

# Foreword

Hong Kong has changed so much since my husband and I arrived here as a newly married couple in 1996. When we had our first child in 1998, I struggled at first to find fun and exciting adventures that we could do as a family. It was not so much that these opportunities did not exist, but more that I did not know about them and had no idea how to get the information I needed or the directions. When child number two was born in 2000, it became a passion of mine to explore this amazing city with my family. After compiling the notes on those adventures, the first edition of *Hong Kong for Kids: A Parent's Guide* (2004) was born.

Little girl number three came along in 2005 and with her a whole new set of challenges and two slightly older children who wanted to explore more stuff! Now we have a nine-year-old and two teenagers (14 and 16) and we are out on the town once more! The highlights from our many years of exploration can be found in this new edition of *Hong Kong for Kids*.

Hong Kong is a much more family-friendly place than it used to be. Sit-down toilets (cleaner ones), baby-changing facilities, nursing rooms, indoor playrooms, malls with stroller lending facilities, and more, are all present in Hong Kong today and they were a RARE find when the first edition was written. Things are just easier than they were and the options for families are better, safer and have reached world-class status. Hong Kong Disneyland is here, Ocean Park has morphed into an international-level ocean-themed amusement park, we have bike parks, skateboarding venues, indoor ice skating rinks, 3D movie theatres, and the list goes on and on.

There are many wonderful adventures available throughout the territory, but when you are toting strollers, backpacks stuffed with bottles, snacks, nappies and toys and kids, most parents understandably don't want the added challenge of FINDING the place. It is my passionate hope that this book becomes the tool that helps your family explore and enjoy Hong Kong to its

fullest. The biggest obstacles between you and a great outing I hope will be eliminated by this book – namely how to identify and then locate a fun-filled outing – because while things in Hong Kong for families have improved greatly, directions can still be difficult and daunting.

The venues selected for inclusion in this book are those our family found worthy of a visit. Every site has been “Stephens Family tested” in the hopes of eliminating the possibility of hauling your children around Hong Kong only to be disappointed once you arrive (we have done this and it's no fun!) This book is not about rating venues or ranking activities in Hong Kong – it is about identifying the best things that are currently here to be explored.

When I first arrived in Hong Kong, I was fortunate enough to meet some lovely ladies who took it upon themselves to show me around. Their most memorable mantra went something like this: “We can't tell you how to get there, but we can show you the way and next time you will be able to find it on your own.” It only took one or two outings for me to realize exactly what they meant, but no statement was ever more true: Locations in Hong Kong can be very hard to find. In the spirit of those women who were so very helpful to me, I present to you this book which I hope will be your family's personal guide to finding the most enjoyable things to do in Hong Kong with your children.

Happy trails!

Cindy Miller Stephens

# Acknowledgements

For more than 23 years I have been blessed to have the love of the most generous person I know, my friend, my confidant, the father of my children and my husband – Chris. Without all the time, energy, computer expertise, superb navigational instincts and co-parenting skills he brought to the project, I could never have finished this second book or even started the first one. When you have someone on your side who really believes in you, anything is possible. Thanks for being my other and better half and giving me all the time I needed to do this while you did the heavy lifting.

I am also very grateful to my children Lara, Hailey and Audrey for being great explorers and for their boundless energy and enthusiasm. Thank you so much for giving me the time (even reluctantly) to work on the computer all those days when you really wanted my attention. All three of you were ready to go out there and try out new places and give your honest opinions about our outings. You all brought with you very special gifts. Lara, you were so organized, computer savvy and willing to help. Hailey, you embraced every outing with equal passion and enthusiasm and brought your contagious giggle on every journey. Audrey, you taught me what would work for the ‘younger’ set and were always very expressive about what you saw and did, running up every mountain with your little feet taking four steps for our every two. The three of you are the reason for this book, and indeed the reason for everything I do.

A special thanks to my mother Marlene Miller and my sister Stephanie Miller who have always supported me in all my endeavours (no matter how crazy). My many and varied career ideas have always been greeted with “You can do it!” or “That sounds great, you would be great at that...” That kind of support makes doing out-of-the-box things possible (like giving up law school and becoming a professional singer and other wild choices).

Being a mom is not a career path for the weak, the passive or the squeamish. Once on the journey, it’s best to take the trip with a co-pilot, another mother with whom you can share your deepest fears and biggest triumphs. For me that person is Anne Sawyer. Not only has she been taking this wild “mommy” ride with me for the past 16 years, she was also willing to go on almost every outing for the book in the first edition, and as many as she could fit in for the second edition as well. Enthusiasm, support, encouragement and a kick in the pants when needed have been provided daily on the book and other subjects by this very special woman who I am proud to call my friend. Thank you also to Anne’s children Zachary and Ceilidh Tesluk for being such great explorers. They have been so enthusiastic about the research for this book and all of the outings that were needed that we have done together over the years.

This third edition of *Hong Kong for Kids* would not have been completed without the help of my wonderful publisher Pete Spurrier and his dedicated colleague Mandy Lam, who were instrumental in researching and checking that all the details of this new edition were up to date and accurate. This is a long and thankless task for which I would very much like to thank them!

A giant thank you to all of the following people and families who helped identify and/or visit all of the outings for this edition (in alphabetical order):

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# How to Use This Book

All of the essential information parents will need for a successful outing with children in Hong Kong is contained in the description of each destination. For simplicity and ease of use, all descriptions cover information in the same format. Please refer to the sample template below as a guide.

## **Name of Destination**

- Address
- Location in Hong Kong
- Telephone number(s)
- Website(s)
- Where to find an area map on the Internet (if applicable)

## **Written Description**

This section provides the reason for visiting the destination with vivid descriptions of exactly what can be found there and what fun things there are to do there for children. In some cases a suggested itinerary is provided.

## **Seasons and Times**

Opening hours, closing times and days of closure for destination and other relevant areas.

## **Admission**

Information regarding cost of entry and/or availability and cost of special passes (where applicable).

## **The Best Ways of Getting There**

Detailed directions to each destination. There are generally a variety of ways to get to each place. The BEST ways to go have been included. As it was impossible to list directions from every location in Hong Kong, Central and Admiralty were chosen as starting points. ALL DIRECTIONS BEGIN FROM EITHER CENTRAL OR ADMIRALTY OR BOTH.

Here is a complete list of possible “ways of getting there”:

- By MTR
- By Bus
- By Mini Bus
- By City Tram
- By Peak Tram
- By Star Ferry
- By Ferry
- Walking
- By Car
- By Taxi

Please see “Transportation Information” for details regarding each of these modes of transport.

## **Getting a Bite**

Dining or snacking options at or near your destination including restaurants, snack bars and vending machines.

## **What’s Close?**

List of nearby child-friendly areas to consider if you wish to extend your visit beyond the initial destination. Those that are underlined are destinations that are covered in greater detail elsewhere in the book.

## **Comments**

This section answers all the following CRUCIAL parental questions:

- What is the suitable age range for the outing?
- How long should one spend there?
- Is the site crowded? If so, when?
- Toilets – Are there any? If so, where are they and are they the squat or sit-down variety?
- Baby-changing tables – Are there any? If so, where?
- Strollers – Is the location stroller-friendly?
- Gift shops – Is there one on the premises?

### Extra Info

This special section provides any additional information that is not covered by the other headings. These topics might include any of the following: Discounts, special performances/ programs/events, special transport, tours, maps, films, news and architecture.

### Special Programs and Tours

Details on special programs and tours offered to the public at the venue.

### For Educators

Contact details and program information (where applicable) for educators wishing to take students on educational field trips to the destination.

### Word of Mouth

From one parent to another – personal comments, tips and planning ideas.

### Additional Aids

In addition to all of the above, this book also aims to provide some useful tools to help save time in terms of choosing an appropriate outing, arriving at your destination without getting lost and accessing useful information.

### Maps

There is nothing more discouraging than heading out with your kids for a fun day out and finding yourself lost and surrounded by unhappy faces (and voices). To help lessen the chances of any directional mishap, you can rely on the detailed directions given in every destination description and on the maps at the back of the book.

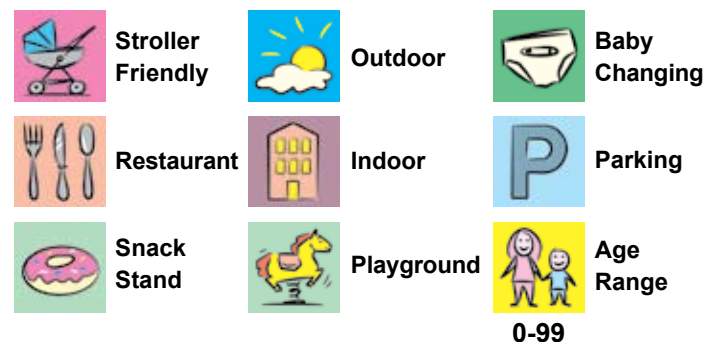
### Chinese Characters

In the margin of each destination description you will find the name and address of each venue written in Chinese. This translation will have a multitude of purposes including: asking for directions from strangers, giving destination names to non-

English speaking taxi drivers, and once you get to the site, checking that you have arrived at the correct destination.

### Icons

The icons located in the margin are there to help speed up the process of choosing a destination. For instance, if by chance the weather outdoors is inhospitable (rain, heat, wind, etc.), you may want to skim the book for indoor outings only; or perhaps you have a newborn in tow and want to be sure to head to a destination that is both stroller friendly and has baby changing facilities. Whatever your needs, the icons are there to help save time and energy.



### Useful Telephone Numbers and Websites

At the back of the book you will find an index of useful telephone numbers and websites. When you are seeking information or to confirm openings, prices and location, this is a good place to start.

### A Word of Caution

Hong Kong is well known to be a vibrant and very fast moving city. Things change here constantly. Businesses come and go. Times, dates and fares change. Please check information on your chosen venue BEFORE you go by consulting its website or by calling the telephone number listed at the top of each destination description.