



**THE NEXT SOHO?** Tai Hang is fast becoming a dining and shopping hub these days, which is a sharp contrast from the mainly residential area of yesteryears. Now, mom-and-pop stores and makeshift eateries thrive alongside the newest restaurants and shops around.

## ‘NOT YOUR USUAL’ HONG KONG SPOTS

Food and travel enthusiast **APPLE MANDY** checks out 10 of the Frangrant Harbor’s coolest digs. Photos by **WILLIAM MAK**

**S**o you think you’ve seen all of Hong Kong’s nooks and crannies? If you’re willing to go beyond the usual haunts, like Causeway Bay or Mongkok, you will be in for a sweet surprise. Go where the locals go and open your eyes to the unique attractions of this neon-lit metropolis.

### TAI HANG TREATS

A mere five-minute walk from the Tin Hau MTR station, Tai Hang is an old residential neighborhood-turned-dining destination. A close rival of Soho in Central, the vicinity is chock-full of restaurant options, ranging from Japanese ramen houses to charming al fresco cafés, from traditional *dai pai dong*s to a 24-hour hole-in-the-wall dim sum eatery.

**BEST BETS:** *Daruma Ramen House, 92E, Tung Lo Wan Road, Tai Hang, +852 2565 6600. Ming Shi Bing Shi, G/F, 16 Wun Sha Street, Tai Hang, +852 2576 7272; TAB: HK\$100–150*



Dining al fresco in Tai Hang

### NATURE RULES!

Magnificent rock formations and beautiful scenery are Geological Park’s top draws. Sharp Island, an exceptional isle located 2,000 meters east of Sai Kung Pier, boasts of a magnificent wave erosion landscape. Get tanned in one of the great beaches here or hike up the trail and check out the white-bellied sea eagle, which breeds along Hong Kong’s coastline.

**TOUR OPTIONS:** *It’s best to tour GeoPark via a local travel agency. To get to Sharp Island, take the MTR to Choi Hung Station (exit C), then a minibus (1A) to Sai Kung’s last stop. Walk toward the Sai Kung Public Pier and take sampans to Sharp Island. TAB: HK\$148 to HK\$198*

### HEARD IT THRU THE GRAPEVINE

Get a taste of a “Made in Hong Kong” wine at 8th Estate Winery, an urban winery in Ap Lei Chau established in 2007. Sourced from wine regions in the United States, Italy, Australia, and France, the premium wines are produced locally by top winemakers. Take a sip of Washington State cabernet sauvignon 2007 and be amazed.

**BOTTOM’S UP:** *Room 306, 3/E, Harbour Industrial Center, No. 10 Lee Hing Street, Ap Lei Chau, +852 2518 0922, www.the8estatewinery.com; TAB: Private tastings of four varietal wines cost HK\$180 per person (minimum of eight persons), and HK\$80 per person during public tastings every Saturday. Wines start at HK\$140.*

### WORTH ONE’S SALT

Couple Omri Shamar and Caroline Goldsmith opened Inhalo eight months ago, bringing the “salt therapy” concept to



**BBQ PARTY:** There's something special about friends and family sitting down in front of a fire at MK BBQ and savoring grilled fare that ranges from sausages, squid, scallops, chicken wings and thighs, and a variety of meat and seafood 'balls'. Photo by Apple Mandy.

Hong Kong. This 100-year-old health-promoting practice from Eastern Europe involves breathing in microscopic salt-infused particles in a natural salt cave. The revolutionary treatment helps alleviate ailments like bronchitis, sinusitis, snoring, and ear infections.

**HEALTH STOP:** *W Place, 7/E, 52 Wyndham Street, Central, Hong Kong, +852 3489 3144, www.inhalospa.com, info@inhalospa.com; TAB: HK\$200 to HK\$675.*



**CODE RED:** Pink dolphins in HK continue to struggle with pollution, too much boat traffic, and habitat loss.

#### GRILLIN' & CHILLIN'

Forget about the grungy décor and interior, MK BBQ is the place to be for good food. Sitting around a large fire pit in a terrace and grilling ingredients of your choice could be fun. The staff does not speak fluent English, so the good ol' "point and order" routine will do.

**GOOD TO KNOW:** *6/E, 29 Soy Street, Mongkok, +852 6693 8700, daily 2 p.m. to 12 a.m.; TAB: Monday to Thursday, HK\$128 for 4 hours; Friday to Sunday and public holidays, \$138 for 4 hours. Price*

*includes cream soda, Coca-Cola, green tea, and a bottle of water.*

#### CAMPING FUN

Stay in a teepee on Palm Beach for a one-of-a-kind accommodation. Found on Lantau Island's south side, these hand-painted, multi-sized American Indian tents sit on a 20,000-square-foot lawn. Other activities available include sunbathing, kayak surfing, skim boarding, and standup boarding. **WHAT'S WHAT:** *Palm Beach, Cheung Sha, Lantau Island, +852 2980 4822, www.palmbeach.com.hk, info@palmbeach.com.hk; TAB: HK\$1,300 (26" teepee), HK\$600 (16" teepee), HK\$550 (12" teepee). For more information, visit www.palmbeach.com.hk/lodging.html*

#### TICKLED PINK

With only fewer than a hundred Chinese white (or pink-colored) dolphins existing today, the Dolphin Watching Tour available every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday in North Lantau and Soko Islands is a must to raise awareness about these endangered animals. They're colored pink because they are said to blush; that is, blood is carried to the skin's outer layers to regulate the dolphin's body temperature. **DO YOUR PART:** *Dolphin Watching Tour, +852 2984 1414, www.hkdolphinwatch.com, info@hkdolphinwatch.com. TAB: HK\$380 per adult, HK\$190 per child (3–11 years old), and HK\$50 for kids 3 years and younger.*

#### BIKERS' PARADISE

Fancy a picturesque bike tour? Rent a bicycle at Wan Wah Bicycle Rental and explore Tai Mei Tuk in the

## HONG KONG It List

The places to see and be seen around the city.  
By CYNTHIA ROSENFELD

### Shop

Local socialite Marisa Zeman does more than lounge by the infinity pool at her father's uber-chic Andara Resort in Phuket. Her Lan Kwai Fong boutique **Nude is Rude** is filled with flowing kaftans, sexy dresses, and slinky jumpsuits in vibrant monochromes plus tiger, retro-inspired, and gilded prints.

### Dine

Indulge in Michelin-starred chef Gray Kunz's **Café Grey Deluxe**. Their well-priced, pre-fixed lunch features creative starters like porcini pumpkin gnocchi in chanterelle cream as a prelude to a sublime steamed Tasmanian salmon with leeks and ginger.

### Drink

The world's highest bar at 490 meters, **OZONE** is not for the vertiginous. Try their signature Dragontini made with vodka, yuzu, and raspberries while admiring captivating Kowloon, Hong Kong Island, and Victoria Harbour views.

### Sleep

Fans are divided on the best aspect of **EAST Hong Kong**. Is it the location, in the former dockyards turned newly cool Taikoo Shing area with new art spaces and eateries just 10 minutes by MTR from Central, or the super plush beds in reasonably priced rooms?

*(Cynthia Rosenfeld is a consultant to the world's finest hotels and resorts. Since 2001, she served as Contributing Editor for Condé Nast Traveler covering Asia.)*



**TOUR DE WAN WAH:** Renting bicycles is the most relaxing option to explore Tai Mei Tuk, Hong Kong's longest bike route that stretches for about 20 kilometers or so from Tai Wai.

New Territories. Savor the fresh breeze while cycling on spacious, two-lane flat pavements overlooking the Plover Cove Reservoir, verdant hills, and calm waters.

**GETTING THERE:** *Wan Wah, Stt 811,*

*DD28, Tai Mei Yuk Village, Ting Kok Road, Tai Po, New Territories, +852 2662 6292. To get there, take the MTR to Tai Po Market, then take a green taxi to Tai Mei Yuk Village. TAB: HK\$35/person per day.*

### GAME ON!

Get your thinking caps on and join board game geeks at Jolly Thinkers Boardgame, a game center-retail-coffee shop in Wanchai and Prince Edward. The choices are many—from all-time favorite games to popular ones like **Geistesblitz**, **Jungle Speed**, **Dixit**, **Blockers**, or **Saboteur**. Also for sale are over 100 game titles on the rack.

**WINNERS' CIRCLE:** *11/F, Bayfield Building, 99 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, +852 2527 2882, [www.jollythinkers.com](http://www.jollythinkers.com), [info@jollythinkers.com](mailto:info@jollythinkers.com);* **TAB:** *HK\$55 (first 2 hours' rental inclusive of one drink—tea, coffee, or juice—worth HK\$30); boardgames are sold from HK\$80 and up.*

### TEE-HEE...

T-shirt design is taken to the next level with Shikisai, a Japanese brand that enables buyers to play with its interactive design details or simply catch other's attention. Be it real lace dangling from a two-dimensional print on a white top or blinds that can be folded up. The clean, minimalist designs are the brainchild of Japanese dynamic duo Noto-Fusai.

**T-SPOT:** *T Nation, Shop 157, Causeway Place, 2-10 Great George Street, Causeway Bay, [www.shi-ki-sa-i.com](http://www.shi-ki-sa-i.com), [tnation.cwb@me.com](mailto:tnation.cwb@me.com). TAB: HK\$499. ■*



**LUXE LIVING:** With living spaces on land getting smaller and more expensive, Hong Kong's expats are discovering the joys of houseboat living...and how!

## WATER, HO!

*Thinking of trading a serious flat for a luxurious houseboat? APPLE MANDY helps you make up your mind.*

It's easy to feel claustrophobic in Hong Kong's "shoebox apartments," so named because of the dwellings' limited spaces which, on the average, measure 700 square feet or less.

For Michele Cameron and her husband St John, with daughters Stephanie, 15, and Lucie, 13, and two dogs Pepper and Brandy, what better way to get back and savor that gift of personal space than living in houseboats? Six years and

five houseboats later, the Camerons are proud owners of a 57-foot, three-bedroom vessel named "Toad Hall" docked at the Discovery Bay Marina Club in Lantau Island.

"What I like about living here is that there is a lot of space and a lot of outdoor living. It just gives you such a wonderful lifestyle," shares Michele.

Indeed, a visit to the Discovery Bay Marina, popular among expatriate families, reveals glamorous perks for residents—complimentary use of high-class facilities, such as a 25-foot swimming pool, tennis courts, library, a fully equipped gym, and a restaurant called Anchorage

that serves both Western and Asian fares. One of the world's largest marinas for liveaboards, the Discovery Bay Marina is home to 214 berths.

Living on a houseboat is a lifestyle choice. Renting one costs between HK\$40,000 and HK\$50,000 per month, including utilities and the right to use all the club facilities. But buying a 2,400-square-foot semifurnished houseboat costs a whopping HK\$6.5 million.

Michele, a qualified state agent for HK Boat and Homes Ltd, says demand for houseboats is increasing. To date, she has sold 60 and rented out over 20 liveaboards.

Other houseboat haunts in Hong Kong include Gold Coast and Aberdeen.

But even with 24-hour security, accidents do happen. "Stephanie has fallen in the water three times over the last six years but luckily she can swim," says Michele. This is why safety measures, such as walking down the middle of the dock, are taught to residents, especially kids. Those who fall into the water can climb the safety staircases or onto smaller boats.

Certainly, living on a houseboat can be expensive, but the promise of breathing in that precious personal space is priceless. ■



PAL flies between Manila and Hong Kong five times a day. Swingaround tour packages are also available. For more information, call PAL Reservations Office at (+632) 855 8888 or visit [www.philippineairlines.com](http://www.philippineairlines.com).