

CUHK International Summer School – Chinese Language Programme 2014

Practical Information for Non-Local Students

Welcome Message

We are glad that you will be attending the CUHK International Summer School – Chinese Language Programme this summer. To prepare you for your time at CUHK and Hong Kong, we have put together the following practical information.

Preparing to Leave

Health Care



CUHK University Health Service

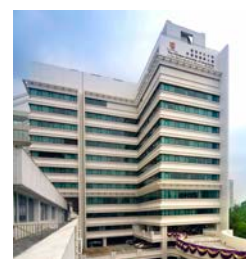
CUHK's University Health Service provides free primary care facilities and clinical services to all local and international students studying at CUHK (excluding dental care and inoculations for travel). Please note that CUHK is not responsible for any charges incurred by students who visit a private physician without a referral from one of the University Health Service's physicians.

Vaccinations

Unlike many Asian countries, vaccinations are not required for travel to Hong Kong. Gamma globulin and other shots are sometimes recommended by medical authorities for added protection. Once in Hong Kong you may obtain vaccinations required for travel in other Asian countries. Some of these can be arranged at CUHK's University Health Service.

Hospitalization

International students holding a valid student visa could enjoy discount rates for public health services. The nearest public hospital to CUHK is Prince of Wales Hospital in Shatin which is about 10 minutes drive from CUHK. It is also accessible by MTR Ma On Shan line and buses.



Prince of Wales Hospital

Insurance

International students should arrange insurance to cover their study abroad period. Some students may be included in their parents' health insurance policies. You should check with your parents before coming to Hong Kong. If you plan to travel outside Hong Kong, you should make sure that your insurance policy covers those regions as well.

China Visa

International students who plan to travel to mainland China need to apply for a China Visa, except for ordinary passport holders from Singapore, Brunei and Japan who can enter China visa free for visits not exceeding 15 days. For other nationalities, a China visa is needed and the fee varies for different nationalities. Students should apply for a China visa on their own from the Embassy or Consulate-General of Peoples' Republic of China at their place of residence before coming to Hong Kong. They may be required to show their CUHK acceptance letter and any evidence of payment. For more information, please visit the Commissioner's Office of China's Foreign Ministry in the Hong Kong SAR website: <http://www.fmcoprc.gov.hk/eng/zgqz/bgfwx/default.htm>.

What to Bring

There is virtually nothing that you cannot buy in Hong Kong. So you should try to limit yourself to the amount of baggage that your airline will allow you to take. The following list may help you decide what to include when packing your luggage.

Things to bring

1. Casual wear such as jeans, sneakers for class;
2. Dresses or coats and ties for formal occasions;
3. Athletic wear for sport activities;
4. Extra pairs of shoes if your shoe size is larger than 10;
5. Extra clothing if you are above average size or height;
6. Warm sweaters for it can be chilly indoors, as air conditioners may go full blast;
7. Mementos of home (pictures, favorite books or music, etc);
8. National costumes for cultural activities at CUHK;
9. Your favorite dictionary to help you with your language class;
10. An electricity transformer if you are bringing electrical appliances from America or Japan since Hong Kong's electrical system operates on 220V;
11. Regular medication (if necessary) and a copy of your prescription.

Things that you may need but can be purchased at reasonable prices in Hong Kong:

1. Raincoats, slickers or umbrellas;
2. Additional blankets;
3. Books and stationery;
4. Cameras, watches, stereos and electrical appliances (e.g. hair-dryers, fans, etc.).

Baggage Allowance

You should check with the airline you are flying with about its baggage limits for international flights and charges (usually quite prohibitive) for excess baggage.

Money and Banking

Hong Kong dollar notes are in denominations of \$1,000, \$500, \$100, \$50, \$20 and \$10. There are also \$10, \$5, \$2, \$1, 50¢, 20¢ and 10¢ coins. The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar at a rate of approximately HK\$7.78 to US\$1. Most foreign currencies and traveller's cheques can be exchanged at banks, hotels or money-changers (check how much you will get in return before handing over your money). American Express, Visa and Master Card holders can withdraw local currency from some automated teller machines (ATM) but of course the handling charges are hefty. There are ATMs on campus.



As in all big cities, avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Traveller's cheques or credit cards are preferred. Personal cheques are rarely accepted.



The Hang Seng Bank, a major local bank in Hong Kong, has a branch office at CUHK. If you open an account at the Hang Seng Bank, you can have money remitted directly into your account through the Hang Seng Bank in New York or through Hang Seng Bank's correspondents, the Hong Kong Bank of California or the Hong Kong Bank of Canada. While the Hang Seng Bank will not

provide cash advance against international credit cards, there are several banks in central business districts that do. If you intend to transfer funds to Hong Kong through credit card accounts, you will need to bank off-campus.

The quickest ways to transfer money to Hong Kong are:

1. Have your family transfer money electronically from your own bank to your bank account in Hong Kong. This may take a few days to a week.
2. Use a debit card on your account's corresponding ATM. To avoid the high interest fee for cash advance, you should first deposit money into your account which can be accessible overseas, e.g. Master, Visa, Maestro, Cirrus, Plus, JETCO, ETC, etc., and then draw from it while you are in Hong Kong.

Living in Hong Kong



Politics



Since July 1, 1997, Hong Kong has become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. There are almost seven million residents experiencing the implementation of the Basic Law and the "One country, Two systems" policy. International students at CUHK have the privilege to study firsthand how the Hong Kong society is responding to and adapting to the new conditions.

Geography

Hong Kong is made up of three quite distinct areas: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula, the New Territories as well as some 260 islands.

Culture

Hong Kong, as a gateway to China, is a fascinating place to study China and Chinese culture. It is a major crossroad in Asia and serves as an international hub for trade and finance. You will spot traditional Chinese and international elements in this diversified city.



Popular Culture

You will be astonished by the sight of stores stocking American, European and Japanese products everywhere. Mickey Mouse or Hello Kitty character goods are common. Western, Japanese and lately Korean influence prevails in the entertainment business and pop culture. There are as many non-Chinese movies as Chinese ones. Two of the four TV stations broadcast in English. A number of channels of Cable TV, Satellite TV as well as radio stations also broadcast in English and some even in Japanese and Korean. Western, Japanese and Korean songs, soap operas, books and cuisines are loved by many. There are also English theatrical performances and concerts of Western and Japanese music. Fashion trends are dominated by European and Japanese trends, with Japanese fashion especially popular among the younger generation.

Culture Shock

Many of you may experience “culture shock” within the first few days of your stay, when things seem to be so different from what you expect, when new experiences feel strange and you long for the familiar surroundings of home.

An open mind will help you to accept the good, bad and ultimately unique aspects of Hong Kong and enjoy your time here. As an added bonus, you will rediscover yourself and your own culture.

Tips to overcome culture shock:

- ✓ Be tenaciously objective, analyzing the good and bad of both cultures
- ✓ Have realistic expectations about other cultures
- ✓ Explore your new surroundings with zeal, and try new things
- ✓ Take the initiative to make friends and participate in activities

People

In Hong Kong, almost 95% of the population is ethnic Chinese. The international community consists of various nationalities, with the Filipinos as the biggest foreign population.

Get to know the Chinese

Although the locals are used to seeing foreign tourists and residents, many do not have personal experience of foreigners at close range. Few indigenous Chinese have close non-Chinese friends and many will not expect a foreigner to have any deep interest in Chinese culture. They will be pleasantly surprised when you demonstrate adaptability and a willingness to use chopsticks.

In Hong Kong, you will find many opportunities to follow paths that are familiar to life in your home city or country. But that of course was not why you chose to study in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is important to consciously resist the temptation of the familiar. For example, make yourself speak Cantonese in situations where English will do or spend less time with groups that include only international students. The longer you stay, the more “Chinese” the city will appear to you, but you will have to be active in searching for the “Chinese-ness”.

Customs and Norms

Navigating gracefully amidst Hong Kong’s mixture of Chinese and Western norms and customs can be a difficult task. You will have to learn nuances of behavior and attitude slowly by making yourself comfortable with Chinese company. The line between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behavior or dress is a hard one to draw in Hong Kong. You will find

all sorts of variations in this multi-racial society, but not every extreme is acceptable to mainstream society. Most Chinese people you meet on the streets will expect you to follow what they stereotype as Western or Japanese ways. They will rarely demonstrate shock or surprise at your behavior. A willingness to adapt to local culture will be welcomed.

Your attention is drawn especially to the following aspects of conduct on and off campus:

1. If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend with whom you are seen frequently, do not be surprised if people talk about it. If you have a friend of the opposite sex visiting Hong Kong, some people may assume an intimate relationship.
2. Chinese people usually do not greet each other by kissing or hugging. This common Western custom may create discomfort among Chinese.
3. Some people in Hong Kong speak very loudly but calling loudly to someone at a distance is considered impolite.
4. Traditionally the Chinese do not quibble over small amounts of money when in a restaurant or taking public transportation. Splitting expenses is considered somewhat discourteous and miserly especially on dates. If someone pays for your meal or bus fare, you should amiably protest and offer to pay. If the other person insists, you should give and reciprocate on a later occasion. An exception to this concerns large group, where every member will pay for his/her own.
5. We are obliged to remind you that physical intimacy in student dormitories is strictly discouraged and curfews are imposed on after-hour visits by friends of the opposite sex.

Living Expenses

Hong Kong is, generally speaking, an expensive city. The prices for some services and goods, particularly imported items, can be higher than those in other major metropolitan areas. But there are also plenty of good buys available through careful shopping and a little bargaining in Cantonese. Some indicative prices are:

| | HK\$ |
|---|---------------|
| Train fare from CUHK to downtown Kowloon | 6.5 – 8.5 |
| Bus fare from CUHK to Kowloon or Hong Kong Island | 6.0 – 25.00 |
| A “McDonald’s” Extra Value Meal | 21.00 – 32.30 |
| Movie Ticket | 50.00—120.00 |

Past experience suggests that international students need approximately HK\$100 per day for food (in student canteens) and about HK\$1,800 per month to cover other expenses.

Food



Hong Kong is as much as an eating paradise as a shopping paradise. Streets are lined with restaurants of cuisines from all over the world. Japanese, Italian, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese and American food are popular and easily accessible, and so is Chinese food.



The Chinese food in Hong Kong is likely to be very different from those you have in your home country. In fact, the term “Chinese food” is not very useful in Hong Kong since there are many regional varieties of Chinese cuisines.

For those who know their Chinese cuisine, Hong Kong is heaven. For those who don't, initial dining experiences can be a little disconcerting, especially if your roommate starts you right off with chicken feet and pig intestine. But don't just run off to the nearest McDonald's or Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) store. Instead, try to learn more about Chinese dishes. It won't be long before you discover many things that you like.



Tipping

Most restaurants add a 10% service charge automatically.

Transportation

Hong Kong boasts one of the world's most efficient, safe, affordable and frequent public transport systems. Different modes of public transport operate on Hong Kong Island, and across the Victoria Harbour in Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories, carrying millions of people to different destinations every day. Navigating through different districts is easy with the Octopus card, a hi-tech debit card acceptable in almost all modes of public transport and some fast food chains and stores. Octopus card is easy and convenient to use, saves time and eliminates the need for small change.



Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTR) – above ground and underground railway

MTR Corporation provides efficient transport services to Hong Kong people. The rail network comprises nine railway lines serving Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. Besides, a Light Rail network serves the local community of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long in the New Territories. Convenient feeder services are also provided by buses. In addition, Ma On Shan Rail network serves the community between Ma On Shan and Tai Wai. It is the most convenient method of commuting between the University and downtown Kowloon.



MTR trains span between the north side of Hong Kong Island and much of Kowloon. There is also an Airport Express line that connects the Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the Hong Kong International Airport on Lantau Island. MTR fares (except the Airport Express line) range from HK\$4 to HK\$52.5. The Disneyland Resort line started operating since summer 2005.



MTR trains are clean and well-kept, but can be crowded during rush hours (8:00—10:00a.m. and 5:00—7:00p.m.). Fares are based on distance traveled. They are exceedingly simple to use and train fares can be paid for through the Octopus Card at the turnstiles.

Buses



Buses serve the entire territory and there are cross-harbour buses which connect various parts of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. Most buses are double-deckers and air-conditioned, with their final destinations marked in English and Chinese on the front top panel. Bus fares are usually low, costing as little as HK\$3.00. Exact change is required but the Octopus Card can be used.

Minibuses

Minibuses are small passenger vans that supplement bus and train services. There are two types of minibuses. The ones with a red stripe have unfixed routes. Passengers may get on and off anywhere and usually pay when alighting. Exact fare is not required and small change can be given. The ones with a green stripe travel on specific routes at fixed prices. Exact payment is required when boarding. Fares of minibuses range from HK\$3 to HK\$22.5 and in most cases the Octopus Card can be used.



Ferries



In the Victoria Harbour between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula, ferries serve as a supplementary mode of transport to cross-harbour buses and the MTR. The most notable of all is the humble but legendary Star Ferry service between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui. A ride costs HK\$2.5 on weekdays and HK\$3.4 on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. There are also ferries serving the outlying islands, Macau and destinations on the coast of Mainland China, which are all popular recreational spots.

Taxis

Taxis in Hong Kong are among the world's most inexpensive. Different types of taxis operate in different parts of Hong Kong. Red taxis may operate in all parts of Hong Kong while green taxis can only operate within a defined area of the New Territories. The fare of green taxis is relatively lower than that of red taxis. Blue taxis are confined to running on Lantau Island only. All three go to the Hong Kong International Airport.



You can order a taxi to pick you up on campus. It will take about 15 minutes for the taxi to come and you will have to pay a surcharge. Since telephone operations at the taxi companies are usually very busy and only speak Cantonese, you may find it easier to just flag down a taxi on Tai Po Road outside the University. Many drivers understand some English, but it is wise to have your destinations written in Chinese characters to show to the driver.



If you want to take a taxi from the University to Shatin or to some places in Kowloon, you will have to hire a red taxi.



Trams

Trams run along the east-west corridor on Hong Kong Island and follow the same tracks they have traveled since 1904. Much more than just a cheap and convenient way of getting around town, the upper decks of the trams offer magnificent views as they weave through busy city districts. Trams run from early morning until midnight. The flat fare is HK\$2.3. Exact change is required and the Octopus Card can be used.



Language

Cantonese is the most widely spoken dialect in Hong Kong, but Putonghua (Mandarin) is increasingly popular. The traditional Chinese characters are commonly used in writing in Hong Kong, while simplified Chinese characters are used in Mainland China. English is the language of business and service industries. Most shops and service personnel speak it to some degree. However, life on the streets of Hong Kong is not truly bilingual because most residents do not use both Cantonese and English with equal ease.

At CUHK, international students will observe the perplexed feeling that local students have for English. Some students dislike English but reluctantly accept its necessity; others enjoy learning English but have had little chances to practice and advance in secondary schools. As international students, you are encouraged to interact with the local students in both English and their spoken dialect.

Climate

Summer (late May to mid-September) is hot, humid and rainy. Temperatures rise to 33°C (92°F) or higher, with humidity around 90%. The temperatures sometimes remain sweltering at night. It can be chilly indoors, as air conditioners are usually going full blast. Typhoons can often affect Hong Kong during these months. They bring heavy rain and very strong winds and can cause serious damage to life and property. During the height of serious typhoons, public transportation shuts down, stores and offices close, and everyone stays indoors. You may visit the Hong Kong Observatory (www.hko.gov.hk) for current weather or detailed information.

Electricity

Electricity mains supply voltage is 220 Volts/frequency of 50 Hz AC.

Laws

On July 1, 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China after 157 years of British colonial rule. The Basic Law was enacted as the constitutional provision for the implementation of the "One country, Two systems" policy. It serves as a mini-constitution of the Hong Kong SAR and the blueprint for future development. Under the Basic Law and the common law system, Hong Kong has remained a free port that promotes free trade and business. The fundamental freedoms of the residents such as freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression are also preserved.

Although Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy, the law deals harshly with drugs and firearms. The Hong Kong SAR Government maintains extensive anti-drugs campaigns and deals severely with possession, purchase, or use of illicit drugs. To combat the spread of violence in society, the possession of firearms and self-defense items such as pepper spray, knuckle-dusters and tear gas is prohibited.

To discover more about Hong Kong, you can visit the Hong Kong Tourism Board website at <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/index.html>.

The Campus

The 137.3-hectare CUHK campus built on a hillside is the largest and the most stunning in Hong Kong. Most of this area is covered in greenery which is nicely carved out of rocks on three plateaux, and nestled among the greenery are tasteful buildings featuring a mix of Chinese and Western architectural styles.



Students and staff of the University can use various sports facilities on campus. These include two outdoor stadiums, three indoor gymnasiums, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, tennis, squash courts, weight training rooms and a water sports centre by Tolo Harbour.

CUHK boasts many tree and bamboo-lined pathways that make for ideal hiking excursions or short study breaks. Some of these paths provide views of an on-campus lake, Tolo Harbour, and a lively brook that cascades down the hillside.

Smoke-free CUHK

The entire university campus, including both indoor and outdoor areas, is designated as no-smoking area. In fact, recognizing the harm that smoking and second-hand smoke bring to us, the Hong Kong SAR Government has passed a bill, stating that the vast majority of indoor areas of workplaces and public places, such as restaurants, offices, schools, hospitals, markets, karaokes and bars which are frequented by people of different ages were required to ban smoking.



Accommodation

Space is always at a premium in Hong Kong. The CUHK student dormitories (hostels) are probably less spacious and comfortable than dormitories in your home institution. Students attending the CUHK International Summer School will share double or triple occupancy rooms with other students. The close quarters can be vexing, but coping with a lack of space is a rudimentary part of living in Hong Kong, one of the world's most densely populated areas.

Hostel facilities and amenities for the use of international students include:

- ✓ Modestly furnished bedrooms each installed with a direct telephone line and high-speed internet connection (ResNet);
- ✓ Air-conditioning: operated by top-up Student ID card;
- ✓ Blankets and bed linens;
- ✓ Laundry facilities: washing and drying machines and clothes lines for drying operated by top-up Student ID card;
- ✓ Public kitchens equipped with water boilers, refrigerators, unit stoves, sinks and microwave ovens (in some hostels);
- ✓ Shared bathrooms with showers on each floor; and
- ✓ Student-operated shops (in some hostels) which are open on designated evenings and sell toilet paper, laundry detergent, toothpaste and edibles such as cookies, fruit, Chinese beans and rice. For additional shopping there is a small supermarket located in the John Fulton Centre within the campus.

When considering what to take to Hong Kong to outfit your living quarters, bear in mind that most of the things you need can be purchased in Hong Kong at reasonable prices.

On-Campus Transportation

Please refer to “Survive & Thrive at CUHK” for details.

Food

Please refer to “Survive & Thrive at CUHK” for information about restaurants on campus.

Tips from the Past International Students

What to Bring?

- ✓ A comfortable pair of walking shoes.
- ✓ More money than you think you will need.
- ✓ Extra pairs of underwear (You’ll need extra pairs when it gets humid and you take three showers a day!)
- ✓ Pack lightly and buy the things you need here (as you’ll have more stuff than you could ever take home by the end of the programme!)

How to Prepare for Life in Hong Kong/CUHK?

- ✓ Be ready for a lot of MSG in the food.
- ✓ Avoid just going to the western places in Hong Kong. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to broaden your scope of friends.
- ✓ Don’t let the crowdedness overwhelm you.
- ✓ Hong Kong is very modern and international on the surface, but its soul is very Chinese.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Stay?

- ✓ Stick it out. No matter what, it’ll be worth it.
- ✓ Cherish the “big picture” (disregard little annoyances).
- ✓ Be brave to the new culture and tolerant to change.
- ✓ Come with an open mind for intellectual and personal change.
- ✓ Associate with local students as much as possible. Show restraint and adaptability to the sometimes annoying habits and customs of Hong Kong.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to the Office of Academic Links for providing the information.

Prepared by: Office of Summer Programmes, CUHK, February 2014