

The Myth of the Island of Hong Kong

> Hong Kong - Motaz Othman

Its surface is too small to appear on a map of the world, but its great international fame ensures it cannot be ignored on the economic, social, tourist and cultural map. It has a huge economy, financial markets, and commands competitive prices for its exports. Its attractions include the ports, a strategic location, openness to the East and the Occident, places of interest, history, civilization, métissée and diversified culture, festivals, dynamic exhibitions, international sports activities and wonderful landscapes. This is what makes Hong Kong one of most famous islands and cities of the world.

Inhabited for more than 6000 years, Hong Kong became Chinese for more than 2200 years. Its inhabitants devoted themselves to agriculture, fishing and the pearl trade. At the beginning of the 19th century, the English started to use its ports in their flourishing silk, tea, spice and opium trade. After the first opium war more than 130 years ago, China had to leave the island to the English for 99 years. On July 1st 1997, Hong Kong was turned over to Chinese sovereignty. It is currently managed according to political, economic and social systems different from the rest of China. It has its own currency, the Hong Kong dollar worth 12.5 American cents. With seven million inhabitants, 95% of them Chinese, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated cities in the world.

I arrived in the morning from Beijing, after taking part in the Qingdao and Beijing tourist exhibitions. My flight was on Cathay Pacific Airlines, one of the biggest airline companies in the world. Jordanians and many Arab nationals can get a visa on arrival. Hong Kong

was designated the best international airport for five years running. The Hong Kong Tourist Bureau provides visitors with information and booklets. Arab and Muslim countries could also open offices at the airport as long as they staff them with active, keen and knowledgeable personnel.

Mrs Mandy Lou, Assistant to the Director of Communications and Public Relations at the Hong Kong Tourist Board proudly describes the island as one of the most significant tourist destinations in the world, visited by 22 million people annually. It is famous for its jewelry, hand made Chinese antiques, ceramics, clothing, a variety of teas as well as ancient museums. It is an island which has something for every member of the family, especially the children. Hong Kong is also famous for delicious Chinese cuisine, universally known and appreciated.

Among the new projects, Mrs. Mandy described the largest leisure park in the world on Lanato Island, as well as the 6km teleferic opening at the beginning of next year. During a 25 minute ride visitors can

contemplate the island's splendid natural landscapes and green mountains. The maritime museum will also be opened showing the development of the shipyards, as well as the reserve of Hong Kong and Whiteland Park, with hundreds of sea birds. At the end of this year, Asia World Expo an immense showroom and exhibition centre will open close to the international airport. ■

