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The Best Full-Day Tours



The Best in **One Day**

1 Star Ferry

2 Victoria Peak

3 Central Architecture

4 Li Yuen Street East & Li Yuen Street West

5 Mid-Levels Escalator

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7 The Press Room

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Previous page: Buddhist monks pray at the Po Lin Monastery.

Hong Kong may be geographically small, but seeing it all in 1 day is tough. If that's all you've got, I suggest you enjoy a quick ride on the Star Ferry (regardless of which side of the harbor you're staying on) before focusing on Hong Kong Island. You'll get a sense of Hong Kong's history, architecture, and East-meets-West way of life. **START: Star Ferry.**

1 ★★★ Star Ferry. From its first sailing in 1898 until the opening of the Cross Harbour Tunnel in 1972, the Star Ferry was the primary means of crossing Victoria Harbour. It remains one of the most spectacular ocean crossings in the world. Take the upper deck for a better view and bear in mind you're only on the water for about 5 minutes, so have your camera prepped in advance. 🕒 **15 min.** **Star Ferry Pier, Central/Tsim Sha Tsui.** 📞 **852/2367-7065.** **www.starferry.com.hk.** **\$HK2.50 upper deck, children \$HK1.50.** **Daily 6:30am–11:30pm.** **MTR: Central, exit A/Tsim Sha Tsui.**

2 ★★★ Victoria Peak. At 396m (1,299 ft.), Victoria Peak is Hong Kong's highest point—with stunning views, it's also the city's ritziest neighborhood. Take the wonderfully old-fashioned tram and enjoy the scene from the 270-degree open-air observatory. Better still, make the circular walk along nearby Harlech and Lugard roads. If it's a murky day,

I recommend postponing your visit until around dusk when the lights of Central will pierce through the gloom.

🕒 **2 hr.** **Peak Tower.** 📞 **852/2849-7654.** **www.thepeak.com.hk.** **Peak Tram \$HK25 adults, \$HK9 kids.** **MTR: Central, exit J2.** **Bus: 15C from Central Pier Bus Terminus (near Pier 7).**

3 ★ Central Architecture. From the tram terminus, make the short walk down Garden Road to join the maze of elevated pedestrian walkways that dissects the Central district, Hong Kong's political and financial heart. Chater Garden and Statue Square are surrounded by some of Hong Kong's most famous buildings, including the colonial Legco building and the sci-fi forms of the Bank of China Tower and the Lippo Centre. The veranda at the northern edge of Chater Garden is the best spot to take in the view, while an abundance of greenery makes for a relaxing stroll below. 🕒 **60 min.** **MTR: Central, exit J2.**

The Peak Tram runs every 10 to 15 minutes, from 7am to midnight.



A View from the Top

Don't expect an idyllic scene when disembarking the Peak Tram.

Passengers exit immediately into one of two huge, adjacent malls crammed with shops, restaurants, and bars. You can get away from the melee by walking along Lugard Road, where the urban skyline looks even more stunning. As you'll see, you're still a way off from the peak, and it's possible to get extra elevation by climbing Mount Austin Road (or one of the smaller trails off Lugard Rd.) to reach Victoria Peak Gardens. The actual peak is unfortunately occupied by a telecom tower and remains off-limits. To enjoy the best of the Peak, it's critical you watch the weather. The view is among the world's finest, but smog or mountain-hugging vapor can spoil the moment.

4 ★ **The Lanes (Li Yuen St. East and Li Yuen St. West).**

Welcome to one of Hong Kong's quintessential shopping experiences: cheap goods in incredibly tight spaces. These two parallel streets are lined with hawkers selling counterfeit designer handbags and other inexpensive goods in tiny stalls filled to the brim with merchandise. ⌚ 30 min. *Between Des Voeux Rd. and Queen's Rd. MTR: Central, exit C. See p 65.*

5 ★★★ **Mid-Levels Escalator.**

Touted as the longest people-mover in the world, this engineering marvel runs through Mid-Levels, a yuppie neighborhood terraced into the lower part of Victoria Peak. The escalator—a combination of steps and ramps—passes through buildings and over streets lined with cheap noodle stalls and upmarket bars and galleries (Staunton St. is my favorite). You can get off wherever you like to explore. If you plan to ride up the escalator, you need to wait until after 10am—before that time it runs downhill for morning commuters. ⌚ 1 hr. *MTR: Central, D2.*

6 ★ **Hollywood Road.** Hollywood Road was the first thoroughfare in Hong Kong, built in 1844 by

the British Army and named after the holly shrubs that lined it at the time. Walk east for 5 minutes (past the point where the road becomes Wyndham St.) and you'll see some of Hong Kong's most historic buildings on the south side of the road. Retrace your steps and head west. There's a great range of Chinese

Mao alarm clocks for sale along Hollywood Road.





A brass lion guards an altar at Man Mo Temple.

furniture, Tibetan rugs, ceramic sculptures, and (of course) Maoist kitsch. 🕒 1 hr. Exit Mid-Levels escalator at Hollywood Rd. Bus: 26.

7 ★ **The Press Room.** Once the headquarters of the English-language *South China Morning Post*, this hip, atmospheric eatery has a large window overlooking the street. It serves hearty, Asian-influenced Western cuisine, including a *fruits de mer* platter that offers some of Hong Kong's finest shellfish. 108 Hollywood Rd. 📞 852/2525-3444. \$\$\$.

8 ★★★ **Man Mo Temple.** Hong Kong Island's oldest temple was built in 1847 and became a hub for the flourishing Chinese community in Sheung Wan. It's dedicated to the gods of literature and war (Man and Mo); the grand entrance is flanked by stone lions for protection. Inside, amid statues of Man, Mo, and other gods, ashes flutter from the huge, curling incense sticks that hang from the ceiling—the smoke is intended to carry prayers to heaven—as the

Buddhist faithful pray to their ancestors. 🕒 30 min. Hollywood Rd. (near Ladder St.). 📞 852/2803-2916. Free admission. Daily 8am–6pm. MTR: Sheung Wan, exit A2. Bus: 26.

9 ★ **Upper Lascar Row (Cat Street).** The nickname Cat Street comes from this area's shady past, when it was known as a market for stolen goods. In Cantonese slang, thieves are “rats,” and the people who buy from them are “cats.” Today's goods are legit, though not necessarily high quality. 🕒 20 min. Upper Lascar Row. MTR: Sheung Wan, exit A2. Bus: 26. See p 65.

10 ★ **Stanley Market.** If you still have plenty of daylight left, head to Stanley. The bus ride alone makes the trip worthwhile, with outstanding views of Hong Kong's steep hillsides and ocean vistas. Unfortunately, the goods at Stanley's famous market are overpriced. Wander the waterfront or visit the Hong Kong Maritime Museum in historic Murray House before returning downtown. 🕒 3 hr. Bus: 6, 6A, 6X, or 260 from Central Exchange Square bus terminal. See p 65.

11 ★★ **Lan Kwai Fong.** If you only have 1 evening, spend it at LKF. Walking up D'Aguiar Street at night is like stepping into a permanent street festival. It's frat-partyish and raucous, but undeniably fun. More-sensitive souls will prefer nearby Soho. MTR: Central, exit D2.

My favorite pub in LKF is the

12 **Hong Kong Brew House.** It's a cavernous place with a great beer selection and a patio out front. If you come early, you can nab a seat outside and watch the madness unfold. 33 Wyndham St. 📞 852/2522-5559. \$.

The Best in **Two Days**

- 1 The Peninsula Hotel
- 2 Hong Kong Museum of Art
- 3 Nathan Road
- 4 Hong Kong Museum of History
- 5 Fook Lam Moon
- 6 Chi Lin Nunnery and Nan Lian Garden
- 7 Temple Street Night Market
- 8 Avenue of Stars
- 9 Symphony of Lights



On your second day, head into the heart of Kowloon. The southern reaches of this artificially engorged peninsula are dominated by historic architecture and hulking museums, but farther north it's a riot of commercialism set against an atmospheric backdrop of crumbling tenement blocks and neon signs. **START: Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Pier.**

1 ★ The Peninsula Hotel.

Opened in 1928, this Hong Kong landmark is the territory's oldest existing hotel. Once located at the end of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Peninsula quickly became a magnet for the wealthy elite; it still has a fleet of Rolls-Royces for hire. Wander inside to enjoy the colonial grandeur. For a slightly less gilded but equally swish insight into colonial Hong Kong, pop in to 1881 Heritage next door, the recently restored site of the Marine Police Headquarters. 🕒 1 hr. *Salisbury Rd.* 📞 852/2920-2888. MTR: *Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E.* See p 124.

Seated Ming Dynasty Buddha at the Hong Kong Museum of Art.



An exhibit on Cantonese opera at the Museum of History illustrates how performers prepare for a show.

2 ★★ Hong Kong Museum of Art.

It's a beige monstrosity from the outside, and a bit like a high school library from within, but don't be fooled—the artwork, ranging from modern Chinese painting to Neolithic bronzes, makes this museum well worth a visit. My favorite is the permanent exhibit on the history of Hong Kong, which includes old photographs that show just how much things have changed around these parts. 🕒 2 hr. 10 *Salisbury Rd.* 📞 852/2721-0116. www.hk.art.museum. Admission \$HK10 adults, free for kids under 4. Free Wed. Mon–Wed, Fri 10am–6pm; Sat 10am–8pm; Thurs closed. MTR: *Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E.*



Lotus pond at Chi Lin Nunnery.

3 ★ Nathan Road. Also known as the Golden Mile, this is Kowloon's major artery and the closest thing Hong Kong has to New York City's Fifth Avenue. The overwhelming number of neon signs alone makes it worth a stop. It's the place to come for bespoke clothing, as well as upmarket malls like iSquare and Woodhouse. For a change of pace, head into adjacent Kowloon Park, or visit the fascinating Haiphong Road Temporary Market, popular for fresh fish and meat. 🕒 *1 hr.* **MTR:** *Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C1.*

4 ★★ Hong Kong Museum of History. This innovative museum takes you chronologically through Hong Kong's history. Exhibits include replicas of pre-British-era homes, as well as a full-size model of a street-car of the type used in Central around 1881. You'll learn everything you need to know about the opium wars, the Japanese occupation during World War II, and the 1997 handover from the United Kingdom to China. 🕒 *1 hr.* **100 Chatham Rd. S.** ☎️ *852/2724-9042. www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkmh. Admission \$HK10 adults, free for kids 3 and under. Wed free. Mon, Wed–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 10am–7pm; closed Tues. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B2. Bus: 5 or 5C from Star Ferry terminal.*

5 🍷 ★★ Fook Lam Moon. Founded in 1948, this restaurant (now part of a small chain) serves the best classic Cantonese dishes in Hong Kong, including braised shark's fin with brown sauce, goose web, roast suckling pig, and braised abalone. The decor is a bit out-dated, but with food this good, who cares? **1/F, 55 Kimberley Rd.** ☎️ *852/2366-0286. \$\$.*

Shop Smart

Because so much of the Hong Kong experience involves market shopping, it's worth sharing a few insider tips. This being Asia, sizes tend to run small, but don't be dismayed if you can't find an XL—just ask, as merchants tend to keep additional sizes and colors stashed away for such occasions. And definitely don't be afraid to bargain with market vendors; it's considered a normal part of shopping here. The rule of thumb is to offer a quarter of what the seller is asking, and then try not to settle for more than half of the original price. If you're not happy with the final price, walk away. Unless you've stumbled upon a must-have antique or some truly unique jewelry, you'll likely see similar goods at the next stall you visit.

6 ★★★ Chi Lin Nunnery and Nan Lian Garden. It may be brand-new, but the Nan Lian Garden and adjacent Chi Lin Nunnery offer insight into ancient China. The restive gardens were cultivated around Tang-dynasty concepts of beauty while the all-timber and highly photogenic nunnery buildings went up without the use of a single metal hinge or nail. 🕒 90 min. MTR: Diamond Hill. See p 23.

7 ★★★ Temple Street Night Market. Oddly, the shopping ops are arguably the least important part of the night market's appeal. This is a fine place to try alfresco dining, Hong Kong style, at one of the *dai pai dong* stalls (head to the junction with Nanking Rd.). Cantonese opera singers sometimes hold miniconcerts on the street, and fortunetellers, many of whom speak English, will read your future for a price (again, do some bargaining). 🕒 2 hr. Temple Street. ☎ 852/2920-2888. MTR: Jordan, exit A. See p 65.

8 ★★★ Avenue of Stars. The Avenue of Stars was a \$HK40-million project opened in 2004 to honor Hong Kong's film industry. It's a lot like the scene along Hollywood's Walk of Fame—there are stars for such local legends as director Wong Kar-wai and actors Jet Li and Maggie Cheung. There's also a statue of Bruce Lee. The real star, though, is the panoramic view of Hong Kong Island. 🕒 30 min.



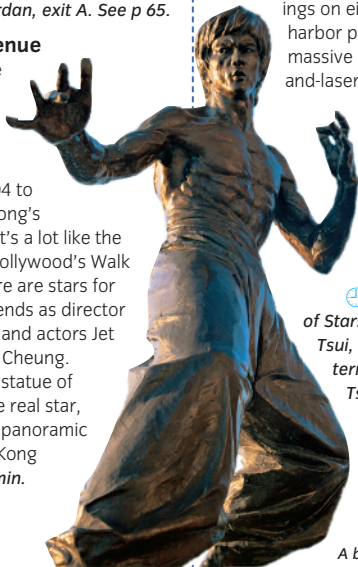
A fortuneteller gives a reading at the Temple Street Night Market.

Avenue of Stars. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui, exit G. Star Ferry terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.

9 ★ Symphony of Lights.

Every night at 8pm, 44 buildings on either side of the harbor participate in a massive 15-minute light-and-laser show coordinated to music. It is as unusual as it sounds, and worth checking out. You'll get the best view from the Avenue of Stars.

🕒 15 min. Avenue of Stars. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui, exit G. Star Ferry terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.



A bronze statue of kung fu film star Bruce Lee looms over the Avenue of Stars.

The Best in **Three Days**

Day three is all about enjoying Hong Kong's greatest, and least appreciated, asset—its natural beauty. With its mountainous interior and craggy coastline, Lantau has long been a favorite for outdoor-types. Disneyland, Discovery Bay, and the Tian Tan ("Big") Buddha have helped to add mass-market appeal, as well as a spiritual edge. **START: Tung Chung MTR.**

1 ★★★ Ngong Ping Skyrail.

The Skyrail, a 5.7km (3½-mile) cableway, was beset by problems upon opening in 2005 (including breaking down midflight). However, it's been running smoothly since 2006 and is now a thrilling experience in all the right ways. Your air-conditioned glass carriage rises up above Hong Kong International Airport and sweeps across Lantau's mountainous interior before dropping you off near the mountaintop. I highly recommend paying the extra \$HK50 for a ride in the glass-bottomed crystal cabin. ⌚ 30 min. Round-trip \$HK107 adults, \$HK54 kids 3–11. Mon–Fri 10am–6pm; Sat–Sun 9am–6:30pm. MTR: Tung Chung.

2 kids Ngong Ping Village.

This replica Tang village offers a bit of Chinese culture and history in a Disneyland-style setting. A "Walking with Buddha" attraction tells the story of Siddhartha Gautama, the young prince who attained enlightenment and became the Buddha. The *Monkey's Tale Theatre* is a high-tech cartoon telling the traditional Buddhist story of the Monkey King. Best of all is a Chinese tea ceremony, which offers an inside look at this age-old custom along with a history of the role tea has played in Chinese culture. ⌚ 1 hr.

☎ 852/2109-9898.

Free admission to village. Admission to *Walking with Buddha* and *Monkey's Tale Theatre* each \$HK36 adults, \$HK18 kids.

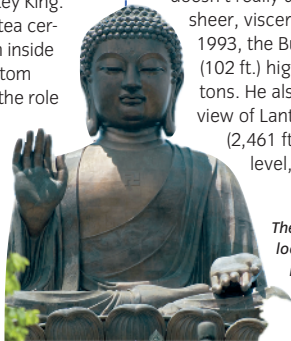


A traditional Chinese gateway at the Ngong Ping village.

Combination ticket for both shows \$HK65 adults, \$HK35 kids. Mon–Fri 10am–6pm; Sat–Sun 10am–6:30pm.

3 ★★★ Tian Tan Buddha. The blurb claims this as the world's "largest seated bronze Buddha," a slightly niche category that doesn't really do justice to its

sheer, visceral impact. Built in 1993, the Buddha is 31m (102 ft.) high and weighs 250 tons. He also has a fantastic view of Lantau from 750m (2,461 ft.) above sea level, but there are



The Tian Tan Buddha looks out over the island of Lantau.

Transportation City

Hong Kong has an enviable range of public transport options, anchored by the ever-expanding MTR network which now reaches into most corners. It's no wonder many residents have never driven a car. In this book, we list MTR stops, which often require a bit of walking, as well as bus routes and ferries when necessary. While we normally recommend public transportation, taxis are relatively cheap and may be your best option if you have limited time. A prepaid Octopus card (see the "Savvy Traveler" chapter, p 147) can be used on all forms of transport, as well as in shops and leisure venues, and will save you both time and money. Be sure to pick one up.

260 steps to negotiate before you can enjoy it too. The museum inside the statue is small and unremarkable. More worthwhile is the set vegetarian lunch at the Po Lin Monastery (see below). 🕒 1 hr. **Free admission to Buddha. Regular lunch \$HK60; deluxe lunch \$HK100. Daily 10am–6pm. Bus: 2 from Mui Wo Pier.**

4 ★ Po Lin Monastery. This monastery was founded more than 100 years ago by reclusive Buddhist

One of the many statues of Buddhist gods that adorn the Po Lin Monastery.



monks; the remaining structures date from 1921 and 1970. The largest temple at Po Lin (which means "precious lotus") has a golden roof and three bronze statues of the Buddha representing the past, present, and future. As you wander the grounds, you'll see monks going about their daily routine. 🕒 45 min. **Ngong Ping.** ☎ 852/2895-5248. www.plm.org.hk/eng/home.php. **Daily 10am–6pm. Bus: 2 from Mui Wo Pier.**

Having lunch at **5 Po Lin Monastery** is a real treat. You'll buy a timed ticket either at the base of the Buddha (if you're planning to visit) or at the monastery itself. I suggest opting for the regular lunch, which is served family style (big helpings of vegetables, soups, and rice are brought to the table for all to share) in a colorful dining room packed with Chinese families. You can also opt for the deluxe lunch, which is served on plates in a quieter room filled mostly with tourists. **Ngong Ping.** ☎ 852/2895-5248. \$.

6 ★ Wisdom Path. The Wisdom Path, signposted from the monastery, leads to a figure eight of 38



The Wisdom Path was laid out in a figure eight to symbolize infinity.

wooden pillars engraved with quotes from the *Heart Sutra*. The *Heart Sutra* is a text read by Confucians, Buddhists, and Taoists, and it includes mantras describing the

philosophies of wisdom, compassion, and enlightenment. The path is just off the 70km (43-mile) Lantau trail, and it's possible to sacrifice the next stop on your tour and hike back down to Tung Chung instead.

🕒 45 min. **Wisdom Path, Ngong Ping.** www.tourism.gov.hk/english/current/current_heart.html.

7 ★★ **Tai O.** Located on the northwestern coast of Lantau, this fishing village is known as the “Venice of Hong Kong” thanks to its traditional stilt housing. For a small fee, you can usually catch a short fishing boat ride along the coast—if you're lucky, you may see Chinese white dolphins. If you'd rather stay on land, head for the shops, where you can pick up a jar of shrimp paste, a pungent sauce made by fermenting shrimp in spices in the sun. There are a variety of walks that can be made around the village. Check out the sign next to the bus stop for ideas. 🕒 3 hr. **Tai O Fishing Village.** *MTR to Tung Chung, then bus 11.*

8 ★★ **Discovery Bay.** In stark contrast to Tai O, this ever-expanding

The Monastery & the Buddha

Po Lin Monastery was founded in 1906 by three Zen masters, Da Yue, Dun Xiu, and Yue Ming, who arrived on Lantau from Zhejiang in eastern China. Soon monks from across southern China were being drawn to the quiet beauty of the monastery. The “Big” Buddha went up on neighboring Muk Yue Peak in 1993, bringing with it an influx of visitors, though the monks don't seem to mind. As for the Buddha, he sits cross-legged (the real Buddha was said to be seated cross-legged when he achieved enlightenment) and his right hand is raised in a vow to eliminate suffering from all beings on Earth. His left hand rests on his thigh with the palm up, as a symbol of Buddha's compassion in granting happiness to all people. The icon on his chest—redolent of the Nazi swastika—represents the everlasting presence and compassion of the Buddha.



Stilt houses line the shores at the Tai O fishing village.

town has a condo/resort feel to it and now has a purpose-built outdoor dining zone which offers downtown comforts beside the sea. There are around 20 international restaurants beside a sandy strip that faces in the direction of Hong Kong Island. Disneyland provides a sideline attraction in the form of its nightly 8pm firework display. When the evening is done, it's back to Hong Kong Island by high-speed ferry. 🕒 2–3 hr. *Discovery Bay, Lantau.* Bus: DB01R from Tung Chung Citygate Bus Station. Ferries sail to Central Pier 3 24-hr.

Caribbean-themed 🍷 **Hemingway's by the Bay** is quintessential Discovery Bay. There's a large outdoor deck where you can enjoy exotic cocktails and Caribbean cuisine while listening to the tropical sounds of calypso and reggae. The barbecue meats are sprinkled with Jamaican and Trinidadian spices and, depending on how many of the huge selection of rums you sink, you might just end your trip to one of

Asia's most populous cities believing you've found an exotic beach paradise. Shop G09, Block A, Discovery Bay. 📞 852/2987-8855. \$\$ ●

Double-decker wooden trams are just one of many options for making your way around Hong Kong.

