

Hong Kong
12 day tour - February 2010

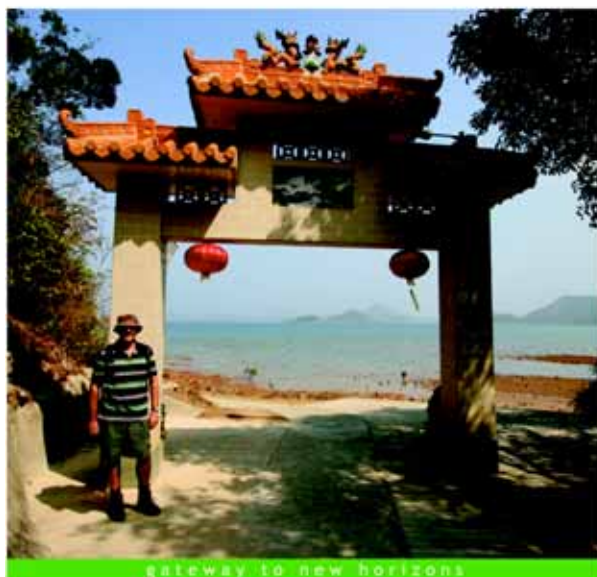
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EXPLORANGES
BUSHWALKING TOURS ph/fax: 08 8369 1779

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12 day itinerary

Hong Kong and the New Territories is 1,104 square kms consisting of Hong Kong Island, Lantau Island, Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories as well as some 260 other islands. Despite the common perception that Hong Kong is just a busy metropolis, 70% of its land mass is rural mountains, forests and outlying islands with much of this area designated as country parks and nature reserves. Hong Kong is a hiker's paradise, providing endless opportunities to explore the glorious countryside or take a scenic walk along paths and trails overlooking the city and harbour. Whether it's a challenging climb over mountains or a pleasant stroll through bamboo forests, walking in Hong Kong will take you into another world and provide a living breathing cultural experience like no other.



Hong Kong
bushwalking by the specialists

Exploranges is one of Australia's leading walking tour operators, renowned for its focus on customers and their experience in the bush. If you share our sense of adventure, our love of nature and our passion for seeking out new experiences, then our exciting new tour to Hong Kong is for you.

Exploranges Hong Kong 12 Day Itinerary

Day One

Depart Australia on a flight bound for Hong Kong International Airport (approx 9 hrs) arriving in the early evening. Your Exploranges Guide will either accompany you on the flight or meet you on arrival in Hong Kong. After clearing immigration and customs it's just a 20 minute ride on the Airport Express train to travel the 30 km journey to the vibrant city centre of Kowloon.

Day Two - Kowloon Orientation

After a leisurely breakfast your orientation starts with a visit to Kowloon Park - 33 acres of chinese style gardens virtually on the doorstep of your hotel in the heart of the busy Tsim Sha Tsui district. From the park it is a short walk to the Kowloon Star Ferry terminal for a one hour circular tour of Victoria Harbour aboard the fabulous double-decker "Shining Star" ferry, a beautiful re-creation of the ferries that plied the harbour in the 1920s. In the afternoon a local guide will walk you through the back streets of Kowloon, and into the daily lives of local residents. Threading through colourful streets this walk explores some of Hong Kong's most lively markets such as the Jade Market, the Food Markets of Canton Street, the bustling Flower Market and the Po Street Bird Garden.

Walking distance: ~ 10 km Grade: easy

Meals included (B,L)



Day Three - Tap Mun Island

Now that you have seen the city it is time to get out and explore the New Territories. Today you will venture to a small fishing village on Tap Mun Island, in the far Northeast. After a short trip on the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway (MTR), Tap Mun is a 90 minute slow ferry cruise out through Tolo Harbour. On arrival at the small island village, where fishermen have worked and lived for several hundred years, the first stop is a visit to the Qing dynasty temple built to honour Tin Hau, the Goddess of the sea and Queen of Heaven. Then it is in easy stroll (probably escorted by a friendly village dog) to circumnavigate the 2 km² island and take in the views overlooking the South China Sea. You will have time to explore the local village, and to browse the dried fish, prawns, and squid on view for sale, before returning to the pier to catch the ferry for a short 30 minute trip back to the Sai Kung Peninsular. From here a local bus completes the journey to Sai Kung, a fishing harbour where fresh seafood is sold straight from the pier. You will have time to feast your eyes on the many restaurants selling live seafood before heading back to Kowloon mid afternoon.

Walking distance: ~ 5 km Grade: easy

Meals included (B,L)



Day Four - The Dragon's Back

Within one hour of Kowloon, on the eastern end of Hong Kong Island, is the Shek O Country Park. It is here that we find the walking trail that Time Magazine has declared the best urban hike in Asia - The Dragon's Back. After an initial steep ascent the track undulates along the ridgeline of a thin peninsula jutting into the South China Sea, providing breathtaking views of Hong Kong's craggy southern shoreline and a string of deserted islands, before plunging back down the mountainside to the sleepy Dai Long Wan ("Big Wave Bay"). This 8.5km walk forms part of the 50 km Hong Kong Trail and will take about 4 hours including lunch on top Mt Collinson (elevation 350m). Once back at sea level the return trip to Hong Kong Central is via the famous double-deck tramcar, affectionately known as "Ding Dings". Hong Kong has the world's largest fleet of double-deck tramcars, carrying an average of 240,000 passengers every day.

Walking distance: 8.5 km Grade: moderate

Meals included (B,L)



Day Five - Cheung Chau

Cheung Chau is just 12 km southwest of Kowloon. This 2.45 km² island is made of two granite islands joined by a sand spit. The central part of the island is densely populated with shops and houses and the narrow lanes prevent normal motor traffic. Therefore, the best way to explore this island is on foot. The one hour ferry ride from Hong Kong Central arrives in the island's small harbour, which is crowded with fishing boats, Chinese junks and sampans. From the pier it is a short walk to one of the Cheung Chau's highest points where the Beitiao Pavilion overlooks most of the island. From here you will explore the rest of the island including the the Pak Tei Temple, dedicated to Cheung Chau's "patron saint", Pak Tei - the Northern King, Tung Wan Beach and ancient rock carvings that are estimated to be over 3000 years old. Walking further around the granite coast reveals imaginatively named rock formations such as Human Head Rock and Vase Rock. Here you will search for the Cheung Po Tsai Cave. Ancient legends say that it used to be the place where Cheung Po Tsai, a pirate with an ill reputation, hid the money he robbed. If it is warm, bring your towel and enjoy a swim before returning to Hong Kong on the afternoon ferry.

Walking distance: ~ 10 km Grade: easy

Meals included (B,L)



Day Six - Free Day

After five full days on the go it is time to rest, relax and recharge before exploring the rest of the New Territories. By now you will be familiar with Hong Kong's excellent public transport system so if you are up to it there are many options to fill in part of your day. These include a self guided tour of Hong Kong's Central District or a visit to the infamous Kowloon Walled City. In the evening you will be introduced to the fineries of street dining at the Temple Street Market before browsing the stalls for that designer handbag or a souvenir T-Shirt.

Walking distance: optional

Meals included (B,D)



Day Seven - Tai Po Kau Forest and Mai Po Marshes

Hong Kong's topography and sub-tropical climate provide a wide range of habitats to support a rich variety of flora and fauna. Conservation of this natural diversity is taken very seriously with about 40% of land in Hong Kong designated as country parks and special areas. Tai Po Kau Forest Reserve and Mai Po Marshes showcase the conservation of habitats in Hong Kong. Tai Po Kau Special Area is 460 hectares or forest reserve. Planting of this forest was started in 1926 when the Government first began afforestation in the New Territories. The dominant tree was Chinese Red Pine and the area has come to be known locally as Pine Garden. Of all the special areas in Hong Kong, Tai Po Kau is probably the richest in variety of native species of trees. Accompanied by a local guide you will spend the morning walking some of the nature trails within this special area. The afternoon will be spent at Mai Po Marshes in the North-western corner of the New Territories. These marshes have been known as a haven for migratory birds for decades. Mai Po was first recognized as a protected area in 1976, when it was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In 1995, 1,500 ha of wetlands around Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay were formally designated a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. If you love bird watching bring your binoculars.

Walking distance: ~ 12 km Grade: easy

Meals included (B,L)



Day Eight - Ngong Ping Plateau

Lantau, occupying a land area of 144 kms², is Hong Kong's largest island. In the Lantau South Country Park, at the base of Hong Kong's second highest mountain, is the Ngong Ping Plateau. To get there you will take the western MTR to the end of the line before ascending to the plateau on the scenic 7 km long Ngong Ping Cable Car. Once at the top you walk a short section of the Lantau Trail to overlook the Po Lin Monastery complex. This monastery incorporates the giant 34m bronze Tian Tan Buddha. The statue symbolizes the harmonious relationship between man and nature, people and religion. The walk takes in the Wisdom Path which is made up of thirty-eight timber columns with inscription of the Heart Sutra - a treasured text revered by Confucians, Buddhists and Taoists alike that articulates the "Perfection of Wisdom of the Buddha". You will have time to soak up the atmosphere of the monastery and to climb the 268 steps to the base of the Buddha's lotus throne. After lunch a short bus ride will take you to Tai O, a small coastal fishing village that is more than three centuries old. Tai O retains most of its historical setting such as waterways, stilt houses and fishing boats and it is famous for its fishing village scenery. Here we take a short boat ride to catch glimpses of the Chinese White Dolphins - locally known as "Pink Dolphins".

Walking distance: ~ 5 km Grade: easy

Meals included (B,L)



Day Nine - The Beaches of Tai Long Wan

In the east of the New Territories, Sai Kung East Country Park covers 4,477 hectares of uplands and coasts and has the largest number of bays and coves among all of Hong Kong's country parks. This includes Tai Long Wan - made up of four idyllic bays: Sai Wan, Ham Tin, Tai Long and Tung Wan. Tai Long Wan is home to many flora species and has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This full day walk starts near to the beginning of the MacLehose Trail where you will walk along the coastline, backed by lush tropical vegetation, with spectacular mountain and coastal views. The path will pass fascinating old clan villages where the traditional Hakka farmers once nurtured feng shui woods. A local guide will accompany you to provide a unique insight into the homes, lands and beaches that these villagers left behind. Although just 20km from Kowloon, your time in this remote seaside area will make you feel a world away.

Walking distance: ~11 km Grade: difficult

Meals included (B,L)



Day Ten - Lamma Island Boat Cruise

Hong Kong is an archipelago that consists of more than 260 islands. Here the ocean is an everyday part of life. For generations fishermen, traders and pirates have plied these island waterways. Any visit to Hong Kong would not be complete without seeing the harbours and shores from their perspective. Today we catch a bus to the busy harbour of Aberdeen to board a private charter Chinese style wooden "Junk". Once out of the harbour, and into the busy international shipping lanes, the captain will set course for Lamma Island. For those who want more walking you can go ashore at Mo Tat Wan and climb to the top of Ling Kok Shan Peak (250m) for a view of the island. Alternatively, you can spend the morning cruising the many bays or perhaps just drop anchor and swim from the boat. Either way a sumptuous seafood lunch awaits at one of the many seafood restaurants in the village Sok Kwu Wan, the largest fish farming site in Hong Kong. In the afternoon the options are the same, relax on the boat with a bottle of wine or take a one hour leisurly stroll across the island to the pier at Yung Shue Wan (Banyan Bay).

Optional Walking distance: 7 km Grade: moderate

Meals included (B,L)



Day Eleven - Lion Rock

The line of Kowloon peaks, stretching east to west for ten kilometres, is one of Hong Kong's main topographical features. In fact, the name Kowloon came from the nine dragons represented by eight peaks of the Kowloon hills and a Chinese emperor. In these hills is the Lion Rock Country Park. Although only small this country park boasts some of Hong Kong's best loved trails, including sections of the MacLehose Trail. Here you will walk stage five of this 100 km trail which snakes along the sharp peaks above Kowloon. The trail has "several steep climbs and challenging descents" but the panoramic views from vantage points such as Lion Rock (495m) and Eagle's Nest make the effort truly worthwhile. The path along the ridges provides views of both the southern and northern halves of the New Territories before descending towards the Kowloon Reservoirs, a favorite haven for many of Hong Kong's wild Macaques monkeys.

Walking distance: 7 km Grade: difficult

Meals included (B,L)



Day Twelve

All good things must come to an end and today it is time to return home. With flights departing Hong Kong International Airport in the evening you will have a late check-out from the hotel so you can relax and take your time. Alternatively you can pack early and spend the day doing some last minute shopping or visiting some of the other great Hong Kong attractions. A ride on the famous Peak Tram, a walk around the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, one of the oldest zoological and botanical centres in the world, or a visit to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum are just some of the many options. At around 5pm it will be time to check your bags at the Kowloon Airport Express Terminal and board the train for the 30 km return journey to the airport. An overnight flight will have you arriving home in Australia mid morning.

Walking distance: optional

Meals included (B,L)

