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These days the towering metropolis is about so much more than just finance. Hong Kong is a gastronomic delight with a dizzying nightlife, gorgeous surroundings, and a fast-changing fashion scene. It's a global city with Chinese flair, and its energy is unparalleled. Here's your guide to Asia's power center.



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HONG KONG'S BEST HOTELS

PENINSULA HOTEL

Referred to as the Grande Dame of the Far East, the Peninsula is the oldest hotel in Hong Kong, dating back to 1928. The decor and elite service (think white gloves and a fleet of Rolls-Royces) harken back to an age when luxury travel was a black-tie affair.

LANDMARK MANDARIN ORIENTAL HONG KONG

Opened in 1963 as the chain's first property, this luxury standard-bearer with rooms featuring the finest marble and wood offers accommodations ranging from a reasonable City View room (from \$413 per night) to the unmatched Mandarin Suite (from \$9,985 per night), with its exclusive artwork and opulent amenities. Three of its restaurants have earned Michelin stars.

THE MIRA HONG KONG

Perhaps the city's hottest boutique hotel, the Mira boasts a chic open courtyard bar, Vibes, a terrific place to kick off a night exploring Hong Kong's raucous party scene.

FOUR SEASONS HONG KONG

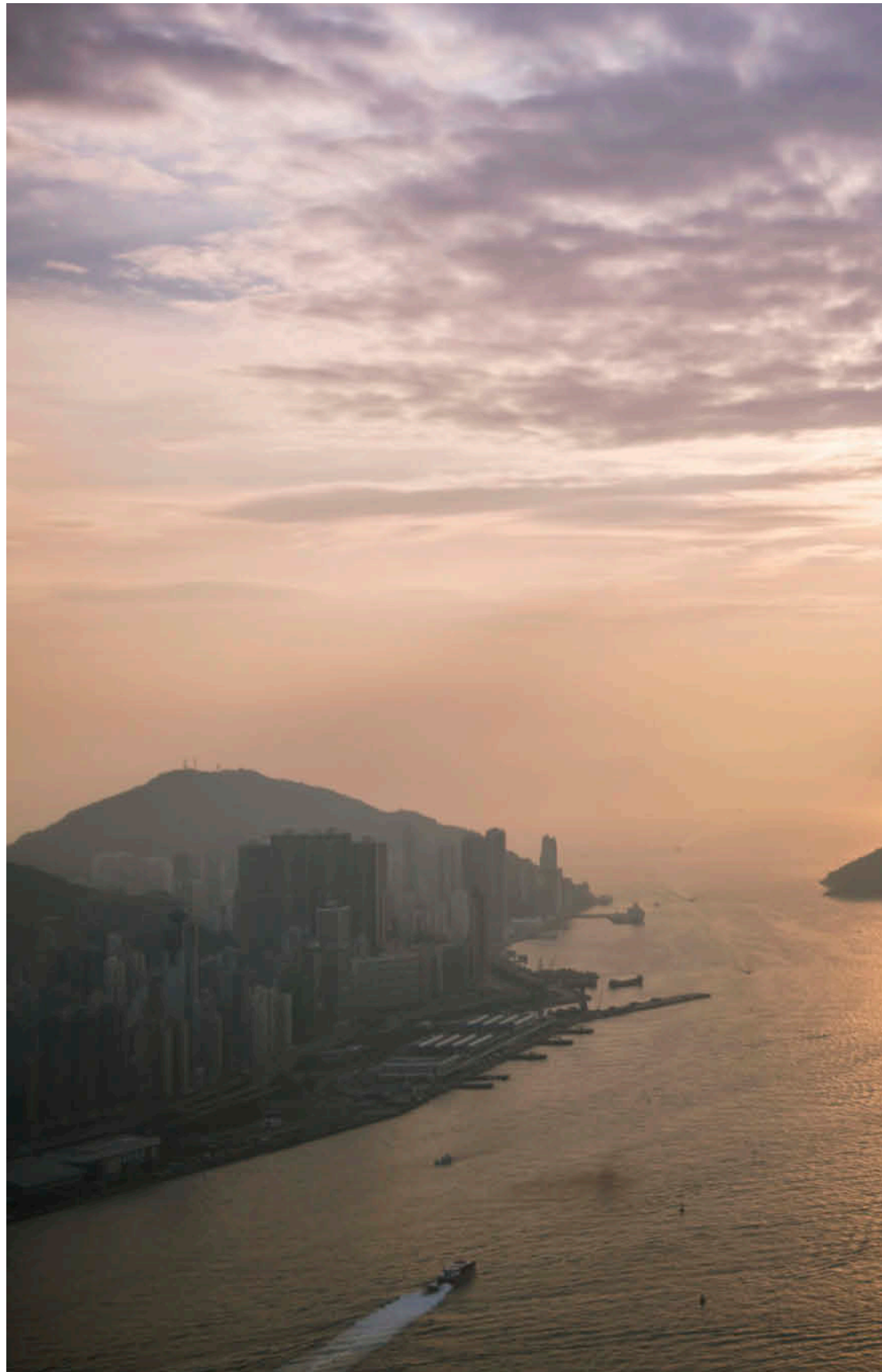
It's all about location with the Four Seasons, situated in the IFC Tower and connected to the Central Harbourfront. Granted, it also includes Michelin-starred restaurants and a Presidential Suite with 24-hour butler service and a bathtub with panoramic views of Victoria Harbor (from \$12,500).

INTERCONTINENTAL HONG KONG

The InterContinental, while generally a more affordable option by Hong Kong standards, boasts one of the most lavish rooms in the city in the \$12,600-per-night Presidential Suite, with five luxurious bedrooms, opulent bathrooms, a study, a gym, and a kitchen where chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants will make you a private dinner. The private rooftop stretches 2,500 square feet, offering panoramic views of Victoria Harbor and the Hong Kong skyline, with a Jacuzzi and an infinity pool.

W HONG KONG

With a modern design and a lounge-y vibe, the W has a clientele that leans less toward investment bankers and more to fashion models and artistic types. It may not provide the pure luxury of its neighbors, but stop by Wet, an outdoor heated pool and deck located on the 76th floor, for some of the best views of the city. —*Keith Gordon*







The Peninsula Hotel Hong Kong features a Roman-inspired infinity pool on the eighth floor, complete with columns, friezes, statues, and a panoramic view of the city's skyline.



ESCAPE THE CITY

Hong Kong is among the world's most densely populated cities. Thankfully, there are plenty of options to escape the grind. Countless hiking trails crisscross the island, and the surrounding areas are rife with parks, beaches, and other natural splendors.

The best hike is along the **Dragon's Back** trail down to the beach in Shek O Country Park, offering stunning horizon-to-horizon vistas of the South China Sea. Dragon's Back is also the most popular paragliding spot in the city. **Paraglide Hong Kong** offers an introductory student pilot course (8 lessons, \$1,329) with a

teacher certified in the U.S., while **Sky Adventure's** version is a four-day student pilot course (12 flights, \$511).

There are also plenty of mountain bike trails just a short trip from the city. For a relaxed ride try **Olympic Trail on Lantau Island**, but for a challenge, adrenaline seekers can head to **Lamma Island's** dirt trails, where local competitions are held. (Beware: The trails here are steep and not for beginners.) The island has banned cars, so on Lamma cycling is king.

Kiteboarding and windsurfing are popular around the islands. (In fact, Hong Kong won

its first ever Olympic medal in windsurfing in 1996.) Trek to Shui Hau beach on the south coast of Lantau Island, where **Hong Kong Kiteboarding School** offers individual or group lessons. The Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department runs five water sports centers, including **Tai Mei Tuk**, which rents out kayaks, windsurfing boards, and small sailboats. Meet up with **Sea Kayak Hong Kong** on Lamma Island to explore hundreds of islands—and the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark, covering 100 square miles of natural beauty—in a kayak. —*Keith Gordon*

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