

Survive and Thrive @ CUHK & Hong Kong

Update: August 2009.



Welcome Message

We are glad that you will be attending the CUHK-CLC Chinese language programmes. To prepare you for your time at CLC, we have put together the following information. We hope this will assist you in planning your travel to Hong Kong, and provide some useful background information to prepare your for life at CUHK-CLC and Hong Kong.

Preparing to Leave

Health Care

Human Swine Flu (Influenza A H1N1)

http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/health_promote_protect/h1n1.html

Keep Clean Be Healthy: A guide to Personal, Home and Environmental Hygiene

http://www.fehd.gov.hk/pleasant_environment/library/booklet/keep_clean_by_healthy.pdf



Vaccinations

Unlike many Asian countries, vaccinations are not required for travel to Hong Kong. Gamma globulin and other shots are sometimes recommended by medical authorities for added protection. Once in Hong Kong you may obtain vaccinations required for travel in other Asian countries.

Hospitalization

International students holding a valid student visa could enjoy discounted rates for public health services. The nearest public hospital to CUHK is Prince of Wales Hospital in Shatin which is about 10 minutes drive from CUHK. It is also accessible by MTR Ma On Shan line and buses.

Insurance

International students should arrange insurance to cover their study abroad period. Some students may be included in their parents' health insurance policies. You should check with your parents before coming to Hong Kong. If you plan to travel outside Hong Kong, you should make sure that your insurance policy covers those regions as well.

China Visa

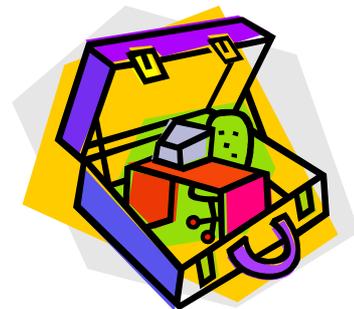
International students who plan to travel to mainland China need to apply for China visa. However, no China visa is needed for Japanese passport holders for staying less than 14 days. For other nationalities, a China visa is needed and the fee varies for different nationalities. Students may apply for a single-entry China visa in their home country or when they are in Hong Kong. If students need a double-entry or a multiple visa, they must handle in their home country. For reference prices, please visit China Travel Services website: www.ctshk.com/english/useful/chinesevisa.htm.

What to Bring

There is virtually nothing that you cannot buy in Hong Kong. So you should try to limit yourself to the amount of baggage that your airline will allow you to take. The following list may help you decide what to include when packing your luggage.

Things to bring

1. Casual wear such as jeans, sneakers for class;
2. Dresses or coat and ties for formal occasions;
3. Athletic wear for sport activities;
4. Extra pair of shoes if your shoe size is larger than 10;
5. Extra clothing if you are above average size or height;
6. Warm sweaters and perhaps a down jacket or down vest for the cold winter;
7. Mementos of home (pictures, favorite books or music, etc);
8. National costumes for cultural activities at CLC;
9. Your favorite dictionary to help you with your language class;
10. An electricity transformer if you are bringing electrical appliances from America or Japan since Hong Kong's electrical system operates on 220V;
11. Regular medication (if necessary) and a copy of your prescription.



Things that you may need but can be purchased at reasonable price in Hong Kong:

1. Raincoats, slickers/ macintoshes or umbrellas;
2. Additional blankets or Chinese quilts (as central heating is not available);
3. Books and stationery;
4. Cameras, watches, stereos and electrical appliances (e.g. hair-dryers, fans, heaters, mobile phones etc.).

Baggage Allowance

You should check with the airline you are flying with about its baggage limits for international flights and charges (usually quite prohibitive) for excess baggage. You may ship bulky items to Hong Kong through the postal service.



Money and Banking

Hong Kong dollar notes are in denominations of \$1,000, \$500, \$100, \$50, \$20 and \$10. There are also \$10, \$5, \$1, 50¢, 20¢ and 10¢ coins. The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar at a rate of approximately HK\$7.78 to US\$1. Most foreign currencies and traveler's cheques can be exchanged at banks, hotels or money-changers (check how much you will get in return before handing over your money). American Express, Visa and Master Card holders can withdraw local currency from some automated teller machines (ATM) but of course the handling charges are hefty. There are ATMs on campus.



As in all big cities, avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Traveler's cheques or credit cards are preferable. Personal cheques are rarely accepted. It is advisable to bring approximately the equivalent of HK\$12,000 in travelers' cheques for using during your first few weeks in Hong Kong. Cashier's cheques and bank drafts made out in your name may take local banks up to one month to clear.

The Hang Seng Bank, a major local bank in Hong Kong, and the Bank of East Asia each has a branch office at CUHK. If you open an account at the Hang Seng Bank, you can have money remitted directly into your account through the Hang Seng Bank in New York or through Hang Seng Bank's correspondents, the Hong Kong Bank of California or the Hong Kong Bank of Canada. While the Hang Seng Bank will not provide cash advance against international credit cards, there are several banks in central business districts that do. If you intend to transfer funds to Hong Kong through credit card accounts, you will need to bank off-campus.



The quickest ways to transfer money to Hong Kong are:

1. Carry traveler's cheques to Hong Kong; cash and deposit them into your local account upon arrival.
2. Have your family transfer money electronically from your own bank to your bank account in Hong Kong. This may take a few days to a week.
3. Use a debit card on your account's corresponding ATM. To avoid high interest fee for cash advance, you should first deposit money into your account which can be accessible overseas, e.g. Master, Visa, Maestro, Cirrus, Plus, JETCO, etc., and then draw from it while your are in Hong Kong.

Living in Hong Kong



Politics

Since July 1, 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. There are almost 7 million residents experiencing the implementation of the Basic Law and the "One country, Two systems" policy. International students at CUHK have the privilege to study first hand how the Hong Kong society is responding to and adapting to the new conditions.

Popular Culture

You will be astonished by the sight of stores stocking American, European and Japanese products everywhere. Mickey Mouse, Hello Kitty or Pokemon character goods are common. Western, Japanese and lately Korean influence prevails in that



entertainment business and pop culture. There are as many non-Chinese movies as Chinese ones. Two of the four TV stations broadcast in English. A number of channels of Cable TV, Satellite TV as well as radio stations also broadcast in English and some even in Japanese and Korean. Western, Japanese and Korean songs, soap operas, books and cuisines are loved by many. There are also English theatrical



performances and concerts of Western and Japanese music. Fashion trends are dominated by European and Japanese trends, with Japanese fashion especially popular among the younger generation.

Culture Shock

Many of you may experience “culture shock” within the first few weeks of your stay, when things seems to be so different from what you expect, when new experiences feel strange and you long for the familiar surroundings of home.

An open mind will help you to accept the good, bad and ultimately unique aspects of Hong Kong and enjoy your time here. As an added bonus, you will rediscover yourself and your own culture.

Tips to overcome culture shock:

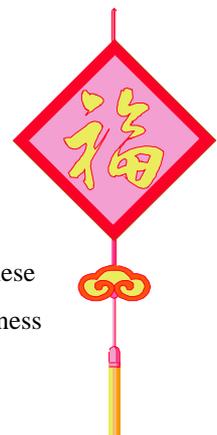
- Be tenaciously objective, analyzing the good and bad of both cultures
- Have realistic expectations about other cultures
- Explore your new surroundings with zeal, and try new things
- Take the initiative to make friends and participate in activities

People

In Hong Kong, almost 95% of the population is ethnic Chinese. The international community consists of various nationalities, with the Filipinos as the biggest foreign population.

Get to know the Chinese

Although the locals are used to seeing foreign tourists and residents, many do not have personal experience of foreigners at close range. Few indigenous Chinese have close non-Chinese friends and many will not expect a foreigner to have any deep interest in Chinese culture. They will be pleasantly surprised when you demonstrate adaptability and a willingness to use chopsticks.



In Hong Kong, you will find many opportunities to follow paths that are a familiar part of life in your home city or country. But that of course was not why you chose to study in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is important to consciously resist the temptation of the familiar. For example, make yourself speak Cantonese/ Putonghua in situations where English will do or spend less time with groups that include only international students. The longer you stay, the more “Chinese” the city will appear to you, but you will have to be active in searching out the “Chinese-ness”.

Customs and Norms

Navigating gracefully amidst Hong Kong’s mixture of Chinese and Western norms and customs can be a difficult task. You will have to learn nuances of behavior and attitude slowly by making yourself comfortable with Chinese company.

The line between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behavior or dress is a hard one to draw in Hong Kong. You will find all sorts of variations in this multi-racial society, but not every extreme is acceptable to mainstream society. Most Chinese people you meet on the streets will expect you to follow what they stereotype as Western or Japanese ways. They will rarely demonstrate shock or surprise at your behavior. A willingness to adapt to local culture will be welcomed.

Your attention is drawn especially to the following aspects of conduct on and off campus:

1. If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend with whom you are seen frequently, do not be surprised if people talk about it. If you have a friend of the opposite sex visiting Hong Kong, some people may assume an intimate relationship.
2. Chinese people usually do not greet each other by kissing or hugging. This common Western custom may create discomfort among Chinese.
3. Some people in Hong Kong speak very loudly but calling loudly to someone at a distance is not considered polite.
4. Traditionally the Chinese do not quibble over small amounts of money when in a restaurant or taking public transportation. Splitting expenses is viewed somewhat discourteous and niggardly especially on dates. If someone pays for your meal or bus fare, you should amiably protest and offer to pay. If the other person insists, you should give and reciprocate on a later occasion. An exception to this concerns is large group, where every member will pay for his/her own.
5. We are obliged to remind you that physical intimacy in student dormitories is strictly discouraged and curfews are imposed on after-hour visits by friends of the opposite sex.



Living Expenses

Hong Kong is, generally speaking, an expensive city. The prices for some

services and goods, particularly imported items, can be higher than those in other major metropolitan areas. But there are also plenty of good buys available through careful shopping and a little bargaining in Cantonese/ Puotnghua. Some indicative prices are:

	HK\$
Train fare from CUHK to downtown Kowloon	6.5-8.5
Bus fare from CUHK to Kowloon or Hong Kong Island	8.2-25.00
A “McDonald’s” Extra Value Meal	23.00-30.00
Movie Ticket	30.00-80.00

Past experience suggests that international students need approximately HK\$2,400 per month for food (in student canteens) and about HK\$1,500 per month to cover other expenses.

Food



Hong Kong is as much an eating paradise as a shopping paradise. Streets are lined with restaurants of cuisines from all over the world. Japanese, Italian, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese and American food are popular and easily accessible, and so is Chinese food.

The Chinese food in Hong Kong is likely to be very different from those you have in your home country. In fact, the term “Chinese food” is not very useful in Hong Kong since there are many regional varieties of Chinese cuisines.

For those who know Chinese cuisine, Hong Kong is heaven. For those who don't, initial dining experiences can be a little disconcerting, especially if your roommate starts you right off with chicken feet and pig intestine. But don't just run off to the nearest McDonald's or Kentucky Fried Chicken store. Instead, try to learn more about Chinese dishes. It won't be long before you discover many things that you like.



Transportation

Hong Kong boasts one of the world's most efficient, safe, affordable and frequent public transport system. Different modes of public transport operate on Hong Kong Island, and across the Victoria Harbour in Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories, carrying millions of people to different destinations every day. Navigating through different districts is easy with the octopus card, a hi-tech debit card acceptable in almost all modes of public transport and some fast food outlets.



MTR (Mass Transit Railway Corporation) – above ground and underground railway



The MTR has been providing a safe, reliable and efficient way to get around Hong Kong since 1979. In December 2007, the operations of MTR and Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation has been merged to form one of the most efficient and far-reaching railway networks in Asia. The newly expanded system extends all the way from the heart of Central and Causeway Bay to the new Territories and Lantau Island. Its 168.1km of track covers 80 stations on the Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Island, Tung Chung, Tseung Kwan O, East Rail, West Rail, Ma On Shan and Disneyland Resort lines. The MTR now also operates a 35.2km Airport Express and 36.2km Light Rail networks which can take you to Hong Kong Airport and 68 stops in the North West New Territories. It also provides speedy train services to major cities across Mainland.

The MTR provides the most convenient method of commuting between the University and downtown Kowloon. All MTR trains are clean and well-kept, but can be crowded during rush hours (8:00-10:00a.m. and 5:00-7:00p.m.). Fares are based on distance traveled. The system is exceedingly simple to use and train fares can be paid for through the Octopus Card at the turnstiles.



Buses

Buses serve the entire territory and there are cross-harbour buses which connect various parts of Hong



Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. Most buses are double-deckers and air-conditioned, with their final destination marked in English and Chinese on the front top panel. Bus fares are usually low, costing as little as HK\$3.00. Exact change is required but the Octopus Card can be used.

Minibuses



Minibuses are small passenger vans that supplement bus and train services. There are two types of minibuses. The one with a red stripe have unfixed routes. Passengers may get on and off anywhere and usually pay when alighting. Exact fare is not required and small change can be given. The ones with a green stripe travel on specific routes at fixed prices. Exact payment is required when boarding. Fares of minibuses range from HK\$2.00 to HK\$22.50 and in most cases the Octopus Card can be used.

Ferries

In the Victoria Harbour between Hong Kong island and Kowloon peninsula, ferries serve as a supplementary mode of transport to cross-harbour buses and the MTR. The most notable of all is the humble but legendary Star Ferry service between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui. There are also ferries serving the outlying islands, Macau and destinations on the coast of Mainland China, which are all popular recreational spots.



Taxis



Taxis in Hong Kong are among the world's most inexpensive. Different types of taxis operate in different parts of Hong Kong . Red taxis may operate in all parts of Hong Kong while green taxis can only operate within a defined area of the New Territories. The fare of green taxis is relatively lower than that of red taxis. Blue taxis are confined to running on Lantau Island only. All three go to the Hong Kong International airport.

You can order a taxi to pick you up on campus. It will take about 15 minutes for the taxi to come and you will have to pay a surcharge. Since telephone operation at the taxi companies are usually very busy and only speak Cantonese, you may find it easier to just flag down a taxi on Tai Po Road outside the University. Many drivers understand some English, but it is wise to have your destinations written in Chinese characters to show to the driver.

If you want to take a taxi from the University to Shatin or to some places in Kowloon, you will have to hire a red taxi.

Trams



Trams run along the east-west corridor on Hong Kong Island and follow the same tracks they have traveled since 1904. Much more than just a cheap and convenient way of getting around town, the upper decks of the trams offer magnificent views as they weave through busy city districts. Trams run from early morning until after midnight. The flat fare is HK\$2.00. Exact change is required and the Octopus Card can be used.



Language



Cantonese is the most widely spoken dialect in Hong Kong, but Putonghua (Mandarin) is increasingly popular. The traditional Chinese characters are commonly used in writing in Hong Kong, while simplified Chinese characters are used in Mainland China. English is the language of business and service industries. Most shops and service personnel speak it to some degree. However, life on the streets of Hong Kong is not truly bilingual because most residents do not use both Cantonese and English with equal ease.

At CUHK, international students will observe the perplexed feeling that local students have for English. Some students dislike English but reluctantly accept its necessity; others enjoy learning English but have had little chances to practice and advance in secondary schools. As international students, you are encouraged to interact with the local students in both English and their spoken dialect.

Climate

Summer (late May to mid-September) is hot, humid and rainy. Temperatures rise to 33°C (92°F) or higher, with humidity around 90%. The temperatures sometimes remain sweltering at night. It can be chilly indoors, as air conditioners are usually going full blast. Typhoons can often affect Hong Kong during these months. They bring heavy rain and very strong winds and can cause serious damage to life and property. During the height of serious typhoons, public transportation shuts down, stores and offices close, and everyone stays indoors.



Laws

On July 1, 1997, after 157 years of British colonial rule, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. The Basic Law was enacted as the constitutional provision for the implementation of the "One country, Two systems" policy. It serves as a mini-constitution of the Hong Kong SAR and the blueprint for future development. Under the Basic Law and the common law system, Hong Kong has remained a free port that promotes free trade and business. The fundamental freedoms of the residents such as freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression are also preserved.

Although Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy, the law deals harshly with drugs and firearms. The Hong Kong SAR Government maintains extensive anti-drugs campaigns and deals severely with possession, purchase, or use of illicit drugs. To combat the spread of violence in society, the possession of firearms and self-defense items such as pepper spray, knuckle-dusters and tear gas is prohibited.

Direction to CUHK-CLC

If you would like to arrange your own transportation to CUHK, please follow these directions. CUHK can be reached from the Hong Kong International Airport by taxi or by a combination of bus and train.

By Taxi:

The trip from the airport to the University is about 45 minutes. The fare is about HK\$310.00. Most taxi drivers in Hong Kong understand some English. The following texts may come in handy:

[The Chinese University of Hong Kong](#)

[Fong Shu Chuen Building](#)

[香港中文大學 方樹泉樓](#)

It is a 3-storey grayish-red building located opposite to the University MTR and the school bus terminal.



By Airport Bus and MTR Train:

Take airport bus route number A41 from the airport to the Shatin MTR Station. The bus runs from 06:00 to 24:00 at 20-minute intervals. The Shatin MTR Station is not the terminal stop for the bus, so ask the driver where to get off. The LCD panel on the bus shows next stop information in Chinese and English. Sometimes, announcement in Cantonese, Putonghua and English is provided as well. The bus ride takes 50-70 minutes depending on traffic conditions (fare: ~ HK\$20.00 payable on boarding bus in exact change).

From the Shatin MTR Station, you can take a taxi to the University (fare about HK\$50.00). It will take about 15 minutes.

Alternatively, from the Shatin MTR station, you can take the train to the University MTR Station (second stop from Shatin). The trains run every 5 to 10 minutes from 06:00 to 24:00. The train ride from the Shatin MTR Station to the University MTR Station takes about 8 minutes (fare: HK\$4.00).

There are two exits at the University MTR Station – one to the CUHK campus and the other to the public bus terminus and taxi stand. The CUHK exit will lead to the University campus. A map showing the University MTR Station and the University campus is accessible on-line at

<http://mmlab.itsc.cuhk.edu.hk/cm/campusmap/img/cumapa4.pdf>.

Upon exiting the University MTR Station, you should turn right. There is a University shuttle bus stop on the right hand side of the MTR station exit. Chinese Language Office is just at the building (Fong Shu Chuen Building 方樹泉樓 C-14) at the opposite side of the shuttle bus stop.

Dormitory Check-in (Summer only)

Upon your arrival in CUHK, you can check-in hostel directly. Some directions are listed below for your reference:

International House (i-House): IH-1 and IH-2 on campus map. Visit reception at IH-1 G/F to collect your room key.

- Take the CUHK shuttle light bus and get off at the stop of United College Staff Residence. Take the road to the left and walk for 2 minutes to reach I-House. The shuttle light bus fare is HK\$4.5 per trip.
- Take the CUHK shuttle / meet-class bus and get off at the stop of Residences No. 3 and 4. Take the road to the right and follow the road sign to the I-House. The walk takes about 8 minutes. The CUHK shuttle / meet-class bus is free during term time.
- During Sundays and public holidays, the CUHK shuttle bus will stop at United College Staff Residence. Take the road to the left and walk for 2 minutes to reach I-House. The CUHK shuttle bus fare is HK\$1 during those days.



SHAW College Hostel: S1, S2, S6, S8 on campus map. Visit reception at S1 G/F to collect your room key.

- Take the CUHK shuttle / meet-class bus with destination “SHAW colleague”. Take off at the stop of “SHAW” and S1 (Kuo Mou Hall) is right next to the bus stop.



Please show up on time in the orientation. Orientation location and schedule is attached. In the orientation you will be able to collect your text books, meet your teachers and classmates, and to join some tours.

Living in CUHK



The Campus

The CUHK campus is on the side of a hill at three levels. The University central administration, main library and central activities buildings are located at the middle level. Chung Chi College is nestled at the base of the hill adjacent to the University MTR Station. United and New Asia Colleges share the uppermost level. Shaw College is situated at the northwestern slope of the campus.

Students and staff of the University can use various sports facilities on campus. These include two outdoor stadiums, three indoor gymnasiums, and Olympic-sized swimming pool, tennis, squash courts, weight training rooms and a water sports center by Tolo Harbour.

CUHK boasts many tree and bamboo-lined pathways that make for ideal hiking excursions or short study breaks. Some of these paths provide views of an on-campus lake, Tolo Harbour, and a lively brook that cascades down the hillside.

Smoke-free CUHK

The entire university campus, including both indoor and outdoor areas, is designated as no-smoking area. In fact, recognizing the harm that smoking and second-hand smoke bring to us, the Hong Kong SAR Government has passed a bill, stating that the vast majority of indoor area of workplaces and public places, such as restaurants, offices, schools, hospitals, markets, karaokes and bars which were frequented by people of different ages were required to ban smoking.



Accommodation (Summer only)

Space is always at a premium in Hong Kong. The CUHK student dormitories (hostels) are probably less spacious and comfortable than dormitories in your home country. While postgraduates will live in single room, undergraduates will share double or triple occupancy room with other students. The close quarters can be vexing, but coping with a lack of space is a rudimentary part of living in Hong Kong, one of the world's most densely populated areas.

Hostel facilities and amenities for the use of international students include:

- Modestly furnished bedrooms each installed with a direct telephone line and network connection (ResNet);
- Air-conditioning: available. (central heating is not available but also mostly unnecessary);
- Blankets and bed linens;
- Laundry facilities: coin-operated / smartcard operated washing and drying machines and clothes lines for drying;
- Public kitchens equipped with water boilers, refrigerators, unit stoves, sinks and microwave ovens (in some hostels);
- Shared bathrooms with showers on each floor;
- Student-operated shops (in some hostels) which are open on designated evenings and sell toilet paper, laundry detergent, toothpaste and edibles such as cookies, fruit, Chinese beans and rice. For additional shopping there is a small supermarket located in the John Fulton Center within the campus.

When considering what to take to Hong Kong to outfit your living quarters, bear in mind that most of the things you need can be purchased in Hong Kong at reasonable prices.



On-Campus Transportation

The University operates a free shuttle bus service on teaching days to transport students and staff among the different levels of the campus. Campus bus schedules are accessible on-line at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/transport_unit/. A fee paying “shuttle light-bus”(with air-conditioning) service also runs through the campus at HK\$4.50.



Tips from Past International Students

On What to Bring

Bring a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Bring more money than you think you will need.

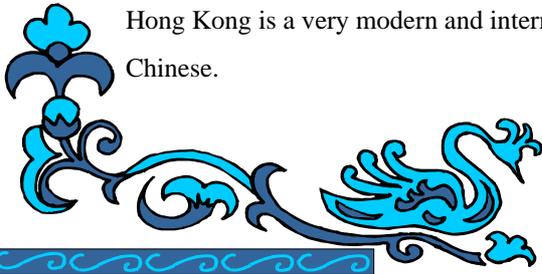
Bring extra underwear; you'll need extra pairs when it gets humid and you take three showers a day!

On Life in Hong Kong

Be ready for a lot of MSG in the food.

Don't let the crowdedness overwhelm you.

Hong Kong is a very modern and international on the surface, but its soul is very Chinese.



Acknowledgement

This guide is adapted from and reproduced with reference to documents from the Office of Academic Link, CUHK.

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