



ASIAN TIGERS
GROUP

Settling-in Hong Kong

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The Basics



About Hong Kong

Hong Kong (Chinese: 香港), officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, is a special administrative region. With over 7.4 million people of various nationalities in a 1,104 km² territory, Hong Kong is the world's fourth-most-densely-populated region.

Hong Kong became a colony of the British Empire after Qing China ceded Hong Kong Island at the end of the First Opium War in 1842. The colony expanded to the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 after the Second Opium War and was further extended when Britain obtained a 99-year lease of the New Territories in 1898. The territory was returned to China when the lease expired in 1997. As a special administrative region, Hong Kong's system of government is separated from that of mainland China.

Formerly a sparsely populated area of farming and fishing villages, Hong Kong has become one of the world's most significant financial centers and commercial ports. It is the world's seventh-largest trading entity, and its legal tender (the Hong Kong dollar) is the world's 13th-most-traded currency. Although the city has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, it has severe income inequality.

The territory has the largest number of skyscrapers in the world, most surrounding Victoria Harbour. Hong Kong ranks seventh on the UN Human Development Index and has the seventh-longest life expectancy in the world. Although over 90 percent of its population uses public transportation, air pollution from neighboring industrial areas of mainland China has resulted in a high level of atmospheric particulates.

Hong Kong is located just south of the Tropic of Cancer, about the same latitude as Mexico City or Casablanca. The climate is subtropical because of the southwest monsoon, a moist, warm, equatorial airflow that provides a rainy season from May to August. Temperatures typically rise to 30 degree Celsius or the middle 90's Fahrenheit.

The winters are cool and dry as the monsoon abates. The weather tends to develop over Mainland China and flow down to Hong Kong. This brings cool, dry temperatures that seldom get below 5 degrees Celsius.

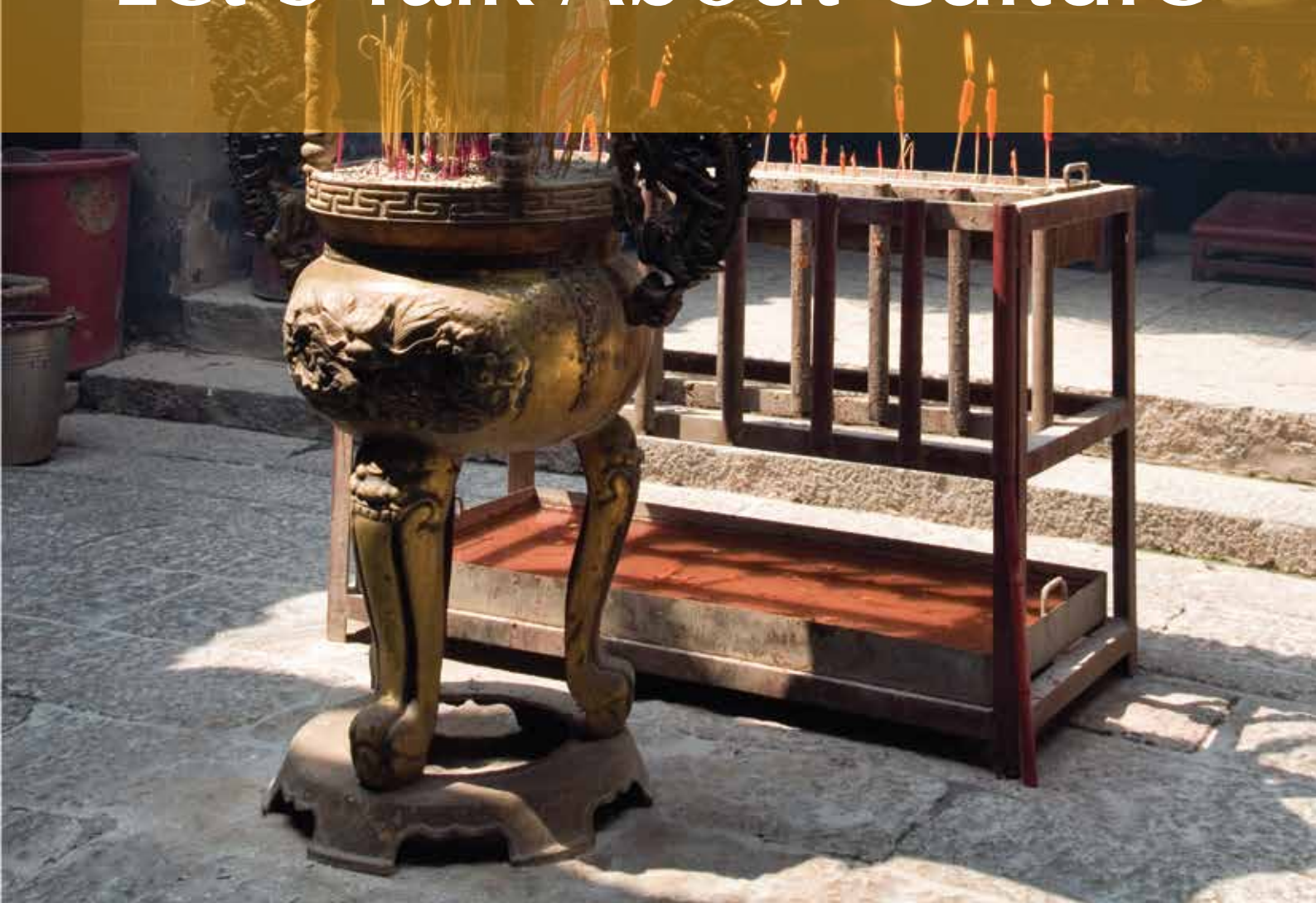
The average annual rainfall in Hong Kong is about 88 inches. Typhoons are a common occurrence in Hong Kong from around July to as late as October. These are violent storms that can virtually shut down Hong Kong for up to 24 hours – sometimes even longer.

Hong Kong 's Facts & Figures

Official Name	: Special Administrative region of the People's Republic of China
Land Area	: 1,074 sq. km/ 414.6 sq. mi
Population	: 7.4 million
Density	: 6,732 people per square kilometer
Time Zone	: UTC+8 (Hong Kong Time)
Currency	: Hong Kong Dollar (HKD)
Language	: Cantonese and English
Official scripts	: Traditional Chinese and English alphabet
Weather	: Humid subtropical climate. Summer is hot and humid, with occasional showers and thunderstorms. Winters are mild.
Weights and Measures	: Metric System



Let's Talk About Culture



Local Culture

What makes Hong Kong so unique is its people. A diversified mix of southern Cantonese Chinese combines with large communities from European, North American, and other Asian nations to produce a dynamic, hardworking and vibrant population. Although the vast majority of the population is ethnically Chinese, Hong Kong has developed a distinct identity. The territory diverged from the mainland due to its long period of colonial administration and a different pace of economic, social, and cultural development. Mainstream culture is derived from immigrants originating from various parts of China. This was influenced by British-style education, a separate political system, and the territory's rapid development during the late 20th century.

Hong Kong's culture is rich and robust. It draws heavily on its diverse population to offer the residents a wide variety of religious, holidays, festivals, food, languages and customs. Freedom of religion, guaranteed in the Basic Law, allows many different faiths to co-exist peacefully, side by side.

Hong Kong celebrates both Asian and Western festivals. There are a great number of holidays but the Chinese New Year merits special mention. Usually in late January or early February (it's a lunar event, so the exact dates change each year). It's a weeklong celebration, time to rekindle old friendships and spend time with close family members. People can experience a Chinese New Year like no other, with a fabulous parade of floats, international and local performers, stunning fireworks show over the harbor, heart-pounding action at the race track, and so much more.



Cultural Do's & Don'ts

Do's

When greeting people that you are not very intimately acquainted with, ensure that you greet people who are more important first. When greeting a family, greet according to age, oldest to youngest.

If you are giving a toast make sure that you fill everyone's glasses, before you fill yours.

If you are invited to someone's house, you should prepare a gift.

Bring business cards printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other side. Make sure that the Chinese side uses traditional characters, instead of the simplified Chinese, which is used in the People's Republic of China.

Be sure to look at a business card upon receiving it. Please do not write on a business card in front of the person who gave it to you.

Expect Hongkongers to ask personal questions.

Don'ts

Hongkongers are used to doing things fast, fast, fast! If you're walking in a crowded place, using public transport, or paying at a 7-11 with a queue behind you, try not to move too slowly or block anyone's way.

Don't smoke in restaurants, bars, public parks or beaches as Hong Kong law bans smoking indoors.

Hong Kong Chinese may stand close when talking. However, they are reserved and uncomfortable with body contact. Do not hug, kiss or pat people on the back.

Don't talk to locals in Mandarin, if possible. They prefer people speaking in English than in Mandarin.

Always avoid loud and obtrusive public behavior to blend into Hong Kong culture.

Lay your chopsticks on your chopstick rest or neatly on the table when you are finished eating. Never stick them in a bowl of rice.

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several tall, modern apartment buildings. The buildings are constructed with light-colored concrete and feature prominent red and blue accents on their balconies and window frames. They converge towards the top of the frame, creating a strong sense of height and scale. The sky is a vibrant blue, filled with scattered white clouds. A bright sun is positioned near the center of the upper half, casting a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene. A semi-transparent yellow horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, serving as a background for the text.

Settling in Tips

Getting Around

Private Car

If you are living in Hong Kong with a young family, their activities have the potential to take you all over the territory. Your life will be more convenient if you have a car, and many expatriates become quickly accustomed to the driving conditions. If you expect your routine life to be confined mostly to central areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, you can manage without a car, particularly if you live close to essential amenities. Driving laws are strictly enforced, and driving is on the left. The rules of the road are British.

A valid U.S., British, or international driving license is valid for one year if you are not a resident of Hong Kong. If you are in Hong Kong for more than 6 months, you must apply for a Hong Kong driving license immediately upon arrival you may use your overseas license for only a maximum of 30 days. If an approved country issued your overseas license (the U.S and the U.K are included, other nationalities should check with the Transport Department), a Hong Kong license will be issued without a test, provided specific requirements are met.

MTR

The Mass Transit Railway is a major public transport network serving Hong Kong. Operated by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), it consists of rail, light rail, and feeder bus service centered on an 11-line rapid transit network serving the urbanized areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories. There are three different fare classes on the MTR: Adult, Students, and Concessionary. The fare of MTR between any two particular stations is not calculated using a specific formula, which can be checked from the fare table or by App. Passengers can pay fare by means of Octopus card or single journey tickets.

Bus Services

Five bus companies provide franchised bus service across Hong Kong, operating more than 700 routes with 5,800 buses. Hong Kong is one of the few cities in the world that bus services are not operated or owned by the Government. The five franchised bus companies are Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited, Citybus Limited, Long Win Bus Company Limited, New World First Bus Services Limited, and New Lantau Bus Company (1973) Limited.

Hong Kong franchised bus routes have a fixed path, fare, service hours as well as schedule. Urban routes mostly operate with double-decker buses, which is a distinguishing feature of Hong Kong. Passengers have to pay their bus fare when they board the bus, and all the buses accept payment by either Octopus card or cash.

Minibus

Minibuses run through areas where the standard bus lines cannot or do not reach as frequently, quickly or directly. Minibuses carry a maximum of 16 (19 for some routes since 2017) passengers, and standing is not permitted. There are 2 types of minibus, one is green in color, and another one is in red. The former has route number and regular stops while the later may not have standard routes or route number.

Taxi

Taxis in Hong Kong operate in three distinct (but slightly overlapping) geographical areas and are distinguished by their color. The taxis in red color is urban taxis, the green one is New Territories taxis, and the rest are blue Lantau taxis. Taxi fares are charged according to the taximeter; however, additional charges on the fare table may apply, such as road tolls and luggage fees. Urban taxis are the most expensive, while Lantau taxis are the cheapest.

Tramways

The Hong Kong Tramways is the tram system run exclusively with double-deckers, providing service to only parts of Hong Kong Island. The rail system is 13 kilometers long, with a total track length of 30 km, and it runs together with other vehicles on the street.

Food

Due to Hong Kong's past as a British colony and a long history of being an international port of commerce, Hong Kong cuisine is mainly influenced by Cantonese cuisine, European cuisines (especially British cuisine) and non-Cantonese Chinese cuisines (especially Hakka, Teochew, Hokkien and Shanghainese), as well as Japanese, Korean and South-east Asian cuisines. Hong Kong provides an unlimited variety of food and dining in every class, with the reputable labels of "Gourmet Paradise" and "World's Fair of Food."

Local Food

As Hong Kong is Cantonese in origin and most Hong Kong Chinese are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Cantonese-speaking regions of China, the food is a variant of Cantonese cuisine – almost all home-cooking and much of the dine-out fares, from restaurant to bakery, are Cantonese or heavily Cantonese-influenced. Most of the celebrated food in Hong Kong such as the roast duck, dim sum, and abalone dish, poached chicken, and the mooncake, and others, are originated in nearby Guangzhou. Besides, the constant contacts Hong Kong has had with the West has made it more susceptible to Western influences and has produced famous local food such as egg tarts and Hong Kong-style milk tea.

International Food

Other foreign styles of cuisines are also popular in the territory; western (authentic, international, or Hong Kong-style), Italian, French, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian, Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean cuisines can be easily found in Hong Kong. You can find whatever you want to eat in Hong Kong.

Medical Care

Hong Kong has many world-class hospitals and medical facilities. Doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals are often trained overseas, and they brought back with them the latest techniques and treatments.

Both Western and Chinese medicine is practiced so this may be a good opportunity for the more adventurous and open-minded to explore alternative herbal medicine. Prescription medicine is relatively inexpensive and easy to find in one of the many pharmacies in Hong Kong.

The Hospital Authority manages 43 public hospitals and institutions, 49 Specialist Out-patient Clinics and 73 General Out-patient Clinics. These are organized into seven hospital clusters based on locations.

Hospital clusters ensure that patients receive a continuum of high-quality care within the same geographical setting and throughout their episode of illness – from the acute phase through convalescence, rehabilitation, and community after-care. This is achieved by rationalizing operations of the hospitals within each cluster so that a comprehensive and complementary range of services can be delivered to the community.

Medical services provided by HA hospitals/clinics are charged as per the Gazette. The charges are much lower for the Eligible Persons than the Non-eligible Persons. Only patients falling into the following categories are eligible for the rates of charges applicable to "Eligible Persons":

- Holders of Hong Kong Identity Card issued under the Registration of Persons Ordinance (Chapter 177), except those who obtained their Hong Kong Identity Card by virtue of previous permission to land or remain in Hong Kong granted to them and such permission has expired or ceased to be valid;
- children who are Hong Kong residents and under 11 years of age; or
- other persons approved by the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority.

Persons who are not Eligible Persons are classified as Non-eligible Persons.

Government Hospitals

Hong Kong West Cluster

Grantham Hospital
MacLehose Medical Rehabilitation Centre
Queen Mary Hospital
The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital at Sandy Bay
Tsan Yuk Hospital
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Fung Yiu King Hospital
Tung Wah Hospital

Hong Kong East Cluster

Cheshire Home, Chung Hom Kok
Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital
Ruttonjee Hospital
St. John Hospital
Tang Shiu Kin Hospital
Tung Wah Eastern Hospital
Wong Chuk Hang Hospital

Kowloon Central Cluster

Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital
Hong Kong Children's Hospital
Hong Kong Eye Hospital
Kowloon Hospital
Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Kowloon West Cluster

Caritas Medical Centre
Kwai Chung Hospital
Kwong Wah Hospital
North Lantau Hospital
Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital
Princess Margaret Hospital
TWGHs Wong Tai Sin Hospital
Yan Chai Hospital

Kowloon East Cluster

Haven of Hope Hospital
Tseung Kwan O Hospital
United Christian Hospital

New Territories East Cluster

Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital
Bradbury Hospice
Cheshire Home, Shatin
North District Hospital
Prince of Wales Hospital
Shatin Hospital
Tai Po Hospital

New Territories West Cluster

Castle Peak Hospital
Pok Oi Hospital
Siu Lam Hospital
Tin Shui Wai Hospital
Tuen Mun Hospital

Private Hospitals

Canossa Hospital
Evangel Hospital
Gleneagles Hong Kong Hospital
Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Stubbs Road
Hong Kong Baptist Hospital
Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital
Matilda International Hospital
Precious Blood Hospital
St. Paul's Hospital
St. Teresa's Hospital
Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan
Union Hospital
People's Liberation Army Garrison Hospital
CUHK Medical Centre

International Schools

Private schools often have waiting lists, so it is advisable to plan ahead. Some schools offer debentures that assure a place for children of debenture holders. In any case, this is one area where it is important to plan ahead to make the proper arrangement before you arrive in Hong Kong.

Below is a brief overview of some international schools in Hong Kong.

American School Hong Kong

6 Ma Chung Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong
+852 3919 4100

Canadian International School of Hong Kong

36 Nam Long Shan Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2525 7088

Chinese International School

1 Hau Yuen Path, Braemar Hill, Hong Kong
+852 2510 7288

Singapore International School (Hong Kong)

2 Police School Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong
+852 2919 6966

Kellett School (Kowloon Bay Prep and Senior)

7 Lam Hing Street, Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong
+852 3120 0700

French International School of Hong Kong

165 Blue Pool Rd, Happy Valley, Hong Kong
+852 2577 6217

Malvern College Hong Kong

3 Fo Chun Road, Pak Shek Kok, New Territories, Hong Kong
+852 3898 4699

Daily Needs

Housing

Expatriate housing in Hong Kong generally falls into one of two categories: High-rise apartment blocks and low-rise townhouses. Single-family, detached housing that is common in the US and Western Europe is scarce. Generally, expat apartments (flats) range from 900 to 2,800 square feet.

Furnished apartments exist but are rare. Many international property agencies in Hong Kong can help you find suitable housing. Once you do, be warned that storage space is limited. Residential leases are typically two years duration, but this, and most other clauses is very much negotiable on a case-by-case basis.

Despite recent economic difficulties, rentals have not declined a great deal, and Hong Kong remains one of the most expensive rental markets in the world.

Groceries

Fresh ingredients are brought in from Guangdong Province and sold in the markets every morning. With the local economy booming, virtually any food or fruit can now be found on restaurant menus or at streets stalls. In addition to the markets and street stalls, there are western style supermarkets and specialty food shops catering to every needs, taste, and price range. Imported goods are always more expatriates often feel more comfortable with a familiar brand name.

Household supplies and hardware are widely available at U.S style supermarkets such as ParknShop and Wellcome, department stores, and small Chinese provision stores: prices are competitive. Many products are from Australia.

Appliances & Electronics

Hong Kong's electricity is 220V, 50 cycle, in common with the British standard on which it is modeled. Transformers and adapters are readily available locally. Hong Kong uses three different types of plugs. The most common is the British three rectangular blade types; others are the "Europlug" or Continental plug and the China plug. There are no specific restrictions on the importation of domestic appliances. If you are relocating from a country whose electrical system is compatible with Hong Kong's, you should certainly include small domestic appliances in your shipment.

Broadcast system

Hong Kong's television system is PAL. TVs and VCRs from European countries including the U.K. are compatible with Hong Kong's system, while those from America are not. Multi-system equipment can also be bought in Hong Kong, although this will be more expensive than PAL equipment can be used to play video tapes brought from the U.S., however, and this may be a useful extra for children's entertainment.

Utilities

Most of the areas in Hong Kong are covered with natural gas supplies (also known as Towngas). Hong Kong China Gas Company is the only supplier. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is used in areas without Towngas supplies, especially in the New Territories. It is supplied by major oil companies. Monthly invoice is sent. And the estimated gas cost of a 1000 sq. ft premises is around HKD500.

Water supply would not be disconnected between tenants. Name on the water account has to be changed through the Water Consumer Enquiry Centers, the Water Supplies Department. Tap water in Hong Kong is sterilized with Fluorine. Although it is fully complies with guidelines set by the World Health Organization, boiled tap water is always securer. Distilled water can be delivered to domestic users, but it is not good for the kidneys of children, especially babies. Water invoices are sent quarterly. For a 1000 sq. ft. premise, the water cost is roughly HKD1000 per month.

Phone & Internet

There are many suppliers for the services and the costs depend on which suppliers you use and the plans you join. Usually, it takes several days for the phone services to be fixed, but immediate assistance is generally available for the internet.

Domestic Help

In Hong Kong, you may employ live-in or part-time domestic helpers to help with your daily chores.

Foreign domestic helpers mainly come from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, most can speak in English. They are mainly live-in helpers that the employees would usually provide them with accommodation and basic meals. For contract made on or after 10 July 2008, the minimum allowable wage is HKD3580 per month.

Basically, the domestic helpers are under the protection of the Employment Ordinance in Hong Kong. There are three types of holidays must be provided: Rest day (1 rest day on every period of 7 days), annual leaves (depends on the numbers of year the domestic helper has served; 7 days a year for the first two years and 1 extra day added afterward), and statutory holiday (12 public holidays through the year in Hong Kong)

You may contact some domestic agents to arrange the employment.

For part-time domestic helpers, you may contact the Employees Retraining Board operated by the Hong Kong government for the employment. The hourly rate is usually HKD50 - 60 per hour. However, those local helpers may not be able to communicate in English.

A close-up photograph of several hands holding wine glasses, clinking them together in a toast. The glasses contain both red and white wine. The background is blurred, showing more people and glasses, suggesting a social event. A semi-transparent yellow banner is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Let's Have Fun

Leisure

Hong Kong people work hard - and they play equally hard. There are a wide variety of activities of activities from water sports, golf, tennis, to hiking. Hong Kong boasts more than 100 kilometers of excellent hiking trails that offer breathtaking vistas of the city skyline, Victoria Harbor and the South China Sea.

Networking

Expatriate social life often revolves around private clubs and organizations. There are many business, recreation, social and athletic clubs to choose. Some are expensive and have long waiting lists; others are more affordable and readily accessible. Some associations, chambers and clubs are shown below.

- American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
- American Women's Association
- Hong Kong Cricket Association
- Hong Kong Gardening Society
- Hong Kong Highlanders
- The American Club Hong Kong
- The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
- The Helena May
- The Hong Kong Club
- The Singapore Association

A white smartphone with a black case is lying on a white surface. To the left of the phone is a red notebook. In the top right corner, there is a potted plant with green leaves. A semi-transparent orange banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "Need Help?".

Need Help?

Emergency Contacts

Emergency

Emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) : 999

Other useful hotlines

Telephone directory enquiries (English)	: 1081
Hong Kong Observatory (weather)	: 1878 200
Consumer Council	: 2929 2222
Hong Kong Immigration Department	: 2824 6111

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