**Hong Kong Overview**

Hong Kong can be divided into three main regions—Hong Kong Island and nearby islets; the mainland Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutters Island; and the New Territories, composed principally of a large area on the mainland, Lantau Island, and most of the colony’s 235 other small islands. Part of the colony is situated in the Zhu Jiang, or Pearl River, delta; the Sham Chun River forms the border with China. Hong Kong consists of about 200 islands all lying south of China’s Guangdong province. Its strategic location along the South China Sea and excellent deepwater harbor have made Hong Kong a major shipping hub in East Asia.

Hong Kong is a special autonomous region of China but has its own constitution. It reverted to Chinese control on 1 July 1997, ending its 156-year status as a British Colony. China agreed to govern Hong Kong under a "one country, two systems" arrangement for 50 years to ensure that the region’s capitalist economy remains in place. China has sought to allay fears that it will undermine Hong Kong’s unique economic and political system that has made the island region attractive to foreign investors.

Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy in all administrative matters except in foreign affairs and defense. It is governed by a pro-Beijing government. Pro-democracy activists continue to resist China’s control over the prosperous island and have accused Beijing of manipulating local governance. Pro-democracy politicians won 25 of 60 elective seats in the September 2004 legislative elections, which is more than previous seats held but not enough to dominate the legislative council.

The Hong Kong government is, at present, consulting constituents on an array of legislative amendments including the mechanism for choosing the chief minister and forming the legislative council. At present, the chief minister and majority of the members of the legislative council are either directly appointed by Beijing or chosen by predominantly pro-China groups.

**Medical Information**

Recommendations may vary for short-term visitors. Always consult your travel health advisor or contact International SOS to discuss your specific needs.

**Food and Water Precautions**

Travelers have a small risk of developing diarrhea in any country; it may be advisable to drink bottled water only, especially on short trips. Always wash your hands before eating.

**Water and Beverages**

Tap water is safe for consumption. The poor maintenance of water tanks in some buildings has lead to an increased bacterial count of the water in those buildings.
Food Risk
Food is quite safe in Hong Kong, especially in hotels and well-known restaurants. There are many small restaurants and food stalls which are also safe. If you are very concerned about the safety of food, choose food that is cooked while fresh and served hot. Since the SARS outbreak, the department of health has been very strict on the hygiene of food stalls and closed many of them for good or until food hygiene standards were met. This has bankrupted quite a few of these vendors because of the high costs needed to meet these standards.

Standard of Health Care
Hong Kong is considered a center of medical excellence in Asia. Both government-run (public) and private facilities offer an international standard of care. All hospitals have an emergency room and an intensive care unit.

Hong Kong residents are increasingly being cared for in private, rather than public, hospitals. Private hospitals offer higher standards and more modern facilities; they are similar to private hospitals in Western countries. Increased occupancy rates sometimes result in a bed shortage.

Private hospitals may be more oriented towards residents than visitors or expatriates. Adventist and Matilda hospitals are more expatriate oriented. You can seek care in either system. Be aware that private healthcare is very expensive in Hong Kong.

As private hospitals do not offer all specialties and sub-specialties, some complex cases will need to be treated in public hospitals. Examples include complex neonatology, severe burns and severe psychiatric cases.

All private and some government hospitals have western-trained doctors. Most doctors speak English but this is not true of nurses. Only nurses working in the private hospitals tend to be fluent in English.

Business and Cultural Information

General Cultural Tips

- Avoid the colors blue and white for social functions and gifts, as they are the Chinese colors for mourning.
- Avoid physical contact, such as patting people on the shoulder. It will not be appreciated.
- If invited to a home, you should bring fruit, candy or cookies. Present the gift with both hands. Avoid the following as gifts: clocks (symbolize death), books (a curse to lose for gamblers) and blankets (stifle prosperity).
- Although women may cross their legs, men should sit with both feet on the floor and their hands in their laps.
- In younger generations, traditions have become less strict and more westernized.
Business Cultural Tips

- Handshakes when greeting and before leaving are customary. After the initial handshake, business cards are presented with both hands on the card. Carefully read the card before putting it away.
- The Hong Kong, SAR Chinese should be addressed by their professional title (or Mr., Mrs., Miss) followed by their surname.
- Appointments should be made as far in advance as possible.
- Punctuality is very important and demonstrates respect.
- Business dress for both men and women should be conservative. Men should wear a dark-toned suit, while women are expected to wear either a dress or a skirt and a blouse.
- Negotiations in Hong Kong, SAR are normally very slow with much attention to detail. The same negotiating team should be kept throughout the proceedings.
- Tea will be served during the negotiations. Always accept and wait for the host to begin drinking before you partake.
- Be aware that a "yes" may just be indicating that the person heard you rather than indicating agreement. A traditional Hong Kong, SAR Chinese business person will have a difficult time saying "no" directly.

Business Hours

- Mon-Fri: 0900-1300 and 1400-1800 or 1900 Sat: 0900-1300.

Public Holidays

Jan. 1 - New Year's Day
Feb. 17 - First day the Lunar New Year
Feb. 19 - Second day of the Lunar New Year
Feb. 20 - Third day of the Lunar New Year
Apr. 5 - Ching Ming Festival
Apr. 6 - Good Friday
Apr. 9 - Easter Monday
May. 1 - Labor Day
May 24 - Buddha’s Birthday
Jun. 19 - Tuen Ng Festival
Jul 1 - Hong Kong SAR Establishment Day
July 2 - Day after Hong Kong SAR Establishment Day
Sept. 25 - Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival
Sept 26 - Day after Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival
Oct. 1 - National Day
Oct. 19 - Chung Yeung Festival
Dec 25 - Christmas

Hong Kong (SAR) financial

Currency
Hong Kong Dollar (HK$) = 100 cents. Notes are in
denominations of HK$1000, 500, 100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of HK$10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50, 20 and 10 cents.

**Currency exchange**
Foreign currency can be changed in banks, hotels and bureaux de change. Banks usually offer the best rate of exchange.

**Credit & debit cards**
American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Traveler’s cheques**
Accepted almost everywhere. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler’s cheques in Pounds Sterling, U.S. Dollars or Euros. Travelers' checks may be cashed at all provincial banks and authorized money changers.

**Currency restrictions**
There are no restrictions on the import or export of either local or foreign currency.

**Banking hours**
Mon-Fri 0900-1630, Sat 0900-1230.

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**Hong Kong (SAR) Telecommunications**

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**Dialing Codes**

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3/4/2008
Calling Card International Dialing Codes
Before traveling it's recommended that you check these lists to print out the International calling codes for your country of travel for the calling card company you use.

Sprint Calling Card International Dialing Codes
AT&T Calling Card International Dialing Codes
MCI International Calling Card International Dialing codes