143.
- **Best Western/Asian Fusion Cuisine:** Trendy restaurants utilizing Western and Asian ingredients to create new dishes are the vogue in Hong Kong, but few carry it off as masterfully as **Vong**, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central (☎ 852/2522 0111), offering what is arguably the best

interpretation of Franco-Asian cuisine in this part of the hemisphere (same owner/chef as the Vong in New York City), as well as great views of the harbor and a nattily dressed crowd. See p. 133.

- **Best Seafood:** Huge decorative seafood tanks and views of Victoria Harbour provide the perfect setting for a memorable seafood dinner at **Yü**, Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (☎ 852/2721 1211). Lobster, crabs, prawns, abalone, mussels, and fish are kept alive until the decisive moment. Chefs prepare your food according to your wishes; there are also imported oysters and a sushi bar. See p. 114.
- **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, ext. 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. 136.
- **Best Steaks:** Juicy U.S. prime Midwestern beef, broiled to perfection, is the forte of American chain **Ruth's Chris Steak House**, 68 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2366 6000) and 89 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2522 9090), along with side dishes of mashed potatoes, sautéed spinach, and Caesar salad. This place is guaranteed to satisfy the cravings of the most dedicated carnivore. See p. 117.
- **Best Burgers and Beer:** **Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill**, with two

locations both sides of the harbor at 88 Queensway, Central (☎ 852/2845 4600), and Ocean Terminal (☎ 852/2735 6111), offers casual dining, good burgers (and other good American food), and drinks throughout the day; its Kowloon branch even provides a view of the busy harbor. See p. 120.

- **Best Pizza:** Located in Hong Kong's prime nightlife district, **Baci Pizza**, 1 Lan Kwai Fong, Central (☎ 852/2840 0153), is a small casual pizzeria offering delicious, wafer-thin pizzas at reasonable prices, as well as pastas. See p. 142.
- **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. 150.
- **Best for Families: Mövenpick Marché**, Peak Tower, Victoria Peak (☎ 852/2849 2000), is a cafeteria offering something for everyone (pizza and pasta for the kids, international fare and drinks for the parents), along with great views of Hong Kong. It's also one of the few restaurants that actually acknowledge the existence of kids, with a children's corner complete with a toddler slide, toys, crayons, and other diversions. For older kids, there's a Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium, Madame Tussaud's, and a motion-simulation theater in the same building on the Peak. See p. 150.
- **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 a ferry to one of the open-air seafood restaurants on the waterfront of Sok Kwu Wan village on Lamma island, where you can dine on fresh seafood, drink a beer or two, and regain perspective. For even more relaxation, hike to one of the island's beaches. See p. 252.

- **Best Afternoon Tea:** For that most British institution, no place is more famous than the golden-age and unparalleled **Peninsula Hotel Lobby**, 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. 156.
- **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 like eggs Benedict from a menu, 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. 151.
- **Best Desserts:** I was born without a sweet tooth, but even I was tempted when the dessert cart was wheeled out at the end of a memorable dinner at **Sabatini**, Royal Garden hotel, 69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East (☎ 852/2733 2000). The sinfully rich creations were all lovingly described and looked equally delicious. In the end, I went for the tiramisu, and I can't imagine the meal without it. See p. 118.