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SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

top picks

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SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Yes it can be an urban jungle, but Hong Kong is surprisingly well served by public sports facilities and other activities. Getting the heart rate going can be as simple as slipping into some swimming togs, grabbing the handlebars of a rental bike or unrolling a yoga mat.

Hong Kong's green open spaces often surprise first-time visitors with their size and relative isolation. Beyond the concrete canyons there's enough wilderness and coast to keep even the keenest hikers, bird-watchers and sailors going for a life time.

If watching rather than doing is your thing, there's a busy spectator sports calendar, too, and often plenty of atmosphere to be found (especially where there's the possibility of a having a flutter on the result).

HEALTH & FITNESS

Hong Kong is bursting at the seams with gyms, yoga studios, spas and New Age clinics offering everything from aromatherapy and foot care to homeopathy. And if your hotel doesn't have a swimming pool, there are three-dozen public ones to choose from.

GYMS & FITNESS CLUBS

Getting fit is big business in Hong Kong, with the largest slices of the pie shared out among a few big names. The [South China Athletic Association](#) (Map p74; ☎ 2890 7736; 88 Caroline Hill Rd, So Kon Po; ☑ Happy Valley) has a massive (1000 sq metre) gym, with modern exercise machinery and an aerobics room, as well as a sauna, a steam room and massage (monthly membership \$250, or \$50 per visit). The following two are notable in that they offer short-term memberships.

CALIFORNIA FITNESS Map p68

☎ 2522 5229; [www.californiafitness.com](#); 1 Wellington St, Central; daily \$150; ☎ 6am-midnight Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun; MTR Central exit D2 Asia's largest health club has six outlets in Hong Kong, including a [Wan Chai branch](#) (Map p65; ☎ 2877 7070; 88 Gloucester Rd; MTR Wan Chai, exit A1), which keeps the same hours.

PURE FITNESS Map p68

☎ 2970 3366; [www.pure-fit.com](#); 1st-3rd fl, Kinwick Centre, 32 Hollywood Rd, Soho; daily \$200; ☎ 6am-midnight Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun; Central Escalator This favourite of the Soho set (entered from Shelley St) has a [Central branch](#) (Map p56; ☎ 8129 8000; 3rd fl, Two IFC Mall, 8 Finance St, Central; MTR Hong Kong Station), which is open the same hours.

SWIMMING POOLS

Hong Kong has 36 swimming pools that are open to the public. There are excellent pools in Tsim Sha Tsui's [Kowloon Park](#) (p91) and in [Victoria Park](#) (p75) in Causeway Bay. Many pools are closed between November and March, but heated indoor and outdoor pools, such as the [Morrison Hill Public Swimming Pool](#) (Map p65; ☎ 2575 3028; 7 Oi Kwan Rd, Wan Chai; adult/child \$19/9) and the one in the basement of the [South China Athletic Association](#) (Map p74; ☎ 2890 7736; 88 Caroline Hill Rd, So Kon Po; adult/child \$22/10; ☑ Happy Valley), are open all year.

THERAPY CLINICS

Feel like giving your tootsies a pamper? Or how about your nostrils an olfactory feast? You can at one of Hong Kong's therapy clinics.

DK Aromatherapy (Map p68; ☎ 2771 2847; [www.aroma.com.hk](#); Ground fl, 16A Staunton St, Central, Central Escalator; ☎ 11am-10pm) Full body aromatherapy treatment \$500 to \$550.

Happy Foot Reflexology Centre (Map p68; ☎ 2544 1010; 11th & 13th fl, Jade Centre, 98-102 Wellington St, Central; ☎ 10am-midnight; MTR Central, exit D2) Foot/body massage starts at \$198/250 for 50 minutes.

Healing Plants (Map p68; ☎ 2815 5005; [info@healingplants.com](#); 13th fl, Capital Plaza, 2-10 Lyndhurst Tce, Central; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; Central Escalator) Acupuncture, reflexology, Swedish massage and homeopathic doctors at hand.

YOGA

Yoga in all its forms is as popular in Hong Kong as it is everywhere else in the world.

Yoga Central (Map p68; ☎ 2982 4308; [www.yogacentral.com.hk](#); 4th fl, 13 Wyndham St, Central; ☎ variable hours; Central MTR, exit D2) Well-established studio offering Hatha

with an Iyengar spin, and Pilates. Beginner and intermediate classes Monday to Saturday cost from \$140/200 for one/two hours.

Yoga Fitness (Map p68; ☎ 2851 8353; [www.yoga-fitness.com](#); 5th fl, Sea Bird House, 22-28 Wyndham St, Central; ☎ variable hours; Central MTR, exit D2) Hatha for \$140 per class or from \$499 for five classes in a month.

Yoga Plus (Map p68; ☎ 2521 4555; [www.yogaplus.com.hk](#); 6th fl, LKF Tower, 55 D'Aguilar St, Central; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Sun; Central MTR, exit D2) Plush studio with spa treatments, Pilates and 11 styles of yoga, including Hatha and Iyengar.

ACTIVITIES

Hong Kong offers countless ways to have fun and keep fit. From tennis and squash courts to cycling and hiking trails, you'll hardly be stumped for something active to do during your visit here.

Information & Venues

One excellent, all-round option is the [South China Athletic Association](#) (SCAA; opposite), east of the Happy Valley Racecourse and south of Causeway Bay. The SCAA has facilities for badminton, billiards, bowling, tennis, squash, table tennis, gymnastics, fencing, yoga, judo, karate and golf (among other activities), and short-term membership for visitors is \$50 per month. Another good place to know is the nearby [Hong Kong Amateur Athletic Association](#) (☎ 2504 8215; [www.hkaaa.com](#)).

[Hong Kong Outdoors](#) ([www.hkoutdoors.com](#)) is an excellent website for all sorts of active pursuits.

BEACHES

The most accessible beaches are on the southern side of Hong Kong Island (see in particular Shek O, p86), but the best ones are on the Outlying Islands and in the New Territories. For a list of beaches deemed safe enough for swimming and their water-quality gradings, check the website of the [Environmental Protection Department](#) ([www.info.gov.hk/epd](#)).

Hong Kong's 41 gazetted beaches are staffed by lifeguards from 9am to 6pm daily from at least April to October (from 8am to 7pm on Saturday and Sunday from June to August). A few beaches, including Deep Water Bay and Clear Water Bay, have year-round lifeguard services. Shark nets are installed and inspected at 32 beaches. From the first day of the official swimming season

top picks

ONLY IN HONG KONG

- [Morning t'ai chi in the park](#) (p227)
- [Betting on the horses at uniquely urban Happy Valley](#) (p230)
- [Cheers and beers at the Rugby Sevens](#) (p231)
- [Watching \(or joining in\) the Dragon Boat Racing festival](#) (p17)
- [Hiking from city into jungle on the Hong Kong Trail](#) (p224)

until the last, expect the beaches to be chock-a-block on weekends and holidays. When the swimming season is officially declared over, the beaches become deserted – no matter how hot the weather.

At most of the beaches you will find toilets, showers, changing rooms, refreshment stalls and sometimes cafés and restaurants.

For information on Hong Kong's swimming pools, see [opposite](#).

BIRD-WATCHING

Birders in Hong Kong will have their work cut out for them: some 450 species have been spotted in the territory. The best area is [Mai Po Marsh](#) (p108), but others include [Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve](#) (p122) and [Po Toi](#) (p149). The [Hong Kong Bird-Watching Society](#) (☎ 2377 4387; [www.hkbws.org.hk](#)) is a font of information and can arrange organised visits to local birding venues. Ask for its free brochure *Bird Watching in Hong Kong*.

BOWLING

Some of the best facilities are on the 1st floor of the Sports Complex at the [SCAA](#) ([opposite](#)). About 60 lanes are open from 10am to 12.30am Monday to Thursday, from 10am to 1.30am Friday, 9.30am to 1.30am Saturday and from 9am to 12.30am on Sunday and holidays. Games cost \$18 to \$30, depending on the time of day and day of the week.

CLIMBING

The [Hong Kong Climbing](#) ([www.hongkongclimbing.com](#)) website is the best resource for climbers in Hong Kong. According to these guys, [Tung Lung Chau](#) (p149) has the highest concentration of quality sport climbs in Hong Kong.

CYCLING

There are bicycle paths in the New Territories, mostly around Tolo Harbour. The paths run from Sha Tin to Tai Po and continue up to Tai Mei Tuk. You can rent bicycles in these three places, but the paths get very crowded on the weekends. Bicycle rentals are also available at Shek O on Hong Kong Island and on Lamma, Cheung Chau and Lantau.

Although the [Hong Kong Cycling Association](#) ([www.cycling.org.hk](#)) mainly organises races, you can try it for information.

Mountain biking is no longer banned in Hong Kong's country parks and there is a fine, ever-growing network of trails available in 10 of them, including Sai Kung and Lantau South Country Parks. You must apply for a permit in writing, in person or by fax through the [Country & Marine Parks Authority](#) (Map pp88–9; ☎/fax 2317 0482; 5th fl, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Rd; MTR Sham Shui Po, exit C). For information check out the website of the [Hong Kong Mountain Bike Association](#) ([www.hkmba.org](#)); for equipment (and first-hand advice) talk to the helpful staff at the [Flying Ball Bicycle Co](#) (☎ 2381 3661; Ground fl, 478 Castle Peak Rd, Cheung Sha Wan; ☎ 11am–8pm Mon–Sat; MTR Sham Shui Po, exit D).

FISHING

While there are almost no restrictions on deep-sea fishing, it's a different story at Hong Kong's 17 freshwater reservoirs, where the season runs from September to March and there are limits on the quantity and size of fish (generally various types of carp and tilapia) allowed. A licence from the [Water Supplies Department](#) (Map p65; ☎ 2824 5000; 1st fl, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Rd, Wan Chai; Wan Chai MTR exit A1) costs \$24 and is valid for three years.

For something a little less, well, wild, head for the [Tai Mei Tuk Fish Farm](#) (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2662 6351; Tai Mei Tuk; weekday/weekend per hr \$25/30, rods rental \$10; ☎ 9am–10pm; 🚗 75K), a large artificial pond by the harbour stocked with freshwater fish.

GOLF

Most golf courses in Hong Kong are private but do open to the public at certain times – usually weekdays only. Greens fees for visitors vary, but range from \$450 for two rounds at the nine-hole [Deep Water Bay Golf Club](#) (Map pp54–5; ☎ 2812 7070; 19 Island Rd, Deep Water Bay; 🚗 6, 6A) on Hong Kong Island to \$1400 at its parent club, the [Hong Kong Golf Club](#) (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2670 1211;

[www.hkgolclub.org](#); Fan Kam Rd, Fanling, New Territories; Fanling KCR), which has three 18-hole courses. Nonmembers can play weekdays only at both clubs.

One of the most dramatic links to play in Hong Kong – for the scenery if not the par – is the 36-hole [Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Public Golf Course](#) (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2791 3388; [www.kscgolf.com](#)) on the island of Kau Sai Chau, which is linked by regular ferry with Sai Kung town, northeast of Kowloon (see boxed text, p126). Greens fees for 18 holes of play by adult nonresidents range from \$660 on weekdays to \$980 on the weekend. You must be accompanied by a Hong Kong ID card holder on weekends; for weekdays be sure to bring your passport and handicap card. It costs from \$160 per round to rent clubs and \$35 to rent golf shoes; caddies are \$175 for 18 holes.

Other courses in Hong Kong include those below.

Clearwater Bay Golf & Country Club (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2335 3888; [www.cwb.golf.org](#); 139 Tau Au Mun Rd, Clearwater Bay; greens fees \$1600–1800; 🚗 91) 27-hole course at the tip of the Clearwater Bay peninsula in the New Territories.

Discovery Bay Golf Club (Map p136; ☎ 2987 7273, automated booking 2987 2112; Discovery Bay, Lantau; greens fees \$1400; 🚗 Discovery Bay) Perched high on a hill, this 27-hole course has impressive views of the Outlying Islands. Nonmembers Monday, Tuesday and Friday only.

Shek O Golf & Country Club (Map pp54–5; ☎ 2809 4458; Shek O Rd, Shek O; greens fees \$300–500; 🚗 3, 309) 18-hole course located on the southeastern edge of Hong Kong Island. Nonmembers must be accompanied by a member.

If you're content with just teeing off (again and again), the Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Public Golf Course has a [driving range](#) (☎ 2791 3344; per 30 min \$35, club rental \$15; ☎ 7am–8pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 11am–8pm Tue, 7am–10pm Fri–Sun). In addition it offers a variety of packages where you can practise putting, chipping and bunker shots.

For more information, contact the [Hong Kong Golf Association](#) (☎ 2504 8659; [www.hkg.a.com](#)).

HIKING

Hong Kong is an excellent place for hiking, and there are numerous trails on Hong Kong Island, in the New Territories (see in particular the Sai Kung Peninsula, p126) and on the Outlying Islands. The four main ones are the [MacLehose Trail](#) (p226), at 100km the longest in

the territory; the 78km-long [Wilson Trail](#) (p227), which runs on both sides of Victoria Harbour; the 70km-long [Lantau Trail](#) (p226); and the [Hong Kong Trail](#) (right), which is 50km long.

When hiking or trekking in Hong Kong some basic equipment is required. Most important is a full water bottle. Other useful items include trail snacks, a weatherproof jacket, a sun hat, toilet paper, maps and a compass. Boots are not necessary; the best footwear is a good pair of running shoes.

Hikers should remember that the high humidity during spring and summer can be enervating. October to March is the best season for arduous treks. At high elevations, such as parts of the Lantau and MacLehose Trails, it can get very cold so it's essential to bring warm clothing.

Mosquitoes are a nuisance in spring and summer, so a good mosquito repellent is necessary. Snakes are rarely encountered.

Maps

Good hiking maps will save you a lot of time, energy and trouble. The [Map Publication Centres](#) (p295) stock the excellent Countryside Series of topographical maps, as well as the unfolded hiking maps (\$34) produced by the Country & Marine Parks Authority for each of Hong Kong's four main trails: the 1:15,000 [Hong Kong Trail](#), the 1:35,000 [Wilson Trail](#), the 1:25,000 [MacLehose Trail](#) and the 1:20,000 [Lantau Trail](#). The four trail maps are also available from the [Government Publications Office](#) (p158) in Central.

Accommodation

The [Country & Marine Parks Authority](#) (☎ 2420 0529; [http://parks.afcd.gov.hk](#)) of the Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department maintains 38 no-frills camp sites in the New Territories and Outlying Islands for use by hikers. They are all free and are clearly labelled on the Countryside Series and four trail maps. Camping is prohibited on the 41 gazetted public beaches patrolled by lifeguards, but is generally OK on more remote beaches.

You can camp at the hostels managed by the [Hong Kong Youth Hostels Association](#) (HKYHA; ☎ 2788 1638; [www.yha.org.hk](#)), with the exception of the Jockey Club Mount Davis hostel on Hong Kong Island and Bradbury Lodge at Tai Mei Tuk in the New Territories. The fee, which allows you to use the hostel's toilet and wash-room facilities, is \$25 for HKYHA or Hostel-

ling International (HI) members, or \$35 for nonmembers.

Organised Hikes

The [YWCA](#) (☎ 3476 1300; [www.ywca.org.hk](#)) arranges group hikes around such areas as Silvermine to Pui O, Shek O to Chai Wan and other popular routes. The [Hong Kong Trampers](#) (☎ 8209 0517; [www.hktrampers.com](#)) are worth checking and arrange informal walks on Sundays. Serious hikers might consider joining in the annual [Trailwalker event](#) ([www.oxfamtrailwalker.org.hk](#)), a gruelling 48-hour race across the MacLehose Trail in the New Territories in November, organised since 1986 by [Oxfam Hong Kong](#) (☎ 2520 2525).

If you would like to do some hiking in the countryside – either individually or in a group – but you would prefer to be shown the way, [Walk Hong Kong](#) (☎ 9187 8641; [www.walkhongkong.com](#)) takes guided nature walks on Hong Kong Island (eg The Peak to Aberdeen), the New Territories (eg Plover Cove and Sai Kung Country Parks) and Lantau Island. There are half-/full-day walks, costing from \$300 to \$600, including lunch.

[Natural Excursion Ideals](#) (☎ 9300 5197; [www.kayak-and-hike.com](#)) offers both hiking and kayaking trips. Hikes take in such places as Plover Cove Country Park and the peak of Ma On Shan. On the water it has half-/full-day tours (\$700/880) including the 'Power Boat, Kayak & Coral Explorer'. This will take you, by unique 'fast-pursuit craft', to the otherwise inaccessible Bluff Island and the fishing village of Sha Kiu Tau from where you can swim, snorkel and then kayak. All gear, including a mask and snorkel, is provided and the full-day tours include lunch.

Hong Kong Trail

Starting from the Peak Tram upper terminus (Map pp54–5) on the Peak, the 50km-long Hong Kong Trail follows Lugard Rd to the west and drops down the hill to Pok Fu Lam Reservoir near Aberdeen, before turning east and zigzagging across the ridges. The trail traverses four country parks: 2.7-sq-km Pok Fu Lam Country Park south of Victoria Peak; 4.2-sq-km Aberdeen Country Park east of the Peak; 13-sq-km Tai Tam Country Park on the eastern side of the island; and 7-sq-km Shek O Country Park in the southeast. Tai Tam is the most beautiful of the four, with its dense emerald woods and trickling streams. The Hong Kong Trail skirts the northern side of

Tai Tam Reservoir, the largest body of water on the island.

It's possible to hike the entire trail – a total of eight stages from the Peak to Big Wave Bay – in one day, but it's quite a slog and requires about 15 full hours. Most hikers pick a manageable section to suit, such as stage No 1 from the Peak to Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Rd (7km, two hours). Note that there are no designated camp sites along the Hong Kong Trail.

Apart from gaining stage No 1 of the trail on the Peak, you can reach stage No 6 (Tai Tam) on bus 6 from the Central bus terminal below Exchange Square or bus 14 from Sai Wan Ho, and stage No 7 (Tai Tam Bay and Shek O) on buses 9 and 309 (Sunday only) from Shau Kei Wan MTR station.

Lantau Trail

The 70km-long Lantau Trail (Map p136) follows the mountain tops from Mui Wo and then doubles back at Tai O along the coast to where it started. It takes just over 24 hours to walk in full, but the trail is divided into a dozen manageable stages ranging from 2.5km (45 minutes) to 10.5km (three hours).

A realistic approach is to tackle the trail's first four stages (17.5km, seven hours), which take in the highest and most scenic parts of the trail and can be accessed from Mui Wo or, conversely, from the Po Lin Monastery and SG Davis Hostel at Ngong Ping. Note that the walk can be treacherous in certain steep sections. Stage No 1 (2.5km, 45 minutes) of the Lantau Trail from Mui Wo follows boring South Lantau Rd, but there's an alternative, more scenic path from Mui Wo to Nam Shan, where stage No 2 begins, via Luk Tei Tong.

The western part of the trail, which follows the southwestern coast of Lantau from Tai O to Fan Lau and then up to Shek Pik (stage Nos 7 to 9), is also very scenic.

MacLehose Trail

The 100km MacLehose Trail (Map pp50–1), the territory's longest hiking path, spans the New Territories from Tuen Mun in the west to Pak Tam Chung on the Sai Kung Peninsula in the east. The trail follows the ridge, goes over Tai Mo Shan, at 957m Hong Kong's highest peak, and passes close to Ma On Shan (702m), the territory's fourth-tallest mountain. The trail is divided into 10 stages, ranging in length from about 4.6km (1½ hours) to 15.6km (five hours).

You can access the MacLehose Trail by public transport at many points (see the list at the end of this section), but arguably the most convenient is reached by catching bus 51 on Tai Ho Rd North, just north of the Tsuen Wan MTR station, and getting off where Route Twisk meets Tai Mo Shan Rd. This is the beginning (or the end) of stage No 9 of the trail. From there you have the choice of heading east towards Tai Mo Shan and Lead Mine Pass (9.7km, four hours) or west to the Tai Lam Chung Reservoir, through Tai Lam Country Park (54 sq km), and eventually all the way to Tuen Mun (22km, 7½ hours), which is the western end of the trail. From Tuen Mun town centre, you can catch bus 260X or 63X to Yau Ma Tei and Tsim Sha Tsui.

Another, perhaps more enjoyable, way to reach the trail is to take green minibus 82 from Shiu Wo St, due south of the Tsuen Wan MTR station. This will drop you off at Pineapple Dam, adjacent to the Shing Mun Reservoir in 14-sq-km Shing Mun Country Park; the new **Shing Mun Country Park Visitor Centre** (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2489 1362; 🕒 9.30am–4.30pm Wed–Mon) is on the western edge of the reservoir. You can follow the Pineapple Dam Nature Trail past several picnic and barbecue areas and around the reservoir itself. The signposted Shing Mun Arboretum has 70 varieties of fruit and other trees, plus medicinal plants.

Running south from the Shing Mun Reservoir is stage No 6 of the MacLehose Trail, which will take you by Smugglers' Ridge and past some pretty dramatic scenery. The trail leads west and then south alongside Kowloon Reservoir to Tai Po Rd (4.6km, 1½ hours). From here stage No 5 of the trail heads east past a hill called Eagle's Nest, through woodland and up Beacon Hill, named after a lookout station positioned here under Qing-dynasty Emperor Kang Xi, which fired up a beacon when enemy ships sailed into view.

From there stage No 5 of the trail runs along a ridge to Lion Rock, from where there is a path leading north to **Amah Rock** (p124). The MacLehose Trail circumvents Lion Rock but you can clamber up the path leading to it. Be warned, though – it's a tough climb.

Coming down from Lion Rock, the MacLehose Trail leads you to Sha Tin Pass. From here you can either head south a short distance along the road and pick up green minibus 37M at Tsz Wan Shan estate heading for Wong Tai Sin MTR in Kowloon, or walk north along a path to Sha Tin (about 2km) and jump on the KCR. If you carry on along stage No 4

of the MacLehose Trail, it will take you into the heart of Ma On Shan Country Park via Tate's Cairn (577m) and Buffalo Hill.

Other places to access the MacLehose Trail (from east to west):

Pak Tam Chung (stage No 1) Bus 94 from Sai Kung town.

Pak Tam Au (stage Nos 2 & 3) As above.

Kei Ling Rd (stage Nos 3 & 4) Bus 299 from Sha Tin or Sai Kung town.

Ma On Shan (stage No 4) Bus 99 from Sai Kung town to Nai Chung (descend at Sai Sha Rd).

Tai Po Rd (stage No 6) Green minibus 81 from Tsuen Wan or bus 81C from the Hung Hom KCR station.

Tuen Mun (stage No 10) Buses 53 and 60M from Tsuen Wan or bus 63X from Nathan Rd in Tsim Sha Tsui or Yau Ma Tei.

Wilson Trail

Wilson Trail (Map pp50–1), which is 78km in length – 82.5km long if you include the MTR harbour crossing – is unusual in that its southern section (two stages, 11.4km, 4½ hours) is on Hong Kong Island, while its northern part (eight stages, 66.6km, 26½ hours) crosses the eastern harbour to Lei Yue Mun in New Kowloon and then carries on into the New Territories.

The trail begins at Stanley Gap Rd, about 1km to the north of Stanley; bus 6, 6A, 6X and 260 from Central pass the beginning of the trail about 2km short of Repulse Bay. The first steeply rising section of the trail is all concrete steps. You soon reach the summit of Stanley Mound (386m), topped by a pavilion. The summit is also known as the Twins (or Ma Kong Shan in Cantonese). On a clear day you'll have an excellent view of Stanley, Repulse Bay and as far as Lamma. The trail continues north over Violet Hill (Tsz Lo Lan Shan), where it meets the Hong Kong Trail, and passes by Mt Butler, drops down into the urban chaos and terminates at the Quarry Bay MTR station. Those who wish to carry on should then take the MTR across to Yau Tong on the Tseung Kwan O line and pick up the trail outside the station.

From here the trail zigzags south to Lei Yue Mun before turning sharply north again into the hills. The trail then takes a westward turn, heading over the summit of Tate's Cairn, and passes Lion Rock and Beacon Hill. The path makes another sharp turn northward, continues through Shing Mun Country Park, returns to civilisation near Tai Po, then disappears

into the hills again at Pat Sin Leng Country Park before ending at Nam Chung Reservoir on the Starling Inlet, not far from Shau Tau Kok and Hong Kong's border with Shenzhen and the mainland.

Parts of the Wilson Trail overlap with the Hong Kong Trail on Hong Kong Island and with the MacLehose Trail in the New Territories, particularly in the area east of Tai Mo Shan.

HORSE RIDING

The Hong Kong Jockey Club's **Tuen Mun Public Riding School** (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2461 3338; Lot No 45, Lung Mun Rd, Tuen Mun; 🕒 9am–6pm Tue–Sun; Tuen Mun KCR) in the New Territories offers private lessons for about \$360 per hour, as does the club's **Pok Fu Lam Public Riding School** (Map pp54–5; ☎ 2550 1359; 75 Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Rd) in southeastern Hong Kong Island.

KAYAKING & CANOEING

The **Cheung Chau Windsurfing Water Sports Centre** (Map p143; ☎ 2981 8316; www.ccwind.com.hk) located at Tung Wan Beach rents out single/double kayaks for \$60/100 per hour. These are also available at the **St Stephen's Beach Water Sports Centre** (off Map p85; ☎ 2813 5407; Wong Ma Kok Path; 🕒 closed Tue; ☎ 6, 6A, 6X) located in Stanley.

Canoeing facilities are available through the **Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre** (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2665 3591; 🕒 closed Wed; ☎ 75K) at Tai Mei Tuk in the New Territories. You can also enquire at the **Wong Shek Water Sports Centre** (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2328 2311; Wong Shek pier, Sai Kung; 🕒 closed Tue; ☎ 92, 299) in the New Territories.

Natural Excursion Ideals (☎ 9300 5197; www.kayak-and-hike.com) has organised kayaking trips out of its base in Sai Kung in the New Territories from \$700. **Dragonfly** (☎ 2916 8230; www.dragonfly.com.hk) has similar excursions on offer.

MARTIAL ARTS

The **HKTB** (☎ 2508 1234), through its Cultural Kaleidoscope program, offers free one-hour t'ai chi lessons at 8am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday on the waterfront promenade outside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (Map p92) in Tsim Sha Tsui. A further class runs at 9am on Saturday on The Peak Tower rooftop. On Sunday from 2.30pm to 4.30pm a display of traditional Chinese martial arts takes place at Kung Fu Corner near Sculpture Walk in Kowloon Park (Map p92).

WALKING & NATURE GUIDES TO LEAD THE WAY

Exploring Hong Kong's Countryside: A Visitor's Companion by Edward Stokes is a well-written and illustrated 185-page guidebook distributed free by the HKTB. It provides excellent background information and the maps are good.

Peter Spurrier's new *Hiker's Guide to Hong Kong* will guide you along the four main trails and introduce you to 10 shorter ones.

Hong Kong Hikes: The Twenty Best Walks in the Territory by Christian Wright and Tinja Tsang is unique in that it consists of 20 laminated loose-leaf cards for hikes on Hong Kong Island, the Outlying Islands and the New Territories that can be undipped and slotted into the transparent plastic folder provided.

Magic Walks, which comes in four volumes and is good for 50 relatively easy hikes throughout the territory, is written by Kaarlo Schepele, almost a legend among Hong Kong walkers.

Hong Kong Pathfinder: 23 Day-Walks in Hong Kong by Martin Williams is based on the author's 'Day Away' column in the *South China Morning Post*.

A lovely pictorial dealing with the countryside is *The MacLehose Trail* by Tim Nutt, Chris Bale and Tao Ho.

The Birds of Hong Kong and South China by Clive Viney, Karen Phillips and Lam Chiu Ying is the definitive guide for spotting and identifying the territory's feathered creatures and an excellent guide to take along while hiking in the New Territories.

A specialist title but a welcome addition to Hong Kong's walking guides bookshelf is *Ruins of War: A Guide to Hong Kong's Battlefields and Wartime Sites* by Ko Tim Keung and Jason Wordie, which includes a lot of walking in the countryside.

Fightin' Fit (Map p68; ☎ 2526 6648; www.fightinfit.com.hk; The One Martial Gym, 23rd fl, Asia Standard Tower, 59 Queens Rd, Central; MTR Central, exit D)

Hong Kong Chinese Martial Arts Association (☎ 2504 8164)

Hong Kong Tai Chi Association (☎ 2395 4884; www.hktaichi.com)

Hong Kong Wushu Union (☎ 2504 8226; www.hkwushu.com.hk) Has classes for children.

Wan Kei Ho International Martial Arts Association (☎ 2544 1368, 9885 8336; www.kungfuwan.com)

Wing Chun Yip Man Martial Arts Athletic Association (Map p92; ☎ 2723 2306; Flat A, 4th fl, Alpha House, 27-33 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; MTR Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E) Charges \$500 a month for three lessons a week (two or

three hours each) and has a six-month intensive course (six hours a day, six days a week) for around \$500 depending on the student.

RUNNING

It's hot, humid, hilly, crowded, congested and the air quality can be shocking. Apart from that Hong Kong is a great place to run.

The best places to run on Hong Kong Island include Harlech and Lugard Rds on the Peak, Bowen Rd above Wan Chai, the track in Victoria Park and the Happy Valley racecourse (as long as there aren't any horse races on it!). In Kowloon a popular place to run is the Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade. Lamma makes an ideal place for trail runners with plenty of paths and dirt trails, great views and best of all, no cars.

KUNG FU & YOU

Chinese *gung-fu* (kung fu) is the basis for many Asian martial arts. There are hundreds of styles of martial arts that have evolved since about AD 500, including *ma-seut*, which is full of expansive strides and strokes and great to watch in competition; *wing-cheun*, the late actor and martial-arts master Bruce Lee's original style, indigenous to Hong Kong, which combines blocks, punches and low kicks; and the ever-popular *taai-gik* (t'ai chi), the slow-motion 'shadow boxing' that has been popular for centuries.

As you can see every morning in the parks throughout Hong Kong, t'ai chi is the most visible and commonly practised form of kung fu today. Not only is it a terrific form of exercise, improving your muscle tone, developing breathing muscles and promoting good health in general, it also forms a solid foundation for any other martial-arts practice. Its various forms are characterised by deep, powerful stances, soft and flowing hand techniques and relaxed breathing.

In China martial arts were traditionally passed down through patriarchal family lines and seldom taught to outsiders, as these skills were considered far too valuable to spread indiscriminately. During the Cultural Revolution, when all teachings outside Maoist philosophy were suppressed, the practise of innocuous-looking t'ai chi was allowed, helping kung fu to live on when so much traditional culture had disappeared.

For easy runs followed by brewskis and good company, contact the **Hong Kong Hash House Harriers** (www.hkhash.com), the main local branch of a lively organisation with members worldwide, or the **Ladies' Hash House Harriers** (www.hkladieshash.com). The inappropriately named **Ladies Road Runners Club** (www.hklrrc.org) allows men to join in the fun. Another group that organises runs is **Athletic Veterans of Hong Kong** (www.avo.hk.org).

Every Sunday from May to November at 8am (7.15am July to September), the **Adventist Hospital** (Map pp54-5; ☎ 2835 0555; Wong Nai Chung Gap Rd, Happy Valley; ☎ Happy Valley) organises a running clinic. To sign up as a new member will cost you \$350. Groups focus on full or half marathon training as well as 10km walks and runs.

SCUBA DIVING

Hong Kong has some surprisingly worthwhile diving spots, particularly in the far northeast, and there is certainly no shortage of courses. One of the best sources of information for courses and excursions is Sai Kung-based **Splash Hong Kong** (☎ 2792 4495, 9047 9603; www.splashhk.com). Other outfits giving lessons and organising dives include the following:

Bunn's Divers (Map p65; see p164) Organises dives in Sai Kung on Sunday for about \$500 (less for members).

Ocean Sky Divers (Map p92; p169) This dive shop runs PADI courses and organises local dives from \$270.

SKATING

There are several major ice-skating rinks in Hong Kong, with Cityplaza Ice Palace in Quarry Bay and Festival Walk Glacier in Kowloon Tong by far the best. They both have two separate sessions on weekdays and up to three on the weekend.

Cityplaza Ice Palace (Map pp54-5; ☎ 2844 8688; www.icepalace.com.hk; 1st fl, Cityplaza 2, 18 Tai Koo Shing Rd, Quarry Bay; admission Mon-Fri \$45, Sat & Sun before/after 2.30pm \$60/70; ☎ 9.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-10pm Sat, 12.30-7.30pm Sun; MTR Quarry Bay, exit B)

Festival Walk Glacier (Map pp88-9; ☎ 2544 3588; www.glacier.com.hk; Upper Ground fl, Festival Walk Shopping Centre, 80-88 Tat Chee Ave, Kowloon Tong; admission Mon-Fri \$40-50, Sat & Sun \$60-70; ☎ 10.30am-10pm Mon, Wed-Fri, 10.30am-8pm Tue, 8.30am-10pm Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun; MTR Kowloon Tong, exit C2)

SQUASH

There are almost 80 squash centres scattered around the territory. The **Hong Kong Squash Centre**

(Map p63; ☎ 2521 5072; 23 Cotton Tree Dr; per 30 min \$27; ☎ 7am-11pm) has some of the most modern facilities, with 18 courts bordering Hong Kong Park in Central. There are three squash courts at **Queen Elizabeth Stadium** (Map p65; ☎ 2591 1346; 18 Oi Kwan Rd, Wan Chai; ☎ Morrison Hill Rd) and **Kowloon Park Sports Centre** (Map p92; ☎ 2724 3344; 22 Austin Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; MTR Jordan exit C3).

TENNIS

The **Hong Kong Tennis Centre** (Map pp54-5; ☎ 2574 9122; Wong Nai Chung Gap Rd; per hr day/evening \$42/57; ☎ 7am-11pm), with 17 courts, is on the spectacular pass in the hills between Happy Valley and Deep Water Bay on Hong Kong Island. It's usually only easy to get a court during working hours. Other courts available:

Bowen Road Sports Ground (Map p63; ☎ 2528 2983; Bowen Dr, Mid-Levels; ☎ 6am-7pm; MTR Admiralty) Four courts.

King's Park Tennis Courts (Map pp88-9; ☎ 2385 8985; 6 Wylie Path, Yau Ma Tei; ☎ 7am-11pm; MTR Yau Ma Tei, exit D) Six courts.

Victoria Park (Map p74; ☎ 2890 5824; Hing Fat St, Causeway Bay; ☎ 6am or 7am-11pm; MTR Causeway Bay, exit E) Fourteen courts.

WINDSURFING & WAKEBOARDING

Windsurfing is extremely popular in Hong Kong; the territory's only Olympic gold medal (Atlanta, 1996) to date was won in this sport. The best time for windsurfing is October to December, when a steady northeast monsoon wind blows. Boards and other equipment are available for rent at **St Stephen's Beach Water Sports Centre** (off Map p85; ☎ 2813 5407) in Stanley on Hong Kong Island, at the **Windsurfing Centre** (off Map p127; ☎ 2792 5605) in Sha Ha just north of Sai Kung in the New Territories, at the **Cheung Chau Windsurfing Water Sports Centre** (Map p143; ☎ 2981 8316; www.cwwindc.com.hk) on Cheung Chau and at **Long Coast Seasports** (Map p136; ☎ 2980 3222) on Lantau.

The **Windsurfing Association of Hong Kong** (☎ 2504 8255; www.windsurfing.org.hk) has some courses for juniors.

Wakeboarding has grown tremendously in popularity in recent years. Deep Water Bay is a popular area for the sport, but for other venues contact the Hong Kong Wakeboarding Association, which shares a website with the **Hong Kong Water Ski Association** (☎ 2504 8168; www.waterski.org.hk).

YACHTING & SAILING

Even if you're not a member, you can check with any of the following yachting clubs to see if races are being held and whether an afternoon's sail is possible.

Aberdeen Boat Club (Map p82; ☎ 2552 8182; www.abclub-hk.com; 20 Shum Wan Rd, Aberdeen; 🚗 70, 73 & 793)

Aberdeen Marina Club (Map p82; ☎ 2555 8321; www.aberdeenmarinaclub.com; 8 Shum Wan Rd, Aberdeen; 🚗 70, 73 & 793)

Hebe Haven Yacht Club (Map pp50–1; ☎ 2719 9682; www.hhyc.org.hk; 10½ Milestone, Hiram's Hwy, Pak Sha Wan; 🚗 92 or 299)

Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (Map p74; ☎ 2832 2817; www.rhkyc.org.hk; Hung Hing Rd, Kellett Island, Causeway Bay)

A major sailing event in Hong Kong is the Hong Kong–Manila yacht race, which takes place every two years. Phone the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club or contact the **Hong Kong Sailing Federation** (☎ 2504 8159; www.sailing.org.hk) for details.

If there is a group of you, you should consider hiring a junk for the day or evening. Eight hours of vessel hire (four hours for night trips), plus a captain and deck hand, are usually included in the price. **Jubilee International Tour Centre** (Map p56; ☎ 2530 0530; www.jubilee.com.hk; Room 2305-6, Far East Consortium Bldg, 121 Des Voeux Rd Central; 🕒 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat; MTR Sheung Wan, exit E3) hires out vessels for 10 to 25 people from \$2000 on weekdays and \$3000 on the weekend.

In addition, the restaurant chain **Jaspa's** (p197) has two junks – one carrying 26 people and the other 40 – for rent. An evening or daytime junk party, including all drinks and a full menu prepared and served on board, costs \$550/200/100 for adults/children aged five to 13/children aged one to five. Note that there must be a minimum of 14 passengers. The boat can pick up or drop off guests at either Sai Kung or Causeway Bay. Ring **Jaspa's Party Junk** (☎ 2869 0733; www.jaspasjunk.com) or consult the website for details.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

Sporting events are well covered in the sports section of Hong Kong's English-language newspapers. Many of the annual events don't fall on the same day or even in the same

month every year, so contact the **Hong Kong Tourism Board** (HKTB; ☎ 2508 1234; www.discoverhongkong.com) for further information.

CRICKET

Hong Kong has two cricket clubs: the very exclusive **Hong Kong Cricket Club** (Map pp54–5; ☎ 2574 6266; www.hkcc.org; 137 Wong Nai Chung Gap Rd; 🚗 63), above Deep Water Bay on Hong Kong Island, and the **Kowloon Cricket Club** (Map p94; ☎ 2367 4141; www.kcc.org.hk; 10 Cox's Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; MTR Jordan, exit E), where the Hong Kong International Cricket Sixes is held in late October or early November. This two-day event sees teams from Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, England, the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and South Africa battle it out in a speedier version of the game. For information contact the **Hong Kong Cricket Association** (☎ 2504 8102; www.hkca.cricket.org).

FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

Hong Kong has a fairly lively amateur soccer league. Games are played at the **Happy Valley Sports Ground** (Map p65; ☎ 2895 1523; Sports Rd, Happy Valley; 🚗 Happy Valley), a group of pitches inside the Happy Valley Racecourse, and at **Mong Kok Stadium** (Map p98; ☎ 2380 0188; 37 Flower Market Rd, Mong Kok; MTR Prince Edward, exit B1). For match schedules and venues, check the sports sections of the English-language newspapers or contact the **Hong Kong Football Association** (☎ 2712 9122; www.hkfa.com). The big football event of the year is the Lunar New Year Cup, which is held on the first and fourth days of the Chinese New Year (late January/early February).

HORSE RACING

Horse racing is Hong Kong's biggest spectator sport, probably because until recently it was the only form of legalised gambling in the territory apart from the Mark Six Lottery, and no one likes to wager like the Hong Kong Chinese. There are about 80 meetings a year at two racecourses: one in Happy Valley (p79) on Hong Kong Island, with a capacity for 35,000 punters, and the newer and larger one at Sha Tin (p125) in the New Territories accommodating around 80,000.

The racing season is from September to June, with most race meetings at Happy Valley taking place on Wednesday at 7pm or 7.30pm and at Sha Tin on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Check the website of the **Hong Kong**

Jockey Club (HKJC; ☎ 2966 8111, information hotline 1817; www.hkjc.com) for details, or pick up a list of race meetings from any HKTB information centre.

You have three choices if you want to attend a meeting. You can join the crowds and pay \$10 to sit in the public area or, if you've been in Hong Kong for less than 21 days and are over 18 years of age, you can buy a tourist badge (\$100 to \$150, depending on the meeting), which allows you to jump the queue, sit in the members' enclosure and walk around next to the finish area. These can be purchased at the gate on the day, or up to 10 days in advance at any branch of the HKJC. Make sure to bring along your passport as proof. The last choice is to join one of the racing tours (p79) sponsored by the HKTB.

The HKJC maintains off-track betting centres around the territory, including a **Central branch** (Map p56; Unit A1, Ground fl, CMA Bldg, 64 Connaught Rd Central; MTR Central, exit J3), a **Wan Chai branch** (Map p65; Ground fl, Kin Lee Bldg, 130 Jaffe Rd; MTR Wanchai, exit

A1) and a **Tsim Sha Tsui branch** (Map p92; Ground fl, Eader Centre, 39-41 Hankow Rd; MTR Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E).

Red-letter days at the races include the Chinese New Year races in late January or early February, the Hong Kong Derby in March, the Queen Elizabeth II Cup in April and the Hong Kong International Races in December.

RUGBY

The **Rugby World Cup Sevens** (www.hksevns.com.hk) sees teams from all over the world come together in Hong Kong in late March for three days of lightning-fast 15-minute matches at the 40,000-seat **Hong Kong Stadium** (Map p74; ☎ 2895 7925; www.lcsd.gov.hk/stadium; 🚗 Happy Valley) in So Kon Po, a division of Causeway Bay. Even nonrugby fans scramble to get tickets (adult/child \$880/300), because the Sevens is a giant, international, three-day party. For inquiries and tickets, contact the **Hong Kong Rugby Football Union** (☎ 2504 8311; www.hkrugby.com).

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