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## Natural beauty abounds in Hong Kong

**NP**

**JIM BYERS, POSTMEDIA NEWS** | December 23, 2015 | Last Updated: Dec 24 8:04 AM ET  
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A pair of young hikers pause to enjoy the view from high up on the Dragon's Back Trail in Hong Kong.

JIM BYERS PHOTO

HONG KONG – I'm standing atop a tall, craggy peak with a strong wind rolling off the China Sea. Small, willow-like plants bend to the power of the breeze as I gaze at steep headlands dotted with acacia trees and sweet-smelling pine.

Far below my feet I can see sand traps laid out on a deep green golf course and gnarly inlets and bays of Hong Kong Island. Uninhabited islands in shades of green and sun-kissed gold dot the surrounding ocean waters. Off to my right, I see a group of surfers bobbing in the water in Big Wave Bay.

That's the thing about Hong Kong. For all its sparkling high-rises and densely packed markets, this is a destination with far more natural beauty than most folks imagine. And some of the best urban hiking on the planet.

I'd been to Hong Kong a couple times before my last visit. I'd always made a point of doing the famous walk around Victoria Peak. But I'd never done the Dragon's Back.



Watching the surfers dance on the waves at Big Wave Bay is a relaxing way to enjoy nature in Hong Kong. JIM BYERS PHOTO

My tour guide and my wife and I took the Metro to the busy Shau Kei Wan area of Hong Kong Island, then hopped on a bus that quickly had us zipping along a narrow road surrounded by tall jungle growth. We got off at one of the starting points for the trail and headed up. And up. And up. It's not technically difficult, and the markers put the distance at about 10 km. But it's a pretty steady rise from the bus stop to the top of Shek O Peak, which is at a tidy 284 metres, making that 10 km feel more like 15.

The trail snakes along a series of ridges that rise and fall like the back of a dragon, offering both up and downhill challenges. Some folks turn around at the top of Shek O Peak and go back but we kept marching. After 90 minutes or so we came to a shaded, quiet and relatively flat path through what's called Pottinger Gap. I was beat but there were several spots to rest and pump out Instagram photos.





From there we took a stony path through a moderately steep ravine down to Big Wave Bay, where I rewarded myself with a locally produced Dragon's Back beer and watched the surfers. There isn't a huge surf culture in Hong Kong, but hanging out here feels a lot like parts of Australia or California; with kids in flip flops and baggy shorts waxing and shaping their boards in slapdash shops near the water.

### **Great hiking options**

There are dozens and dozens of great hikes to be found in Hong Kong, many on Hong Kong Island but others in Kowloon, the New Territories or on one of the many islands that comprise the territory. Here's one man's look at a few options.

### **VICTORIA PEAK**



A short walk along the trail near the top of Victoria Peak reveals stunning views of Hong Kong's majestic skyline. JIM BYERS PHOTO

Being on a small, paved road used (if infrequently) by locals and parks workers, the stroll near the top of Victoria Peak is more of a walk than a hike. But it's truly iconic; a roughly 4 km loop along Lugard and Harlech Roads rewards you with fantastic views of Hong Kong's skyscrapers below your feet. If you like, you also can hike down through a heavily wooded valley to the Pok Fu Lam reservoir.

### **LANTAU ISLAND**

There's a huge variety of hiking on Lantau. Some folks make the arduous climb to the Po Lin monastery and Big Buddha statue at the top of a large hill.

## LAMMA ISLAND



Lamma Island has several nice beaches for families to enjoy.

JIM BYERS PHOTO

There's an easy hike from the village of Yung Shue Wan to a nice beach (Hung Shing Yeh), albeit with an ugly power plant off to one side.

**CHEUNG CHAU**



There's a pretty pavilion on the north end of Cheung Chau with pretty views of the water. It's a short walk from the pier. COURTESY HONG KONG TOURISM



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The main route folks take on this island is a fairly short hike that combines strolling past waterfront restaurants and small alleyways with a great beach and a pretty pavilion on top of a hill. Be sure to check out the rich colours and vivid carvings at the Pak Tai Temple.

### If you go

### STAYING

[The Madera](#) is a lively boutique property in Kowloon with good value and a nice rooftop patio. Rooms in January from \$220 Cdn. per night. [The Langham](#), also in Kowloon, is a stunning five-star hotel with one of the prettiest lobbies in Asia. Rooms in January from around \$350.

### DINING

Located at the stunning Langham Hotel in Kowloon, T'ang Court recently received a third Michelin star. The breakfast buffet is out of this world. They serve magical dim sum at the beautiful Spring Moon restaurant, located at the Peninsula Hotel. For unbelievably good dim sum at a fab price, try any of the Tim Ho Wan restaurants; said to be the world's cheapest Michelin star food spot. Other great options include Jamie Oliver's Italian in the Causeway Bay area and superb, modern Thai food at Soi 7 in Central Hong Kong. Yeh), albeit with an ugly power plant off to one side.

### PLANNING

[www.discoverhongkong.com](http://www.discoverhongkong.com)

### ARRIVING

Cathay Pacific has flights daily from Toronto to Hong Kong, with comfortable seating and great service. Their business class and premium economy sections are especially helpful on long flights.

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