



Hong Kong's nightly light and laser show, called the Symphony of Lights, was named the World's Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show by Guinness World Records. A stunning vision of colored lights, laser beams and searchlights create an unforgettable spectacle synchronized to music and narration piped over loudspeakers at the boardwalk on the Kowloon side.

Lisa Lubin

EUROPE & ASIA PACIFIC

Snapshot: Hong Kong, China

A forward-thinking city with ancient traditions

By Lisa Lubin
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In a place where Cantonese and English are the official languages, Hong Kong's seven million inhabitants thrive in this center for international finance and trade. Hong Kong is a vibrant city with an infectious rhythm. On the surface it's a huge metropolis like any other, with mobile phone-carrying workers hurrying to meetings in a forest of steely skyscrapers, but look a little bit closer and you find an ancient land full of traditions and culture. Here East truly meets West.

Origins: The area now known as Hong Kong has been inhabited since the Paleolithic Era. The region officially became part of Imperial China during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) and later served as a trading post and naval base during the Tang (A.D. 618-907) and Song Dynasties (A.D. 960-1279). The first Europeans arrived in the 1500s when a Portuguese seaman claimed Hong Kong for Portugal.

Then and Now: This very animated city was just a collection of small fishing villages when the British claimed it in 1842 after the First Opium War. Hong Kong was returned to the Chinese in 1997 and is now known as a "Special Administrative Region," along with nearby Macau, of the People's Republic of China. Today, this former fishing colony is a huge international metropolis boasting one of the world's most open and dynamic economies.

Appeal: Hong Kong is a bustling coastal city that offers a full-on assault of sounds, sights and smells. A simple stroll down Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui is invigorating. You hear constant calls from street corner vendors ("Handbag?" "Need a tailor?"), see stores jam-packed with shoppers, and breathe in the enticing smells of steamy noodle shops that remain open late every night. Standing on the tip of Kowloon Peninsula, visitors can gaze across Victoria Harbor to the full expanse of the Hong Kong Island skyline, with a total of 7,681 skyscrapers. And while other great cities like Paris, London and New York took several centuries to build, Hong Kong only took a few decades and built almost everything here in the time since today's young investment bankers were born. A seven minute ferry ride costing only about 30 cents brings travelers across the harbor to Hong Kong Island. This 30-square-mile financial center is the heart of Hong Kong. Here visitors experience the fusion of past and present by walking around a mix of modern skyscrapers and centuries-old markets.

Who goes here: Hong Kong is a forward-thinking city with ancient traditions. It welcomes visitors from all over the world, and since the handover of Hong Kong back to China, increasing numbers of migrants from mainland China have been coming to the city. The Hong Kong Tourism Board estimates the number of visitors in 2006 was 25.25 million. Ninety-five percent of the residents of Hong Kong are ethnic Chinese. But there is also a large community of foreigners with Filipinos, Indonesians and Americans being the largest immigrant groups. Expatriates from Europe and America have flocked here, working on the "Wall Street of Asia," where steely skyscrapers hover over ancient temples and a few remaining rickshaws.

Famous sons and daughters: Bruce Lee (November 27, 1940–July 20, 1973) was an American-born, Hong Kong-raised martial arts actor and is widely regarded as the most influential martial artist of the 20th century.

Jackie Chan (born April 7, 1954) is a Chinese stuntman/actor/producer/director. He is one of the best-known names in kung fu and action films.

Maggie Cheung (born September 20, 1964) was born in Hong Kong and raised in England. She is an award-winning film star who's appeared in more than 80 films. She is best known in the West for her roles in the movies *In the Mood for Love*, *Hero* and *Clean*.

PHOTO GALLERY



Snapshot: Hong Kong, China

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Comments

This thing ROCKS!!

Posted by Marcus Wall on April 16,2008 | 05:33PM

Awesome picture and article - thanks!

Posted by Brandy on May 1,2008 | 09:03PM

Although my visit to Hong Kong was almost 10 years ago this piece brought the memories flooding back. A excellent picture of all that HK is. Thanks.

Posted by Elissa Muller on May 2,2008 | 02:41AM

Fantastic article and the pictures are outstanding! I found the content to be very informative and I could just about "smell" the delicious food that was so vividly described. It was great to read a fresh view on such a vibrant city and I look forward to more stories by Lisa Lubin.

Posted by cheryl meadows on May 2,2008 | 06:54AM

Wonderful Article. Lisa completely understands how to phrase things so that you can completely absorb the information using all of your senses. Reading her story is like a 3D adventure with surround sound. The words jump off the page and tease the brain of the reader into thinking they are in the place she's describing, experiencing the things she is and enjoying that special moment from the time you find yourself in it. It's a pleasure to read her account of a distant land I visited through her story. Makes you want to go there for real and hope it lives up to the experience she's given us. More!!

Posted by Kevin Fitzpatrick on May 2,2008 | 10:27AM

great article!!!

Posted by Ingrid Yonata on May 3,2008 | 12:49PM

Ditto on the Kevin F. post. In my words, Thumbs up.

Posted by Brian on June 5,2008 | 08:28AM

She's right! Hong Kong is so great; so much fun! If you like big cities you have to go. It reminds me of an Asian NYC and I can't wait to return. So much to do, so many other islands to explore...

Posted by Priscilla on June 29,2008 | 04:54AM

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