



Hong Kong heritage: A cultural showcase for Refugee Week 2025

Geographic and Language 地理和語言

Geographic 地理



Hong Kong is in southern China, spanning about 1,100 square kilometers with 7.5 million people. It includes Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories, Lantau Island, and smaller outlying islands.

Language 語言

Hong Kong has two official languages: Chinese and English. The government follows a "Two Written, Three Spoken Languages" policy, meaning:

- Written languages: Chinese and English
- Spoken languages: Cantonese, English, and Mandarin

Cantonese is the most common language, used by over 90% of locals. Traditional Chinese is the standard writing system.

Honouring Cantonese and Traditional Chinese supports the "One Country, Two Systems" policy, which guarantees Hong Kong's way of life remains unchanged for 50 years. (Source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org>)



Culture of Hong Kong 香港文化

Hong Kong's Food Culture 香港飲食文化

Chopsticks is the main tableware in Hong Kong.



The etiquette of using chopstick:

- No pointing or waving – Don't use chopsticks to gesture at people.
- Avoid sticking them upright – Never place chopsticks straight into a bowl of rice.
- No tapping – Don't hit dishes or tableware with chopsticks.
- Respect others' chopsticks – Don't clash or overlap them.
- Use of serving chopsticks – When sharing food, use separate chopsticks for serving.
- Choose before picking – Decide on a dish first; don't hover your chopsticks over food.

Chinese restaurant 中式茶樓



Hong Kong people love dim sum for breakfast, starting as early as 5am. It includes Chinese tea and small dishes like shrimp dumplings and barbecued pork buns. In Cantonese, this tradition is called "one cup and two pieces," meaning one cup of tea with two dim sum items



Dai Pai Dongs 大排檔 - A fading piece of Hong Kong's food culture



Dai Pai Dongs, Hong Kong's famous street-side food stalls, used to be everywhere. But now, they're disappearing due to strict hygiene rules and the government stopping new permits.

Traditional Chinese Cuisine 傳統中餐

Hong Kong's food culture blends Eastern and Western flavours. The city offers a huge variety of international cuisines, earning it the nickname "Gourmet Paradise."

Traditional Breakfast 傳統早餐



Image source: <https://sunny1948.blogspot.com>

Hong Kong's traditional breakfast includes congee, "Yau chai kwai" (fried dough), and "Chai leung"—a special dish where fried dough is wrapped in rice rolls.



Street Snacks 街頭小食

Street food is a big part of Hong Kong's food culture. Popular snacks include shumai, stuffed aubergine/pepper/tofu, steamed vermicelli rolls, egg waffles, rice pudding cake, fried chicken legs, beef offal, ice cream, and grilled cold noodles. Locals love these tasty bites!



“Cart noodle” 車仔麵



Cart noodles got their name from mobile vendors who used wooden trolleys to carry kitchen utensils and food. Customers pick their favourite noodles, toppings, and soup, making it a flexible and affordable meal loved by many.



Chinese Herbal Tea 中藥

In Hong Kong's hot and humid climate, Chinese herbal teas help reduce dampness and offer health benefits. People drink them for colds, sore throats, or acne





Traditional Festivals in Hong Kong 香港傳統節日

New Year's Eve markets 年宵年場



Around the 20th of the last lunar month, New Year's Eve markets open across Hong Kong, selling auspicious New Year flowers and festive foods. After a family dinner, people visit these markets together to celebrate the new year.

Lunar New Year 農曆新年 (Lunar New Year, 1st day of the lunar calendar)

*Lunar New Year, also known as Spring Festival, is the most important festival in Hong Kong. It is family reunions and welcoming the new year. Traditions include decorating with couplets, a big family dinner on New Year's Eve, giving red envelopes (**Lai see**) on the 1st day, and visiting relatives. The 7th day of the lunar calendar, "**Yan Yat**", is known as the common people's birthday.*

Festive foods carry lucky meanings, such as **egg rolls and fried dough** ("Golden and Silver House"), **sesame balls and pistachios** ("Always Smiling"), **sugar lotus seeds and winter melon** ("Sweet and Happy"), **large fish and meats** ("Abundance Year After Year"), and **celebratory fruits** ("Great Fortune")





Float parade 花車巡遊



<https://www.discoverhongkong.com/>

On the 1st night of Lunar New Year, a dazzling float parade lights up Tsim Sha Tsui. Performers sing and dance alongside decorated floats, celebrating tradition and multiculturalism with lively energy.

Firework 煙花匯演



On the 2nd day of the Lunar New Year, there will be a fireworks display, and all the citizens will enjoy the fireworks together, which is a metaphor for welcoming a bright and beautiful new year.

Lion Dance 舞獅



In addition, lion dance not only adds atmosphere and brings blessings to the Lunar New Year, but also becomes a promotional activity for many commercial organizations.



Lantern Festival 元宵節 / 東方情人節 (15th day of the Lunar New Year)

The Lantern Festival is known as the Chinese Valentine's Day, bringing a romantic glow to parks and recreational areas with stunning lantern displays. Families and couples gather to admire lanterns, solve riddles, and enjoy the festive atmosphere. A special tradition is sharing rice balls, symbolizing family unity and reunion.



Ching Ming Festival 清明節 (15th day after the Spring Equinox, usually April 4-6)

During Ching Ming festival, people honour and pay respects to their ancestors by visiting their graves and clearing weeds to show respect and remembrance.

Dragon Boat Festival 端午節 (5th day of the 5th lunar month)

The Dragon Boat Festival honours the ancient Chinese statesman **Wat Yuen**, who drowned in protest against corruption. Legend says villagers raced in boats to find him and threw rice dumplings into the river to keep fish away.



Today, dragon boat races and eating rice dumplings are traditional practices of this festival. And, it has become an international sport, making the races more entertaining for spectators.



Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋節 (15th day of the 8th lunar month)

In ancient Chinese legend, ten suns appeared and burned the land, destroying crops. A strong hero named **Hau Ngai** saved the people by shooting down nine of the suns.



Families gather for a special meal to celebrate harvest and unity, enjoying mooncakes, seasonal fruits like starfruit, pomelos, and persimmons, along with other traditional foods. After dinner, they admire the moon and light lanterns together.



There are various Mid-Autumn lantern fairs, the Victoria Park's lantern exhibition being the largest. The event features lantern displays, traditional craft performances, games, and lantern riddles.

Chung Yeung Festival 重陽節 (9th day of the 9th lunar month)



According to legend, a plague hit a village, harming many people. A wise sage advised them to climb a mountain on the **9th day of the 9th month** for safety. Over time, this became a tradition on **Chung Yeung Festival**



Winter Solstice 冬至

The Winter Solstice is a major festival in Hong Kong, marking the longest night of the year and the transition to warmer days. It's a time for family, harmony, and joy.

On this night, families gather for a festive meal, enjoying sweet rice dumplings (**rice balls**) as a symbol of togetherness.





Hong Kong's Unique Features 香港的特色

Health Foods: Ginseng, Sea Products, and Herbal Remedies

健康養生食品:人蔘、海產和中藥



Image source: <https://www.discoverhongkong.com/hk-tc>

Hong Kong people believe food is better than medicine for health. They often use ingredients like ginseng, seafood, and herbs in their cooking, especially in soups, to keep their bodies strong and balanced.

Feng Shui 風水



Image source: <https://www.discoverhongkong.com/>

Hong Kong people believe Feng Shui brings good luck and helps avoid misfortune. Many take it seriously, applying its principles to home design and even major life decisions. The Chinese University of HK even offers Feng Shui courses, showing how important it is to the culture.

Villain hitting 打小人



Image source: <https://www.discoverhongkong.com>

Every March, Hong Kong's "beating the Villain" tradition is at its busiest. People gather under Goose Neck Bridge in Causeway Bay, a popular spot for the ritual. Elderly women set up stalls, burn incense, sacrifice paper-cut white tigers, and use slippers to drive away bad luck—helping people overcome difficulties.



Cantonese Opera Culture 粵劇



Cantonese opera blends drama, music, literature, visual art, martial arts, and dance. Despite challenges over time, it has endured and remains an important cultural tradition. It is recognized by UNESCO as part of humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage.



Folk Festivals 民俗節日

Hong Kong has many traditional festivals and customs unique to its people. Like many festivals in Chinese communities, these celebrations are often related to the worship of gods or folklore.

Cheung Chau Bun Festival 長洲太平清醮



Image source: <https://www.discoverhongkong.com/>

The Cheung Chau Bun Festival is a special folk event in Hong Kong, featuring Bun Grabbing and the Piao Se Parade. According to legend, locals prayed to the North Emperor during a plague, and after parading his statue, the epidemic ended. Today, the festival is recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage.

Yulan Festival (Festival of the Hungry Ghosts) 盂蘭勝會



The Yulan Festival, rooted in Chaozhou tradition, has over a century of history. It takes place throughout the 7th lunar month, featuring sacrifices, peace rice distribution, lucky item auctions, and divine opera performances. In 2011, it was recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage.



Housing in Hong Kong 香港房屋

Housing in Hong Kong is roughly divided into three categories: public housing, home ownership housing and private buildings.

Public Housing 公共房屋

Public housing in Hong Kong is government providing affordable homes for lower-income residents. It plays a key role in the city's housing, with nearly half the population living in public housing. Most public housing has over 40 floors.



Public housing in Hong Kong

Image source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

Home ownership housing 居者有其屋



Kam Hay Court in Ma On Shan

Image source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Ownership_Scheme

The Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) helps residents buy their own homes by offering flats at below-market prices to public housing tenants and low-income individuals. Resale is restricted, either to eligible buyers or on the open market after paying a premium to the Housing Authority.



Private buildings 私人樓宇

Private developers build these high-rise buildings, a common sight in Hong Kong. They often have integrated management for the whole complex, unlike individually managed blocks. Some also include markets, malls, or recreational facilities.

Public housing 公共房屋

Public housing is rented by the government to Hong Kong residents and sub-letting is not allowed. The general waiting time is 5-8 years.



Image source: <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/>

In the early 1950s, political changes in China led many people to move to Hong Kong, causing a surge in squatter settlements. These overcrowded, makeshift homes had poor living conditions and were prone to frequent fires.

In 1953, a huge fire in Shek Kip Mei on Christmas night left over 50,000 people homeless. The government quickly built two-story blocks for those affected. Later, the Hong Kong Housing Authority was created to provide affordable housing for low- to middle-income families.



Image source: <https://www.facebook.com/tsewail/posts>



Image source: https://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/public_housing/

The 1st public housing estate built by Hong Kong Housing Authority in 1957-North Point Estate.



Image source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_housing_in_Hong_Kong

Nowadays, most of the current public housing estates have over 40 floors.

Home Ownership Scheme 居者有其屋

The Home Ownership Scheme - Hong Kong Housing Authority builds and sells housing units at a price lower than the market value, with the land price deducted, to low-income citizens.



Image source: <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/public-housing-heritage/public-housing-development/index.html>

Private housing 私人樓宇

Private developers build these high-rise buildings, a common sight in Hong Kong. They often have integrated management for the whole complex, unlike individually managed blocks. Some also include markets, malls, or recreational facilities.



Image source: <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/hong-kong-skyscrapers-with-holes/index.html>



Private housing can be categorized into several types:

Luxury Residences 豪宅



Wealthy people who live there. The properties with property management and clubhouses.

Private Estate 私人屋苑

Typical private estate usually composed of multiple buildings, with property management, some of them have clubhouses.



Single building 單幢樓宇 :

A single building with property management, but no clubhouse.



Image source: <https://www.hkp.com>.



Tenement building 戰前樓宇

These are old residential buildings in Hong Kong, over 50 years old, standalone, and without lifts.



Image source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org>

Village houses 村屋



'Ting Uk' are mainly built by indigenous villagers in Hong Kong who own the land. They are more common in the New Territories.

Subdivided units 分間樓宇單位

About 110,000 households live in subdivided units, with 20-30% of them under 8 square meters. Residents must share public kitchens and toilets, often facing poor hygiene conditions.



Image source: <https://www.hk01.com/>





Caged homes 籠屋



Image source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hant/%E7%B1%A0%E5%B1%8B>

Caged homes first emerged in the 1950s as temporary housing for migrant workers in Hong Kong. Residents sleep on beds enclosed by iron cages, giving them their name. By 2010, around 100,000 people still lived in these cramped spaces.

Rooftop house 天台屋



Image source:
https://www.hk01.com/article/335459?utm_source=01articlecopy&utm_medium=referral

A rooftop house is a structure built on top of a building. Most are illegal, but many poor people still live in them. They are very hot in summer and cold in winter.



Transportation 交通運輸

Hong Kong has a world-renowned, efficient, and diverse public transportation system, heavily reliant on the MTR (Mass Transit Railway). Beyond the MTR, buses, ferries, trams, and taxis also play a crucial role in getting around the city.

Mass Transit Railway 港鐵



The MTR is Hong Kong's biggest transit system, with heavy rail and light rail. It connects major areas like the New Territories, Kowloon, Hong Kong Island, and Lantau Island, as well as mainland China. The Light Rail serves Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. The system has 10 main lines and 68 light rail stops.

Trams 電車



Hong Kong's tram, known as "Ding Ding," has been running since 1904. It operates only on Hong Kong Island, from Kennedy Town to Shau Kei Wan, passing through Happy Valley. It is the world's last double-decker tram system still in operation and one of Hong Kong's oldest transport modes.

Buses 巴士

Buses are a major form of public transportation in Hong Kong and are categorized into three types: franchised buses, non-franchised buses, and minibuses.



Franchised Buses 專營巴士

Franchised buses are the most common form of transport, with four main companies providing services across nearly 700 bus routes.



Non-Franchised Buses: 非專營巴士

Known locally as "village buses," non-franchised bus services are operated by various companies and mainly serve areas where franchised bus services do not operate efficiently. These buses aim to alleviate the pressure on public transportation during peak hours.



Minibuses 公共小巴:

Hong Kong's minibuses complement buses and trains. There are two types:

- Red minibuses – Flexible routes, schedules, and fares, not government-regulated.
- Green minibuses – Fixed routes, schedules, and fares, regulated by the government.



Taxis 的士



Hong Kong has three types of taxis:

- **Red (Urban Taxis)** – Operate everywhere, including Kowloon, the New Territories, Lantau Island north, the airport, Disneyland, and major ports.
- **Green (New Territories Taxis)** – Operate only in the New Territories.
- **Blue (Lantau Island Taxis)** – Operate only on Lantau Island.

Passengers crossing the harbour may need to pay a tunnel fee.



Ferries 渡海小輪



Domestic Ferries: Hong Kong's ferry services operate routes between the New Territories, outlying islands, and Hong Kong Island.

Air Transport 飛機 / 空中巴士



Hong Kong's air transport is extremely busy. The Hong Kong International Airport, located at Chek Lap Kok on Lantau Island, is the fifth-busiest international airport for passenger traffic worldwide and the busiest cargo airport globally.

This content was developed with support from Warwickshire's Migration Team to showcase the culture and history of Hong Kong. It celebrates the Hong Kong community in our county as part of Warwickshire's Refugee Week events and programme.

