



DESTINATION REPORT

**HONG KONG S.A.R.**

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) includes Hong Kong Island in the South China Sea, Lantau Island, and the Kowloon Peninsula. It has a subtropical monsoon climate with cool, humid winters, and hot, rainy summers. Typhoon season runs from July to October. Hong Kong has one of the world's busiest deep-water harbors, and one of the most vibrant economies.

The British occupied Hong Kong Island in 1841 amidst the first Opium War. China officially ceded the island in 1842 at the conclusion of the war. Kowloon Peninsula was ceded to the British in 1860 at the conclusion of the second Opium War, and in 1898 the United Kingdom signed an agreement to lease the territories from China for 99 years. On 1 July 1997, at the conclusion of this lease and pursuant to a 1984 agreement between China and the UK, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong remains highly autonomous, if only semi-democratic. Under "one country, two systems" agreement, it is able to maintain the free market system implemented by the British, but its foreign and defense affairs are handled by the People's Republic of China. The Special Administrative Region designation will expire in 2047.

Hong Kong population is a little over seven million, 95 percent are ethnic Chinese. The linguistic makeup of Hong Kong reflects its colonial history. Cantonese and English are the official languages. Almost 90 percent of the population speaks Cantonese, but most speak at least some English and an increasing number speak Mandarin. Most signs are written in both Chinese and English. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are practiced by almost 90 percent of the population.



# SECURITY ASSESSMENT

## Security Risk Rating

Low

## Security Risk Overview

Visits to Hong Kong are generally free of major security concerns. Hong Kong has a low crime rate, a stable political system, and minimal official corruption. Most crimes in Hong Kong are non-violent and opportunistic in nature. There is a low threat of international and indigenous terrorist activity and there have been no attempted terrorist attacks in recent years. Police in Hong Kong are generally well equipped, well trained, and highly capable of responding to emergencies in a timely manner.

### Terrorism

There is a low threat of indigenous or international terrorist activity in Hong Kong. There have been no reported terrorist attacks in Hong Kong for the past five years.

### Civil Unrest

Demonstrations are common in Hong Kong. The annual day of protest in Hong Kong is 1 July and the event tends to attract hundreds of thousands of participants. Nevertheless, protests tend to be peaceful, and are generally limited to early July. Most political or social rallies are located in the central business district, near most government buildings. Although protests in Hong Kong rarely turn violent, the possibility of incidental violence should not be discounted. Police have used force and heavy-handed tactics to disperse protesters in the past. Localized traffic disruptions and road closures can be expected during these demonstrations.

Anti-mainland protests have occurred over the perceived influx of tourists and parallel-goods traders from mainland China. These protests have been attended by members of various radical groups and individuals, dubbed in the media as "localists," who share a strong anti-mainland sentiment. Most protests have taken place in the New Territories, which border mainland China. During such events, protesters have been known to clash with police.

Additionally, since mid-2014, a series of street protests and sit-in campaigns have been staged by pro-democracy activists in several key districts in Hong Kong, to demand electoral reform, the resignation of CY Leung, and the right for the people of Hong Kong to vote for the next Chief Executive in 2017 without mainland Chinese government interference.

### Personal Security

Violent crime is rare in Hong Kong, but petty crimes such as pick-pocketing occasionally occur in crowded urban areas. These crimes tend to be non-violent and opportunistic in nature. There have been reports of robberies in Hong Kong's Country Parks, though the incidents have decreased after the Hong Kong police launched a crime prevention operation.

Military installations are controlled by the People's Republic of China and photographing these areas is prohibited. Fines can also be issued for spitting or littering.

Same-sex relations are not illegal in Hong Kong and the public attitude is increasingly tolerant towards same-sex couples. There have been no reports regarding harassment or discrimination

against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) individuals in Hong Kong in recent years.

Typhoons commonly hit Hong Kong every year between July and September. An average of six typhoon warnings are issued each year by the Hong Kong Observatory. Typhoons often cause power outages, flight cancellations, train service suspensions, and other issues.

## **Law Enforcement**

Police are highly trained and professional. They are able to prevent, respond to, and investigate most crimes. Response time is generally less than five minutes for emergencies, and less than 10 minutes for non-emergency calls. Emergency operators speak English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. Police impunity and corruption is rare in Hong Kong.

Prisons in Hong Kong generally meet international standards. Detainees have access to potable water and medical care, though overcrowding can be an issue. The judiciary is considered independent and individuals are presumed innocent. In the event of an arrest, notify the relevant consulate as Hong Kong authorities may fail to do so.

## **Transportation**

**Air:** Hong Kong is rated Category 1 in the International Aviation Safety Assessment Program (IASA). This means that the country's civil aviation authority has been assessed by IASA inspectors and is found to license and oversee air carriers in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) safety standards.

**Bus:** Roughly 90 percent of Hong Kong's population relies on the public transportation network for daily travel. Buses are widely available, clean, reliable, and inexpensive. Routes are well marked and stops are posted and announced in both Chinese and English on most bus lines. There are also red and green minibuses that pick up and drop off passengers; red buses have no fixed route, and green buses have fixed routes. Pickpocketing occasionally occurs on Hong Kong's public transportation network.

**Car:** Vehicles in Hong Kong travel on the left side of the road. Speed limits are 50 kilometers (31 miles) per hour in urban areas, 80 kilometers (50 miles) per hour on highways, and 110 kilometers (68 miles) per hour on expressways unless otherwise marked. Roads are well maintained and extensive but are often congested. Foreigners can drive in Hong Kong with a valid overseas license, insurance, and an international driving permit. All vehicles must carry third party liability insurance. All drivers involved in a traffic accident must undergo blood alcohol testing. The use of hand-held cellular devices while driving in Hong Kong is strictly prohibited and could result in a USD 260 fine.

**Taxi:** Taxis are plentiful and efficient. Taxi drivers may refuse to carry passengers who do not wear a seat belt. Only use properly marked taxis, and book through a hotel if possible. Do not get into a taxi if there is an unknown passenger sitting in the vehicle. If unhappy with the direction in which the taxi is traveling, speak calmly, yet firmly to the driver in conjunction with the hand gesture to stop in case there is a language barrier. If there is no positive response from the driver, exit the vehicle at the first opportunity.

**Train:** In addition to an efficient and widely utilized light rail system (the Mass Transit Railway or MTR), trains connect Hong Kong with Guangzhou every two hours, while trains travel between Beijing and Shanghai on alternate days. There are occasional accidents reported on the rail network, some of which have resulted in casualties.

Double-decker trams are available on the northern coast of Hong Kong. However, they are slower and less comfortable.

Traveling between Hong Kong and mainland China requires a Chinese visa.

**Water:** Ferries and jetfoils are widely utilized in Hong Kong, especially for travel between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, and to access other outlying islands. They are generally well regulated and are less expensive than the MTR. Ferries will likely be canceled during extreme weather events.

Though fatal boat accidents are rare in Hong Kong, accidents have occurred in the past due to highly crowded waters.

### **Scams, Fraud, Corruption, and Extortion**

There are some scams in Hong Kong which have become common in recent years. Individuals may ask travelers to carry packages, which are usually full of drugs, with them in their luggage. Additionally, there has been an increase in fake property and time share scams. Common scams against foreigners, regardless of destination, include dating and marriage scams, false employment opportunities, and virtual kidnapping for ransom. Avoid giving out personal information at all costs, especially bank or credit card numbers.

Corruption, bribery, and government harassment are rare in Hong Kong. Travelers should report any incidents of corruption or bribery to their embassy or consulate.

### **Security Advice**

Be prepared. Make an effort to understand your destination environment before you travel: identify the possible threats and prevailing situation, understand your own vulnerabilities and take action to mitigate the risks.

Maintain a low profile and good situational awareness. Ensure you travel with reliable communications equipment, test your mobile (cellular) telephone upon arrival at your destination and keep it fully charged. Make note of emergency telephone numbers, including the police, fire department, ambulance, and embassy or consulate.

Avoid all protests and demonstrations to minimize the risk of exposure to incidental violence. Travelers should walk away or wait inside a shop or restaurant if it is not possible to leave the area. Plan alternate routes to circumvent potential protest locations. Seek the assistance of a local host, or travel with a local driver, where possible.

To minimize the risk of becoming a victim of petty theft, travelers should maintain caution and exercise situational awareness at all times. Avoid overt displays of wealth. If confronted by a criminal, do nothing to antagonize the situation. Carry a "dummy" wallet if possible, and carry a passport photocopy at all times.

Carry handbags on the opposite side from passing traffic to reduce the risk of thieves on motorcycles trying to snatch them.

Avoid walking unless you are confident of the security situation. Do not walk by yourself at night in secluded or troublesome areas of the city. Do not take shortcuts away from main roads, which tend to be busy and provide a safer environment.

National holidays and public festivals tend to attract large crowds in some countries. Such public gatherings, despite a typically enhanced security presence, create a potential venue for disorder or violence. In addition, large crowds may well impede local transportation systems.

Do not buy counterfeit or any goods in violation of copyright laws. Doing so may be a violation of

local laws and can carry hefty fines or even prison time.

Reduce risk of injury from car crashes by always wearing a seatbelt. Some countries have heavy fines for not wearing a seatbelt. Avoid drinking and driving. Be sure to travel with all appropriate documentation, including passport and visa photocopies. Individuals who intend on driving should be in possession of their International Driving Permit (IDP), vehicle registration, and proof of insurance at all times.

Travelers are subject to the laws of Hong Kong, even if they are not a citizen of Hong Kong. Individuals can also be prosecuted for violating their home country's laws while in a foreign country. Travelers should be aware of the laws and customs of the country they are traveling to in order to avoid prosecution.

# HEALTH ASSESSMENT

## Health Risk Rating

Low

## Travel Health Advice

Routine vaccines for preventable diseases, such as measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, chickenpox (or varicella), poliovirus vaccine, etc. are recommended for all travelers.

Prevent against insect bites and insect-borne diseases, such as tick-borne encephalitis or malaria, by using insect repellent and wearing long pants, long sleeve shirts, boots, and hats if possible.

Prevent against foodborne illnesses by avoiding undercooked food and unpasteurized dairy products and washing hands, especially before eating.

## Immunizations - Required for Entry

Immunization	Notes
None	There are no immunizations required for entry into Hong Kong SAR.

## Immunizations - General

The following immunizations are recommended for travel to all destinations.

Immunization	Recommendations
<b>Routine</b>	Routine vaccines for preventable diseases, such as measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, chickenpox (or varicella), poliovirus vaccine, etc. are recommended for all travelers.
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	Hepatitis B Virus is spread through contact with blood, sexual relations, and contact with contaminated needles. There are several pre-exposure vaccination options available: PEDIARIX (pediatric formulation containing DTaP, HepA/B, and polio vaccines), TWINRIX (three dose HepA/HepB combination series), ENGERIX-B, and RECOMBIVAX HB. The full course of three injections is recommended prior to travel.
<b>Influenza</b>	Influenza is spread between humans through sneezing, coughing, and can be spread by touching objects contaminated with the virus. There are two types of pre-exposure vaccinations available: Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (TIV), and Live Intranasal Influenza Vaccine (LAIV). TIV is injected into the upper arm or thigh, and LAIV is administered as a nasal spray. Common TIV vaccines include Afluria, Agriflu, FluLaval, Fluarix, Fluvirin, and Fluzone. Common LAIV vaccines include FluMist.

## Vaccine Preventable Diseases Specific to Hong Kong

The following are vaccine preventable diseases that are prevalent in Hong Kong.

Immunization	Recommendations
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<b>Hepatitis A</b>	Hepatitis A is found in areas with poor sanitation and poor food and water safety, and can be spread through sexual relations, blood transfusions, and needles. Several pre-exposure vaccination options are available: PEDIARIX (pediatric formulation containing DTaP, HepB, and polio vaccines), HAVRIX, VAQTA, TWINRIX (three dose HepA/HepB combination series), AVAXIM, and EPAXAL. The first injection should be administered before departure and a booster after six months.
<b>Typhoid Fever</b>	Typhoid fever is spread through the ingestion of contaminated food or water. Individuals traveling to areas where typhoid fever is common should undergo vaccination at least one week before travel. Booster shots are necessary, as the vaccination loses effectiveness over the course of several years. Two forms of the vaccine are available: an inactivated shot, and a live weakened oral vaccine. Vaccination against typhoid fever is recommended for all travelers, especially those traveling to smaller cities or rural areas. Resistance to first-line antibiotics has been found in neighboring China.



## Health Risks in Hong Kong

Health Risks	Details	Recommendations
<b>Air Pollution</b>	Air pollution is a major health issue in Hong Kong and has continued to deteriorate. Most of the pollution comes from mainland China, rather than the island itself.	Children, the elderly, and persons with respiratory problems should consult with a doctor before traveling to China and avoid outdoor activities on days when high pollution levels are recorded. Travelers can monitor up-to-date air quality reports and advice on the Hong Kong Environment Protection Department's website.
<b>Avian Influenza (H5N1)</b>	Highly pathogenic avian influenza, H5N1, can cause outbreaks in wild bird populations and in livestock. It remains more deadly than a regular influenza virus.	There is no vaccine for H5N1 in humans. Avoid all direct contact with birds, including domestic poultry (such as chickens and ducks) and wild birds, and avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live birds are raised or kept.
<b>Avian Influenza (H7N9)</b>	Highly pathogenic avian influenza, H7N9, which normally circulates among birds, can cause infections in both birds and humans. Most infected individuals become severely ill. Sustained human-to-human transmission has not yet been reported.	While a vaccine to prevent against H7N9 is currently in development, it is considered to be unreliable and difficult to procure. Avoid all direct contact with birds, including domestic poultry (such as chickens and ducks) and wild birds, and avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live birds are raised or kept.
<b>Dengue Fever</b>	Dengue fever is spread through the bite of an infected <i>aedes</i> mosquito. Symptoms include headache, sudden-onset fever, rash, and joint pain.	There is no vaccine to protect against dengue fever. Prevent against bites by using insect repellent (with 30-50% DEET, or 7-15% Picaridin) and wearing long pants, long sleeve shirts, boots, and hats if possible. Stay indoors in areas with screens and air conditioning, if possible. The risk of being bitten by a mosquito is highest in the early morning, several hours after daybreak, and in the late afternoons before sunset. The <i>aedes</i> mosquito, which carries dengue fever, typically lives indoors in dark, cool places like closets, under beds, bathrooms, and behind curtains, as well as around standing water.

<b>Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease</b>	Hand, foot, and mouth disease is spread between humans through contact with the respiratory secretions of an infected person, fluid in blisters, and through contact with feces of an infected person.	There is no vaccine to prevent against foot and mouth disease. Travelers should avoid contact with infected persons, and wash their hands thoroughly. There is no medication to treat foot and mouth disease. Symptoms are treated as they arise.
<b>Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV)</b>	Japanese encephalitis is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito, but cannot be spread between humans.	Vaccination is available but ineffective and costly. According to the CDC, vaccination against JEV is only recommended to travelers who plan to spend more than a month in endemic areas during the JEV transmission seasons. The JEV vaccine is not 100 percent effective and should not be a replacement for precautions against mosquito bites.

### **Food and Water Safety**

Tap water in Hong Kong is generally held to high sanitary standards. Nevertheless, it is preferable to stick to bottled, boiled, or otherwise purified water. Thoroughly wash and peel fruits and vegetables and avoid undercooked or raw meat and seafood as these are often the source of foodborne illnesses. Consuming unpasteurized dairy products can lead to illness.

### **Medical Facilities and Services**

Hong Kong has a number of high-quality medical facilities staffed by qualified Western-trained physicians. Some medical professionals also practice traditional Chinese medicine. Emergency medical service is reliable. Some hospitals may expect cash payment before providing medical care. Pharmacies are well-supplied and most prescription drugs are available in Hong Kong.

# DESTINATION DETAILS

## Time Zones

From 1 January to 31 December, Hong Kong Time (HKT): GMT+8 Hours  
Hong Kong does not observe Daylight Saving Time.

## Currency

Hong Kong Dollar (HKD)

## Credit Cards

Most shops, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses in Hong Kong accept credit cards. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Diner's Club Cards are accepted almost everywhere. Travelers should always notify their bank of their travel plans to avoid having their account frozen.

### ATMs

ATMs are widely available in Hong Kong. Most are linked to international networks and have signs indicating the types of cards that they accept. Travelers should check with their bank before their trip about any fees that might be charged with ATM use.

## Banking Hours

From Monday to Friday 09:00-16:30 and Saturday 09:00-12:30.  
Hours may vary with bank and location.

## Major Holidays

Services and transportation may be affected on/around the following holidays:

Date	Holiday
01 January 2017	New Year's Day
02 January 2017	New Year's Day (observed)
28 January 2017	Chinese Lunar New Year (Day 1)
30 January 2017	Chinese Lunar New Year (Day 2)
31 January 2017	Chinese Lunar New Year (Day 3)
04 April 2017	Ching Ming Festival
14 April 2017	Good Friday
15 April 2017	Holy Saturday
17 April 2017	Easter Monday
01 May 2017	Labor Day
03 May 2017	Buddha's Birthday
30 May 2017	Dragon Boat Festival

01 July 2017	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day
01 October 2017	National Day of the People's Republic of China
02 October 2017	National Day of the People's Republic of China (observed)
05 October 2017	Day after Mid-Autumn Festival
28 October 2017	Chung Yeung Festival
25 December 2017	Christmas Day
26 December 2017	Boxing Day

**NOTE:** No further elections are scheduled to take place in 2017.

## Voltage Information

220V, 50Hz - Plug Type G, D, M

## International Airports

Airport Name	Airport Code	Airport Location
Hong Kong International Airport	HKG	Hong Kong

## ENTRY & EXIT REQUIREMENTS

The following information is for citizens of the United States. If you are a citizen of a country other than the United States, contact an embassy or consulate for up-to-date requirements. For additional questions regarding entry/exit requirements, contact Global Rescue at (+1) (617) 459-4200.

A passport valid for at least one month beyond the intended departure date, proof of sufficient funds for the duration of your stay, and an onward or return ticket are required for travel to Hong Kong. A visa is not required for trips lasting less than 90 days. Travelers planning to stay longer than 90 days must apply for a visa prior to departing the United States. A visa extension can be obtained at the Immigration Department of Hong Kong SAR. Applications for Hong Kong and mainland China visas must be carried out separately. Failure to produce the required documents may result in denial of entry.

Note: Many neighboring areas to Hong Kong require a valid passport for at least six months beyond the date of entry. If planning on regional travel beyond Hong Kong plan accordingly.

### IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

**The following items are permitted:** 19 cigarettes OR 25 cigars OR 25 grams of tobacco and one liter of alcohol above 30 ABV.

**The following restrictions apply:** Weapons, explosives, and ammunition require a license from the Hong Kong Police Department. Plants and their products must have a license from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Pets must have a veterinary health certificate, proof of inoculation, and import permit from the Veterinary Officer of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Medicine must have a doctor's prescription.

**The following items are prohibited:** Illegal drugs, knives, deadly weapons, controlled chemicals, endangered species and their products, radio transmission equipment, uncut diamonds, meat, poultry, counterfeit goods, strategic commodities, and pornography.

### EXPORT RESTRICTIONS

**The following restrictions apply:** Weapons, explosives, ammunition, plants, and their products must have a license. Medicine must have a doctor's prescription.

**The following items are prohibited:** Illegal drugs, knives, deadly weapons, endangered species and their products, radio transmission equipment, controlled chemicals, uncut diamonds, meat, poultry, powdered milk formula, counterfeit goods, and pornography.

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

<b>Intl. Country Code</b>	+852
<b>Fire</b>	999
<b>Police</b>	999
<b>Ambulance</b>	999

### Contact Information for Select Embassies

#### **US Consulate General in Hong Kong SAR**

26 Garden Road, Central  
Hong Kong  
Telephone: (+852) 2841-2211  
Emergency After-Hours Telephone: (+852) 2523-9011

#### **UK Consulate General in Hong Kong SAR**

1 Supreme Court Road, Admiralty  
Hong Kong  
Telephone: (+852) 2901-3000

#### **Australian Consulate General in Hong Kong SAR**

23th Floor Harbour Center  
25 Harbour Road  
Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Telephone: (+852) 2827-8881

For other embassies, contact Global Rescue at (+1) (617) 459-4200.