

Country Profile: Hong Kong

General Information:

- Hong Kong is a territory part of China south of Guangzhou.
- The land area of Hong Kong comprises of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon.
- As of July 1, 1997 an agreement was reached between the Chinese and British governments that parts of Hong Kong would be returned to China. The people of Hong Kong will be governing the island as the Special Administrative Region of China (SAR). This is now known as "one country, two systems" policy. The island is self governing; possess its own legal and political systems, and currency. High degree of autonomy except in defense and foreign affairs.
- The official languages are Chinese (Cantonese) and English.
- The government type is limited democracy.
- The currency is the Hong Kong dollar (HKD).
- In the summer from June to September the climate is warm and humid. During the winter the temperature can drop to as low as 10 degrees Celsius.
- Natural resources are very limited; food and raw materials must be imported.

Economy:

Hong Kong possesses a highly developed capitalist economy with a free market economy. They are dependent on international trade and finance. The territory has increasingly being incorporated with mainland China through tourism, trade and financial links. The travel restrictions from China to Hong Kong have eased. Tourism from China to Hong Kong has increased significantly. China tourists outnumber foreign tourists. Over the past few years China has been Hong Kong's largest trading partner. The Hong Kong stock exchange is the sixth largest in the world and it has the second highest value of initial public offerings. The stock exchange has established itself as the premier leader for listing mainland Chinese companies on the market. In an arrangement since 1985 the Hong Kong dollar has been closely linked to the US dollar.

Industries include textiles, clothing, tourism, clocks, plastics, electronics, shipping, banking, toys and watches. Export commodities include printed material, watches and clocks, plastics, toys, precious stones, textiles, apparel, footwear, and electrical machinery and appliances. The largest export markets for Hong Kong are mainland China, Japan and the United States.

Culture Etiquette:

Greetings:

A higher ranking person is greeted first before a person with a lower rank. An older person is greeted first before a younger person. A woman is greeted before a man. Family members are greeted in order of age, oldest first and youngest last.

Shake hands with everyone; that includes men, women, and children. The handshake will not be as firm as a Western handshake.

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Communication Style:

Indirect communication is often used. "Yes" may not mean an agreement; it often means "I hear you." "No" is generally not said, but you may hear "I will have to wait," or "This may be very difficult."

Personal Space and Touching:

Standing close to each other when talking is ok, however, they are reserved people and uncomfortable with body contact. Avoid hugging, kissing, and patting someone on the back.

Views of Time:

Punctuality is expected and respected. Allow 30 minutes of courtesy time if someone is going to be late for an appointment with you.

Gender Issues:

Foreign businesswomen should have little trouble conducting business. Chinese women generally do not drink alcohol, but for foreign women, drinking in moderation is acceptable.

Gestures:

Winking at someone is a rude gesture. When requesting a bill, make a writing motion with your hand. When summoning a person, extend your arm, palm down and make a scratching motion with the fingers. Never point with your fingers; that gesture is meant for animals.

Taboos:

Do not place chopsticks standing upright in the rice bowl. Hong Kong Chinese are very superstitious so do not mention failure, poverty or death during a conversation.

Business Etiquette:

Dress:

For a business meeting, men should wear conservative and lightweight Western-style suits and ties. Women should wear conservative dresses, suits or skirts and blouses. Wear a good watch; it will be noticed.

Titles and Business Cards:

Use appropriate titles and family names when addressing people. Only use first name when invited by your host or colleagues. Titles include Miss, Mr., Mrs., Doctor or Professor along with the family name (surname). Chinese names are given in two parts: family name and given name.

It is recommended that business cards are printed in both English and in Chinese with "classical" characters. They should not be printed in simplified Chinese which is used in the People's Republic of China. Upon introduction present your business card using both hands with the Chinese side facing up.

Be sure to look at the business card when it is presented to you. Do not write on the business card in front of the person who presented it to you.

Meetings:

Tea is served at meetings. Do not drink the tea until the host takes the first sip. When the meeting has come to an end, the host will leave the tea untouched.

Negotiations:

Appointments for business meetings should be scheduled a month prior to your arrival. Take time to build relationships. It will take time to accomplish any goals. Face to face meeting is preferred, but courtesy calls and personal selling are appreciated and important to its success.

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Negotiations will be slow and detailed, but efficient. When attending the meetings, be sure to send senior people with the expertise to make decisions on the spot and be prepared to compromise. A business deal may be completed with a handshake. Lawyers are not present at negotiations until the contracts are drawn up and signed.

Do not open an office in Hong Kong without hiring or consulting a feng shui professional. A feng shui professional advises on the facility, moving date, opening date, entrance and the positions of office furniture to be in harmony with nature and spirits. Do not ignore this custom. Many Chinese will not do business without feng shui approval for fear of trouble from spirits. Ask a Hong Kong businessperson for a recommendation for a feng shui professional.

Gift Giving:

Giving a gift is a sign of respect and friendship. At the first meeting bring a small gift. High quality cognac, brandy, candy, and pens are suitable gifts. Never visit a Chinese home without bringing a gift. Gifts should be presented and received with both hands. Do not open gifts upon receiving them. When giving gifts, try to give them in sets of 3, 8, or nine. The numbers 3, 8, and 9 in Chinese sounds similarly to life, prosperity, and 9 is a homonym for eternity. Do not give flowers with the colors white and red which symbolize mourning and blood. Do not give a clock as a gift because it symbolizes death, but a watch is a suitable gift. Try to bring a gift from your hometown or state. It is illegal to present a civil servant with a gift.

Travel information:

If the person has the following documents a visa and entry permit is not required:

- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Passport.
- British National (Overseas) Passport.
- Hong Kong Certificate of Identity.
- Hong Kong Re-entry permit (for entry from the Mainland of China and the region of Macao only).
- Hong Kong Seaman's Identity Book.
- Hong Kong Document of Identity for Visa Purposes provided that the document is valid or the holder's limit of stay in Hong Kong has not expired.
- Travel documents bearing one of the following endorsements: "Holder's eligibility for Hong Kong permanent identity card verified." or "The holder of this travel document has the right to land in Hong Kong. (Section 2AAA, Immigration Ordinance, Cap. 115, Laws of Hong Kong)"
- Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card

The following countries will need a visa to enter Hong Kong: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Russian Federation, Serbia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. A person visiting from a country that does not require a visa can stay from 14 - 180 days. Please visit the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehhtml/hkvisas_4.htm for more information about gaining entry into Hong Kong.

Sources:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/hk.html>

http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehhtml/hkvisas_4.htm

http://www.hlbi.com/dbifiles/dbi_pdf/hongkongEng.pdf

http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_hk.htm

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