

# Hong Kong

By Tom Kirvan

Describing the many features of Hong Kong is a tall order, particularly since its skyline includes more than 8,000 skyscrapers.

And yet, that eye-opening number can obscure the fact that Hong Kong Island is just one of 263 islands in what is officially known as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the name attached to the territory that became part of the People's Republic of China in 1997 after decades of British rule. It now operates under the central government's "one country, two systems" principle.

Sporting a subtropical climate, Hong Kong is on China's southern coast and is surrounded by the South China Sea. Most of its population is concentrated on the Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong Island, and in cities throughout the New Territories.

One of the most prominent financial centers and commercial ports in the Far East, Hong Kong offers a mix of heavily populated urban landscapes, rugged peaks and terrain, and miles of coastal shoreline that make it unique. The splendor of it all can best be absorbed at the top of Victoria Peak, an 1,811-foot hill that can be traversed by tram and stands atop a city that has been a popular tourist destination for more than a century. The Peak Tram was Asia's first funicular railway, and remains one of the steepest tramways in the world.

Aside from its natural beauty, Hong Kong also is home to the most sophisticated escalator and walkway system in the world, stretching a half-mile in length and some 440 feet in height, providing an important link between the Central and the Mid-Levels on the main island. Among Hong Kong's famous landmarks is the bronze Big Buddha located on Lantau Island. The 112-foot-tall statue weighs more than 280 tons, and has been a busy tourist attraction since its completion in 1993.

Hong Kong also has its own Disneyland Park with seven themed lands that opened in 2005 amid much fanfare.

A relatively short ferry ride or drive away is Macau, a former Portuguese colony that now is referred to as the "Las Vegas of the East." A major resort city, Macau is a gambling mecca in the Far East and one of the most densely populated regions in the world. It is connected by the Hong Kong-Zuhai-Macau bridge, which opened in 2018 and spans more than 34 miles across the Pearl River Delta.



## Fast Facts

Languages: Chinese and English

Area: 426 square miles

Population: 7.5 million

Religion: Taoism

Buddhism

Christianity

Muslim

Must-see Attraction: Victoria Peak

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