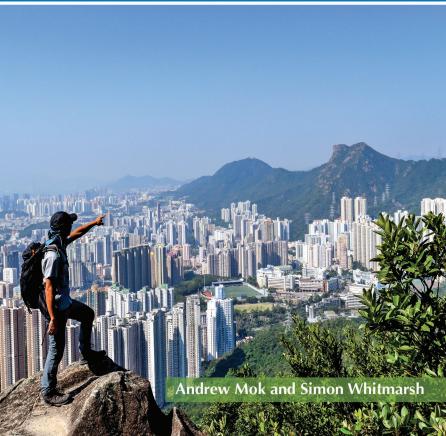


HIKING IN HONG KONG

Hong Kong, Lantau, MacLehose and Wilson Trails and 21 day walks



HIKING IN HONG KONG

HONG KONG, LANTAU, MACLEHOSE AND WILSON TRAILS AND 21 DAY WALKS by Andrew Mok and Simon Whitmarsh



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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1051/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone. co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Looking towards Lion Rock, the emblem representing the 'never give up' spirit of the city

CONTENTS

Map key .	5
Route sun	nmary tables
Preface	9
INTRODU	UCTION
About Ho	ng Kong13
Geology.	
Wildlife .	
Plants and	d flowers
History	
Getting th	ere
	ound
	and when to go
	odation
	nones and internet
	alking in Hong Kong
	ake
	ing
	GPS
	d safety
	ies
	guide
LONG-DI	ISTANCE TRAILS
Trek 1	Hong Kong Trail
Trek 2	Lantau Trail
Trek 3	MacLehose Trail
Trek 4	Wilson Trail
TICK I	***************************************
DAY WAI	KS
Walk 1	Big Knife Mountain
Walk 2	Tai Lam Chung Reservoir Circuit
Walk 3	Yuen Tsuen Ancient Trail
· rain 5	100

Walk 4	Ben Nevis
Walk 5	Tung Ping Chau
Walk 6	Hanging Lantern and the ghost villages
Walk 7	Wong Leng and Bride's Pool
Walk 8	Plover Cove Reservoir Country Trail
Walk 9	Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve
Walk 10	Lion Rock and the walk of many hills 200
Walk 11	Tai Tan and Cheung Sheung Country Trails 206
Walk 12	Ma On Shan Country Park
Walk 13	Ko Lau Wan to Sharp Peak
Walk 14	High Junk Peak
Walk 15	Chi Ma Wan Country Trail (extended version)
Walk 16	Cheung Chau
Walk 17	Violet Hill
Walk 18	Tung Lung Chau
Walk 19	Mount Stenhouse, Lamma Island244
Walk 20	From pier to pier, Lamma Island
Walk 21	Po Toi Island
Appendix .	A Useful contacts
Appendix	B Language and glossary

Note on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

Symbols used on route maps lighthouse alternative route peak start point campsite finish point building **SF** start/finish point viewpoint alternative start/finish point bridge alternative start point transmitter station alternative finish point obelisk route direction cave woodland other feature urban areas water feature station/railway toilets underground railway refreshments motorway tunnel shelter cable car route Relief in metres 800-1000 600-800 400-600 Contour lines are SCALE: 1:50,000 200-400 drawn at 25m intervals 0 kilometres 0.5 and highlighted at 0-200 0 miles 100m intervals. GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1051/GPX.

ROUTE SUMMARY TABLES

Hong Kong Trail

Stage	Distance	Ascent	Grade	Time	Page
Day 1	18km	1400m	difficult	5hr 45min	34
Day 2	16km	980m	difficult	5hr 30min	40
Day 3	16km	1050m	difficult	4hr 45min	45
Total	50km	3430m		16hr	

Lantau Trail

Stage	Distance	Ascent	Grade	Time	Page
Day 1	14.5km	1560m	challenging	6hr	54
Day 2	16km	670m	difficult	5hr 30min	61
Day 3	17.25km	1020m	difficult	6hr	68
Day 4	14km	760m	moderate	4hr	72
Day 5	12km	540m	moderate	4hr	76
Total	73.75km	4550m		25hr 30min	

MacLehose Trail

Stage	Distance	Ascent	Grade	Time	Page
Day 1	24.5km	1340m	challenging	8hr 30min	88
Day 2	10.25km	670m	moderate	3hr 45min	94
Day 3	23.5km	1770m	challenging	9hr	98
Day 4	20.75km	1680m	challenging	8hr 15min	105
Day 5	22.5km	990m	difficult	6hr 30min	111
Total	101.5km	6450m		36hr	

Wilson Trail

Stage	Distance	Ascent	Grade	Time	Page
Day 1	11.5km	1040m	difficult	5hr	122
Day 2	9.25km	560m	moderate	3hr 30min	126
Day 3	16km	1270m	difficult	6hr	131
Day 4	20.5km	1080m	difficult	6hr 45min	136
Day 5	23km	1470m	challenging	9hr	143
Total	80.25km	5420m		30hr 15min	

Day walks

Walk		Distance	Ascent	Grade	Time	Page
Walk 1	Big Knife Mountain	8.75km	560m	moderate	3hr 30min	154
Walk 2	Tai Lam Chung Reservoir Circuit	22.5km	1200m	difficult	6hr 30min	158
Walk 3	Yuen Tsuen Ancient Trail	14.5km	730m	moderate	4hr 30min	164
Walk 4	Ben Nevis	8km	600m	difficult	4hr	170
Walk 5	Tung Ping Chau	7km	140m	easy	3hr	175
Walk 6	Hanging Lantern and the ghost villages	17km	810m	difficult	6hr 15min	180
Walk 7	Wong Leng and Bride's Pool	10.5km	780m	difficult	4hr 30min	187
Walk 8	Plover Cove Reservoir Country Trail	18.5km	780m	difficult	6hr 30min	192
Walk 9	Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve	10.5km	660m	easy	4hr	197
Walk 10	Lion Rock and the walk of many hills	11.75km	1080m	challenging	6hr	200
Walk 11	Tai Tan and Cheung Sheung Country Trails	16km	800m	moderate	5hr 30min	206
Walk 12	Ma On Shan Country Park	9.5km	680m	moderate	4hr	212
Walk 13	Ko Lau Wan to Sharp Peak	15.5km	1080m	challenging	7hr	217
Walk 14	High Junk Peak	8.75km	600m	moderate	3hr 30min	223
Walk 15	Chi Ma Wan Country Trail (extended version)	21.5km	1250m	difficult	7hr 15min	227
Walk 16	Cheung Chau	12.5km	470m	moderate	4hr 30min	231
Walk 17	Violet Hill	5.25km	400m	easy	2hr 15min	235
Walk 18	Tung Lung Chau	7.25km	520m	easy	3hr 30min	240
Walk 19	Mount Stenhouse, Lamma Island	9km	620m	challenging	4hr 30min	244
Walk 20	From pier to pier, Lamma Island	6.25km	270m	easy	2hr 15min	249
Walk 21	Po Toi Island	6.25km	340m	easy	2hr 30min	253



PREFACE



When we came together – one of us born in Hong Kong and the other a frequent visitor to the area – to write this guide, little did we know what wonderful hiking opportunities awaited us in the Pearl of the Orient. We could not have been more wrong in thinking that hiking here would be like an easy stroll or a city tour, and our eyes were opened to the hidden, nature-filled

beauty of this former British colony. The highest mountain, Tai Mo Shan, is only 957m, nothing compared to Everest, but the steep peaks and hilly landscapes of the entire area definitely give a good cardiovascular workout.

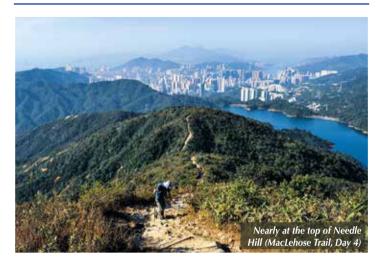
Writing this book involved us in walking extensively around all parts of the territory: hiking up some of its top 100 highest peaks, including Hong Kong's own Ben Nevis, enjoying panoramic views, circumnavigating some of the 262 outlying islands, and relishing the challenge of completing all four long-distance trails – we were astounded at what it had to offer.

We thoroughly enjoyed doing the research for this book, discovering places that even a local such as Andrew had never seen. We hope that, with its insider tips and vignettes of local information, the book will bring you as much enjoyment.

Andrew and Simon



INTRODUCTION



Hong Kong (香港 pronounced Heung Gong, meaning Fragrant Harbour) is simply 'home' to over 7.5 million locals. The name conjures up ideas of a vibrant city of multi-culturalism where East meets West, a foodie haven where it is possible to eat astoundingly well by day and night, an exciting shopping venue for almost anything and, most of all, a densely populated metropolis famous for its skyscraper landscape. It has the highest number of vertiginous buildings in the world, twice as many as New York, but if you think it is a complete concrete jungle, come hiking in Hong Kong and be very pleasantly surprised. The widely held idea of Hong Kong as an amazing skyline tells only a tiny part of the story, for it also provides the nature and challenges that serious hikers crave.

Hong Kong is 75 per cent countryside, with 440 square kilometres (40 per cent of the land mass) protected area. It is made up of a series of volcanic peaks, where the flat areas (natural or man-made) are developed, leaving steep hilly landscapes as conservation areas, offering fantastic ridge walks and superb panoramic views. The mountains are not massive but the steep ascents and descents provide great challenges; liking steps is an advantage!



Within a relatively small geographical area, it is possible to climb mountains, walk through mangrove swamps, visit old fishing villages, see wild boar or pangolin, go tropical birdwatching, explore unique geological features, and admire the astounding numbers and varieties of butterflies. There are options to camp on remote beaches for stargazing, or to be whisked off to five-star hotels and eat in Michelin-starred restaurants. should your preference and budget be that way inclined. With the efficient transport system, it is surprisingly easy to leave the hustle and bustle of this international business centre behind. giving hikers easy access to nature.

Once stunning views, challenging climbs and massive multi-day

hikes are added into the mix of gentler family-orientated strolls through national parks and nature reserves, the place becomes interesting to hikers of all grades looking for something a bit different. Hong Kong cannot be described as wilderness: it is for people who appreciate that the famous skyscraper landscape can add an extra dimension as a background to startling natural beauty. In addition, this is an archipelago of 263 islands nestling in the South China Sea, providing opportunities for circumnavigation of the islands as well as many coastal walks visiting white-sanded beaches.

Visit Hong Kong for an Eastmeets-West extravaganza? Yes! But why not add UNESCO-listed geology

(Walk 5, or Section 2 of MacLehose Trail); ridge walks high above the concrete jungle (Walk 10); or wildlifewatching, ranging from eagles to dolphins (Lantau Trail). Whether visiting for mere days or for longer, there are hikes here to astound, to challenge, to excite, to surprise, and, above all, to provide calming nature in contrast to the bustling, frenetic metropolis. Hiking is one of the locals' favourite pastimes, and Hong Kong has also become renowned worldwide as a hiking destination with award-winning walks such as the Dragon's Back and MacLehose Trail.

This book covers the length and breadth of this surprisingly diverse territory. It includes all four long-distance trails (Hong Kong, Lantau, MacLehose and Wilson), broken into chunks of reasonable size with emphasis on ease of access via public transport, and with camping information where relevant. The day walks range from easier hikes suitable for families or those with limited time, to challenging hikes up to fantastic summits including the top ten highest mountains, and trails in more remote areas.

ABOUT HONG KONG

The official name is the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, abbreviated to SAR. It is both part of China and administratively separate under the 'one country, two systems' principle, which has been in place since Hong Kong ceased being a British protectorate in 1997.

Covering a total area of 2755 square kilometres, it consists of Hong Kong Island (the second largest island), Lantau Island (the biggest island), Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories bordering mainland China, plus another 261 islands. It is surrounded by the South China Sea on three sides.

It is famous for its harbour views, skyscraper landscape, food (especially Cantonese cuisine), and film stars, including Bruce Lee; it remains an incredibly important centre for world trade and is one of the richest cities in the world. The population has increased from 3 million in the 1960s to 7.5 million.

There is a significant amount of greenery in Hong Kong. This is because building on steep slopes is difficult, so development tends to be on the flat of the shoreline or on reclaimed land, leaving the hills to nature. This is further helped by ample amounts of water, especially during the typhoon season, and most plants and trees are evergreen due to the subtropical climate.

Frequently encountered are catchwaters, channels for rainwater drainage, which are necessary for both protecting slopes (see MacLehose Trail, Section 10) and filling the many reservoirs of Hong Kong.

GEOLOGY

Hong Kong is 85 per cent volcanic in origin, mostly igneous rock, including granite, which is slowly cooled magma. It only became the archipelago that it is today when the sea levels rose at the end of the last ice age.

The Hong Kong Global Geopark is UNESCO-listed and consists of two main areas. The best displays of its explosive volcanic past can be seen in the Sai Kung area, where the incredibly rare pink hexagonal columns are very similar in appearance to the Giant's Causeway in Ireland but with a different formation process. The columns are silica-rich volcanic rock as opposed to the dark grey basalt columns found elsewhere. Po Pin Chau (nicknamed Giant Pipe Organ) and the twisted hexagonal columns

near East Dam are good examples (MacLehose Trail, Section 2).

The second geopark area is in the North East New Territories, showcasing the rarer sedimentary rocks. The best places to appreciate these are Tung Ping Chau (Walk 5) for multiple layers of the youngest, attractively eroded rocks, or Ma On Shan (Walk 12) and Plover Cove area (Walks 7 and 8) for the oldest Devonian ones.

WILDLIFE

Birds

A staggering 530 bird species are found in Hong Kong. This is due to its subtropical climate and highly varied environments (coastal, shrublands, woodlands and wetlands), as well as its location on a major migratory





route, the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. Good walks for seeing birds are Lantau Trail, Tai Po Kau (Walk 9) and Po Toi Island (Walk 21).

Frequently encountered are redwhiskered bulbul, a cheerful sparrowsized bird with red cheeks and a punk haircut, and the happy calls of the various types of laughingthrushes. Black kites are a regular sight, even in the middle of the city, and are the most common raptor seen. If you are lucky, you could spot colourful male sunbirds, ospreys or even giant whitebellied sea eagles.

Bird lovers might consider taking a break from walking to visit Mai Po Nature Reserve in the northeast of Hong Kong (www.wwf.org. hk/en/wetlands/mai-po), although please note that a permit is required. Among the species to be seen here are

black-faced spoonbills; formerly critically endangered and now a protected species, 20 per cent of the world population overwinters in Hong Kong.

For further reading, check out *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong* by Ray Tipper.

Animals

In such a densely populated territory, you would not expect much wildlife. However, thanks to the varied habitats and conservation efforts, there are chances to see unfamiliar species such as leopard cat, barking deer, pangolin, porcupine, mongoose and otter.

Rhesus and long-tailed macaque monkeys were introduced around Kowloon and Shing Mun Reservoirs (see Wilson Trail, Section 6), but, due to overpopulation, contraception is being trialled. Avoid looking

HIKING IN HONG KONG

THE HONG KONG TRAIL – Day 1

DAY 1

The Peak to Wan Chai Gap Road

Start Tram station at The Peak 山頂纜車站

Finish Wan Chai Gap Road bus stop, Stubbs Road 灣仔峽道巴

士站,司徒拔道

Distance18kmTotal ascent1400mGradeDifficultTime5hr 45min

Terrain All on well-made paths; a mixture of stone and concrete

steps, dirt and concrete paths, with minimal road and

pavement

Summits Victoria Peak (552m)

This stage begins with enticing panoramic views at Victoria Peak, one of Hong Kong's most famous landmarks, and incorporates some very wild-looking scenery. To make an adventure of the start, consider taking The Peak Tram, a funicular railway built in 1888 to serve the rich and privileged.

Much of this stage is delightfully cool and shaded beneath the forest canopy. Section 1 has the best views. Section 2 is easy walking, but best linked with Sections 1 and 3 to add interest. Section 3 is very quiet and crosses some attractive burbling streams, even in the dry season.

Public transport for Day 1

Beginning: From Hong Kong MTR station (Tung Chung line) exit B1, take bus 15 or 15X from the bus terminus across the road to the right; or take The Peak Tram (see Appendix A).

To finish at Section 1/2 junction: Fork right, signed Pok Fu Lam Road. Walk along this pleasant path by the reservoir for 1km, reach a T-junction and turn right; the bus stop is 100 metres along on the opposite side of the road (Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road bus stop, Pok Fu Lam Road 薄扶林水塘道巴士站, 薄扶林道). Take bus 7 to Hong Kong MTR station (Tung Chung line).

To start at Section 1/2 junction: From Hong Kong MTR station (Tung Chung line) exit B1, walk to the bus terminus across the road to the right; take bus 7 to Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road bus stop, Pok Fu Lam Road 薄扶林水塘道巴士站, 薄扶林道. Head NW then almost immediately turn right (N) onto Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road. Walk up this road for 1km, then turn right (S), signed Peel Rise.

To finish at Section 2/3 junction: Continue following the road (Peel Rise, although no sign) SW by the catchwater for 400 metres. Stay on the road and at the T-junction at its end, after 800 metres, turn right, downhill (S) along Aberdeen Reservoir Road. Go straight on at the crossroads with Tsung Man Street/Yue Fai Road, then first left onto Aberdeen Main Road. Yue Fai Road bus stop 漁暉道巴士站 is 100 metres along. Take bus 7 to IFC Mall for Hong Kong MTR station (Tung Chung line).

To start at Section 2/3 junction: From Hong Kong MTR station (Tung Chung line) exit B1, walk to the bus terminus across the road to the right; take bus 7 to Tsung Man Street bus stop, Aberdeen Reservoir Road 崇文街巴士站, 香港仔水塘道. Head N along Aberdeen Reservoir Road for 150 metres then turn left along Peel Rise. Immediately fork right (still Peel Rise but no sign) and walk up this road for 1.2km before turning right (NE), signed Wan Chai Gap and Peak Road.

End: Take bus 15 to Central MTR station (Island and Tsuen Wan lines).

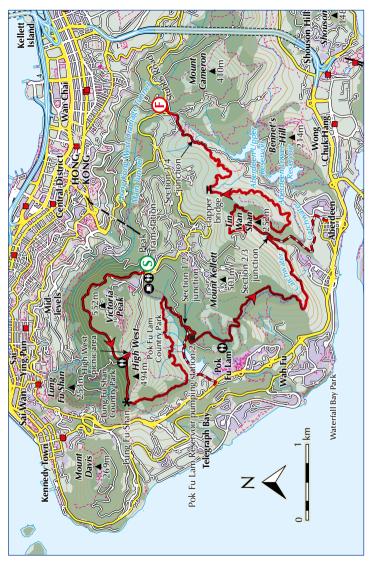
Section 1

From The Peak Tram station, with your back to the exit, turn right (W), then immediately right again to Lugard Road, which is the official start of Hong Kong Trail. This rapidly becomes a pedestrianised route with amazing views. Stay on Lugard Road, which is entirely level (don't go up or down), for 2.4km to reach **High West Picnic Area**.

Turn sharp right to walk along Harlech Road, following signs for Pok Fu Lam Reservoir. At the end of the concrete path 750 metres later is Pok Fu Lam Country Park. Lung Fu Shan Viewing Point is here, looking westwards towards Lantau Island on the South China Sea. Follow the crazy paving to a set of stairs on the far side and go down for about 100 metres. Then at a T-junction

Allow extra time for this section for the superlative views that change as the route winds around the summit, accompanied by fascinating information boards.

HIKING IN HONG KONG
THE HONG KONG TRAIL – DAY 1



VICTORIA PEAK

Victoria Peak, regarded as the symbol of the 'Pearl of the Orient', is the highest peak on Hong Kong Island, with a commanding view overlooking the harbour, and was the site of the colonial governor's residence.

The old name, documented in the Qing Dynasty, was 硬頭山, meaning Hard Head Hill. Legend had it that after the famous pirate Cheung Po Tsai (see Walk 16) was defeated, the Hongkongers, mainly fishermen, believed that the territory would become peaceful, hence the name was changed to 太平山, meaning Peaceful Hill.

After colonisation, the name was changed officially three times: first, to Mount Possession, then Mount Austin, and finally Victoria Peak. The locals did not like the literal translation of the latter, so the Chinese name was changed to 扯旗山, meaning Raising the Flag Peak. Nobody knows the exact origin, whether it is linked to raising the flag when the British colonised Hong Kong, the use of flags by seafarers for naval navigation, or flags used in meteorology to measure wind speed. More importantly, however, most Hongkongers past or present would simply call it The Peak.

turn left. Continue on the main path, wonderful and shaded, ignoring any of the few turnings off the path, now following signs for Chi Fu (not to the reservoir).

The next 3km are amazing: despite being on Hong Kong Island, one of the most populous places in the world, here the route traverses dense undergrowth between thick clumps of bamboos and crosses trickling streams. Get to a road and turn right, downhill; 150 metres later is a fork, which is the **Section 1/2 junction**. To continue the trail, fork left, following signs for Peel Rise.

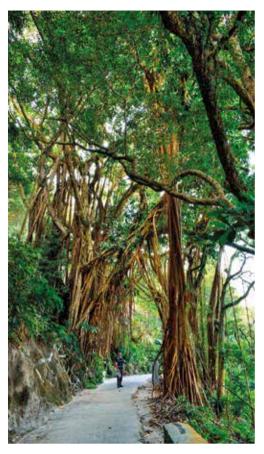
Section 2

About 400 metres from the Peel Rise turn, walk past **Pok Fu Lam Reservoir**



HIKING IN HONG KONG
THE HONG KONG TRAIL – Day 1

Banyan tree tunnel



It is bizarre to see a 'beware of horse' sign here. This was a bridle path for the British gentry in colonial times, and there is still a riding school nearby.

pumping station 2. Shortly after, with a picnic area on the right, turn left up some steps, still following signs for Peel Rise. At a concrete road 200 metres later, go left, signed Chi Fu. This ends after 400 metres at a T-junction; turn left again, following signs for Peel Rise. ◀

Follow the main path for about 2km to the end of concrete, with amazing views of Lamma Island on the

right. Go down some steps to a shelter and straight on at a footpath crossroads. At a fork 200 metres later, go left, signed Peel Rise. Follow this down many stairs (not taking any turnings) for 300 metres. At the bottom, cross over the catchwater to a T-junction and go left to walk along it (no sign) for about 1km. Shortly after a large dam-like structure is a road junction; this is the **Section 2/3 junction**. To continue the trail, turn left (NE) along this road (which is Peel Rise, although no signs), signed Wan Chai Gap and Peak Road.

Section 3

Continue NE along Peel Rise for 600 metres, then at a path crossroads (with a picnic area and shelter on the left), go right, signed Wan Chai Gap. This is another one of those sections where the sight and sound of the city have completely vanished, as the route crosses over a pretty river. At a junction 1.6km later, go straight ahead, signed Aberdeen Reservoir. Cross another beautiful stream via a **clapper bridge**; 2.5km after the previous junction, reach another junction and go straight ahead following signs for Wan Chai Gap (Aberdeen Reservoir is signed right).

Arrive at Aberdeen Reservoir Road 850 metres later, which is the official **Section 3/4 junction.** ▶ To finish today's itinerary, turn left following signs for Wan Chai Gap, cross a bridge and go up the road for 500 metres to Mount Cameron Road. Turn left, then turn right at the end of this road 150 metres later onto **Stubbs Road**; Wan Chai Gap Road bus stop is a further 50 metres on the left.

To continue the trail, cross the road and take a path signed Black's Link via Middle Gap Road.







- four multi-day treks and 21 varied day walks Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, New Territories and the islands
 - Tai Mo Shan (the highest summit) and other peaks



The Hong Kong archipelago is one of surprising diversity and contrast, where high-rise modern cities are set against a backdrop of lush green mountains, and sandy beaches lie right alongside dense jungle. It's also a great destination for hiking, with countless paths, including the award-winning multi-day Hong Kong and MacLehose Trails, and a sophisticated public transport system offering easy access to many of the routes.

This guide presents a hand-picked selection of some of the best day walks Hong Kong has to offer, plus four short treks. You'll also find all the necessary practical information, as well as fascinating overviews of local history, plants and wildlife.

- best walking from October to April
- graded routes, from easy family walks to strenuous mountain trails
- public transport information and language notes



