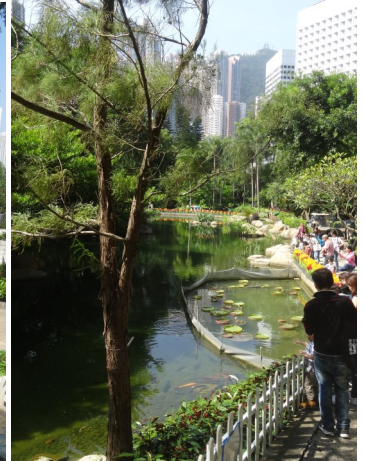


**Friday October 27**

It was another beautiful morning as we left the hotel via the adjoining shopping mall and ascended the escalators into Hong Kong Park. This is a lovely oasis in the middle of the towering skyscrapers and is filled with water features, flower beds and trees. It also has a covered aviary and a number of venues for wedding photos, sports activities and other leisure activities.



***Hong Kong  
City Park***



Once across the park we joined the line waiting for the tram up to Victoria Peak. It was still only mid-morning but we had a 45 minute wait for the 100+ year old tram to arrive and take us to the peak. Here we had magnificent views over the city, the straits and Kowloon on the mainland. The number of office and residential tower blocks is mind-boggling from any angle in this city but at 1700 feet above sea level it really is stunning. 7 ½ million people live in the Territory and there are very few one-family dwellings so virtually everyone lives in one of these massive towers. The views from any one must be fantastic but at the rate at which they are going up, it would seem that any-





one could lose his harbor view at any time. In addition, the water is being filled in all the time so more tower blocks can be built. It is a remarkable city and has to be seen to be believed.



*The Peak Tram's route from Central district to Victoria Peak covers a distance of about 0.87 miles and an elevation of just under 1,312 feet. The line has two pronounced curves, one to the left immediately after leaving the lower terminus, and the other to the right in the upper half of the ascent. The gradient also varies considerably throughout the ascent. It is a single track route and a passing loop, with two trams.*

*In 1881 Alexander Findlay Smith first put the project of a Peak Railway into shape and presented a petition for a concession to the governor of Hong Kong. The necessary legislation was passed two years later.*

*Findlay Smith did not approach the project rashly. Travelling extensively in Europe and America, he made himself conversant with nearly every existing method of railway employed for mountain ascent — San Francisco, Scarborough, Rigi, Monterey, Lucerne, the Rhine, Mount Vesuvius — and returned to Hong Kong thoroughly convinced of the feasibility of his idea. The actual construction was begun in September 1885 and in May 1888 the line was officially opened.*

*It took three years to build the Peak Tram. Most of the heavy equipment and rails needed for the construction were hauled uphill by the workers with no mechanical support. As a revolutionary new form of transport for Asia at the time, the tramway was considered a marvel of engineering upon its completion.*

*The Peak Tram was opened for public service on 28 May 1888. As built, the line used a static steam engine to power the haulage cable. It was at first used only for residents of Victoria Peak. Despite that, it carried 800 passengers on its first day of operation, and about 150,000 in its first year, transported in the line's original wooden-bodied cars. The tram's existence accelerated the residential development of Victoria Peak and the Mid Levels.*



After taking in the sight and having a light lunch we took the bus back down the hill to our hotel. Sitting on the top deck of a double-decker bus twisting down these steep roads is also a thrill – and provides more amazing views of the city and the southern (South China Sea) side of the island.

Tonight we ate in the hotel again; this time at a steakhouse. The meal was very good and the Manhattans also after a second attempt. We chatted with the hostess who was originally from Switzerland but had lived in Hong Kong for 23 years. She was somewhat concerned about the political and censorship changes taking place here since 1999 but, at least until now, the security and life-style of Hong Kong was sufficient to negate any chance of a return to Europe.

### **Saturday October 28**

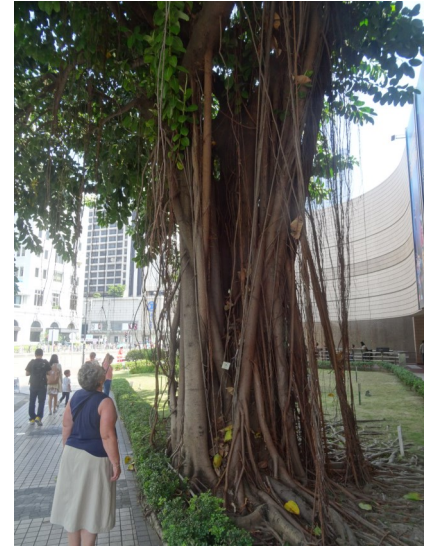
We took the Metro after breakfast as far as Central and then walked about 15 minutes to get the ferry to Kowloon. Once on the “mainland” we spent about 3 hours strolling along the waterfront, past the famous Peninsula Hotel, down Nathan Street (tailors and electronics), and through Kowloon Park.



*Hong Kong  
from Kowloon*



**Entrance to the Arts Center, the Clock Tower (end of the former Kowloon to Canton Railway), an interesting tree.**



The park appeared to be very popular with Muslim women (there is a mosque right next to it) as well as with local families spending time with their children on a warm day.

There are several water features, a lake with flamingos and other water birds, an aviary and a large swimming pool complex. It was very pleasant watching



the world go by and enjoying a mango drink before taking the Metro back to the hotel.



Tonight we had planned to eat at an Italian restaurant in the mall next to the hotel but we stopped to check out the Fish Bar in the hotel for tomorrow. We liked the look of the menu and the ambiance (closed overhead but open to the pool area) so decided to eat there tonight. It was a very good meal with excellent service and, by Hong Kong standards, quite reasonably priced.

### **Sunday October 29**

For our last day here on this trip we decided to use the tram and Metro to head towards the northeastern corner of Hong Kong Island. This is an area we have never visited on previous trips.

We took the tram as far as Victoria Park, probably only a few miles from the hotel. Here we walked through the park, complete with a statue of Queen Victoria, and saw the ponds, lawns, trees and recreational facilities (tennis, basketball, and soccer – all very well used).





Perhaps the most interesting feature, however, was the number of Muslim women who were sitting in every shaded area in and around the park. There were groups of between 5 and 30 sitting on the ground (sometimes with a layer of cardboard or blanket between them and the sidewalk) and most were eating what appeared to be a communal array of dishes. There were no men in the scene (maybe one or two in the hundreds or even thousands of women) and virtually all the women were between 20 and 30 years old and dressed in very fine traditional dress.



We learned that there is a very large Indonesian women population in Hong Kong who work in the domestic service industries in the city; apparently this is their way of spending their day off. When we first came to Hong Kong in 2000 the majority of domestic workers were from the Philippines but now the Indonesians have taken over in large part. Apparently the migration is monitored and administered under the auspices of both governments but it seems a difficult, lengthy and sometimes dangerous process to get to Hong Kong. How long they stay is something we didn't find out, but they do send money back home and often this is used to start businesses.

The women we saw seemed to be very happy with their lot and were certainly very well dressed and caused no nuisance – once you get over the fact that they take up virtually all the walking area around the park! We had seen a similar situation in Kowloon Park yesterday – but the numbers there were far fewer. It was interesting to witness this migrant population here and it just underscored how world-wide the issue of semi-permanent (or permanent) workers is and, apparently, how essential it is to the local society. Fascinating.



We eventually made it to the end of the tram line (although we used the Metro as an accident had stopped tram service for a while) and found ourselves in a uniquely Chinese residential area. There were dozens of huge tower blocks which must house thousands in a few square blocks. It appeared that most were on the streets on this warm day and the markets, cafes and shops were packed with locals. In fact, many restaurants had long lines waiting to get in for their Sunday lunch. There was an almost complete lack of English signage and no evidence of anything remotely "touristy" along the several blocks that we walked.

We bought a cold drink (at a Hong Kong version of Tesco Express!) and sat in a small park for perhaps 45 minutes, just watching the world go by and seeing the locals going about their Sunday routine. I don't think we saw more than a handful of non-Chinese in our entire stay in this area. It was a great way to spend our last few hours here. We took the tram all the way back to the hotel and had our usual afternoon tea before thinking about getting ready to leave Hong Kong early tomorrow morning.

Tonight we ate at Man Ho again in the hotel and had another excellent meal; a great way to "end" this visit to Hong Kong.

### **Monday October 30**

We were up at 7, in the lounge for a cup of coffee and to check out and in our taxi to the airport by 8:15. The journey took only 30 minutes so, even with longer lines for check-in than we are used to, we were through the whole process and in the shopping area by a little after 9:30. We spent the last of our Hong Kong dollars and then had another coffee and pastry in the lounge before boarding our flight. This left a little ahead of schedule soon after 11:30 so we were on our way to Seattle on the first of three legs home.

We arrived in Seattle about 45 minutes ahead of schedule but couldn't get an earlier onward flight so we had over 3 hours in Seattle airport before leaving for Minneapolis and then on to Cincinnati to end another interesting vacation in Asia.

