

Hong Kong:

Live it, love it

> Hong Kong - Mounir Fishawy

East Asian with Western flavour, Hong Kong is a harmonious combination of over 260 islands and two provinces next to south China. The new is modern par excellence, and the old attests to the authenticity, and originality of Chinese culture.



Buddha

تمثال بوذا

Hong Kong is not just an area of 1100 square kilometres on the outskirts of China, as much as a title for it, beginning with the new province of Kowloon neighbouring main land China, and ending with the islands in the South China Sea, such as: Hong Kong, Lantau, Lamma, Peng Chau and Cheung Chau. It is truly a magnificent panorama from businessmen and tourists. Imagine that a population of 6.90 million people receives 25.25 million tourists annually, about half of them Chinese, and the other half from all over the world. If it had a limited area, it summarizes the world. Experience shows that all of those who lived in it loved it.

Kowloon: the centre for museums and markets

We arrived in Hong Kong on "Cathay Pacific". According to the program ▶



The way to Buddha

الطريق إلى بوذا

prepared by the Tourism Authority, I went to the InterContinental Hotel, accompanied by other invited professional colleagues from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The hotel is located in Kowloon, the province bordering on the mother country, China, from the south, and overlooking the South China Sea. You can see through any of the windows or balconies of this wonderful hotel the monuments and skyscrapers of Hong Kong Island, which is very close to Kowloon. This magnificent panorama scene doubles its splendour in the evening, where it gleams with different colour lights in more than 40 high-rise buildings, with a wonderful climax of a daily display of a symphony of laser lights, which were cited in the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest global optical show.

The first activity of this visit was touring the hotel itself where I noticed two important features: it includes the only restaurant in Hong Kong licensed to barbecue meat on coal, and the "Presidential Suite," an area of 7000 square meters, which is a small hotel in itself. I was so impressed, I decided to ask the director general of the hotel about the rent of this suite. He replied: "Special offer for you - only 12 thousand U.S. dollars per night." I asked again: "Does that include a full breakfast or only butter and jam?" He replied: "No". I told him: "It is expensive ... I will not hire it!"

I was nevertheless invited, to take part in a spiritual exercise "Tai Chi" at 6am the following morning on the balcony of the

same Presidential Suite. It is a Chinese sport which depends on mental concentration, with the performance of some slow static movements under the leadership of the Chinese teacher William Ng.

Most markets and museums in Hong Kong are concentrated in Kowloon Province which is full of museums, such as: Space, Arts, History and Science. Visitors like to spend the evening strolling through the markets, restaurants and cafes until well after midnight, enjoying the dazzling bright and colourful lights. It should be noted that smoking is strictly prohibited in all public places in Hong Kong, closed or open! Hong Kong markets deal in local currency, the Hong Kong dollar (US\$ = HK\$ 7.80).

Hong Kong mosque

There are five mosques in Hong Kong: one on Nathan Road in Kowloon, called the "Kowloon Mosque," which was built in 1896 and then rebuilt and opened in 1984. The mosque has a capacity of two thousand worshippers. I paid a visit and found it composed of several floors. The remaining four are on the island of Hong Kong, namely:

- Jama Mosque of Shelly Street: built in 1890, it is the oldest in Hong Kong, rebuilt in 1905. It has been renovated recently.
- Ammar Mosque and Osman Ramju Saddick Islamic Centre built in 1981, with room for seven hundred worshippers.
- Chai Wan Mosque: located near the



Kowloon's mosque

مسجد كولون

Muslim graveyard.

- Stanley Mosque: located within Stanley prison.

Halal food restaurants are widespread and distributed over most of Hong Kong. The majority are Indian and Pakistani, as well as some Indonesian, Chinese and Egyptian restaurants.

Lantau Island

We drove from the Kowloon peninsula towards Lantau Island via Tsing Ma bridge ▶



Traditional building

مبنى تقليدي



Morning exercises on the top of the hotel

تمارين صباحية فوق سطح الفندق



The mosque in Kowloon

مسجد كولون



Kowloon's mosque and Islamic Centre

مسجد ومركز كولون الإسلامي

(2.2 km-long) heading for an area called "Ngong Ping 360", to take a cable car to the village of Ngong Ping, some 5.7 km away. During the 25 minute ride we saw the marvellous nature of the picturesque north side of the island and the beautiful water of the South China Sea. When we got to the village, there was a reception by the most important Chinese tea house which prepares teas of different taste. We enjoyed tasting several types, and suffered from some, but this is a subjective judgment. Most of them, including several flavours of green tea, were new to me. The people of Hong Kong are proud of producing many different flavoured teas.

We came away from the tea house refreshed, and went to the giant statue of Buddha made of bronze on top of a hill in the village near Po Lin Monastery which is surrounded by beautiful rose gardens.

After eating vegetarian Chinese food, we walked through the village and took the cable car back to the main station. From there we headed to "Disneyland - Hong Kong."

Hong Kong Island

Hong Kong island is full of admirable monuments and tourist attractions, but we had time to visit only two of the most important. We climbed to the top of the highest building in Hong Kong (428 m), to watch from its balcony, the top of the

clouds, as well as the roofs of other skyscrapers, scattered all over the island. It is truly a natural and architectural panorama beyond description.

Coming down and going inside, I found Madame Tussauds Museum of Hong Kong, with wax statues of all world leaders and influential celebrities, negatively or positively represented.

The second site was Ocean Park which received a record number of visitors of nearly five million in one year, and 85 million since it opened in January 1977.

Cable cars brought us to the second area of the park called "The Land Tongue". It is a peninsula extending into the sea. We ▶



The Mihrab

المحراب



Inside Kowloon's mosque

مسجد كولون من الداخل



European theme in Disney Land

منظر أوروبي في دزني لاند

visited the exhibition of Sea Jelly Fish and another called "Atoll Reef" with three thousand fish, from 280 species, including 22 species of giant fish. Another exhibition was called "Napoleon" and another "Shark Aquarium" which includes 70 sharks from 35 species. The "Pacific Theatre," includes many sea mammals, such as dolphins and trained sea lions which presented some exiting games. Finally, there was the "Ocean Park Tower" (200 m high and about 72 storeys), which rotates through a full cycle allowing users a view of the South China Sea, the port of Victoria and the islands of Lantau, Lamma and Cheung Chau.

Next to Land Tongue, is "Tai Shue Wan" where we saw man made water falls, and aviaries containing 700 birds from 60 species, and other amazing facilities.

Farewell panda

We went back to the main gate and found a huge exhibition of giant balloons called "Sky Fair". The average balloon was 22m, with a capacity of about 29 passengers It rises to more than one hundred meters above the ground.

Then came the surprise - a visit to the Giant Panda Habitat. Hanging over it is a model of the rare and famous giant panda bear. When we entered, we found three large cages next to each other, one for the

panda "Jia Jia" (born in 1978), and another for "An An" (born in 1986). The third houses the young pandas: " Le Le "and "Ying Ying ", both born in August 2005. All four were born in the Chinese city of Sichuan. We have seen the four of them playing and eating bamboo, apples and carrots. The park management handed us a model of the panda with a label containing information on the identity of each of the four pandas, including: sex, date and place of birth,

weight, personal profiles and formal characteristics and their favourite food.

Our visit to the Panda House was a good end to my trip. Saying goodbye next to the pandas was one of the most beautiful memories impressed on my imagination from the trip to Hong Kong, this enchanting and magnificent site of the world, which confirmed to us that although we only stayed for three days, we have living proof of the slogan "Hong Kong ...Live it, Love it." ■



The panda

الباندا



View across the water

منظر عبر البحر