

HONG KONG

Business Guide

Compiled by:

Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong

Hong Kong, July 2024

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

A passport is required for all visitors to Hong Kong with a validity of one month beyond your intended stay. Swiss nationals do not need a visa if their stay in Hong Kong is not exceeding 90 days. For more information, please refer to the Immigration Department.

<https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/visas/immigration-entry-guideline.html>

With effect from 28 December 2021, the Immigration Department has introduced electronic services for visa applications to allow applicants to complete the entire process of visa-related applications online. Please visit the [Immigration Department website](#) or click [here](#) for more details.

You may want to consider applying for the HKSAR Travel Pass if you frequently travel to Hong Kong for business. HKSAR Travel Pass holders may use Hong Kong residents' counters for simplified immigration clearance procedures. Further details about this pass and a downloadable application form can be found on the [Immigration Department website](#).

All visitors entering Hong Kong must go through Customs clearance and declare any dutiable commodities exceeding duty-free quotas. Visitors who fail to declare or make a false or incomplete declaration to a Customs officer about the quantity of dutiable goods in their possession are liable to prosecution. For detailed information, please consult the website of the Customs & Excise Department. www.customs.gov.hk/en/home/index.html

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

Chinese and English are the two official languages in Hong Kong. The southern Chinese dialect of Cantonese is the most common spoken language. Traditional Chinese characters are used in writing. Putonghua (Mandarin) is more and more spoken by people in Hong Kong. English and Cantonese are used by the Hong Kong Government and in the courts. Nearly all business people speak English.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

First Day of January	1 January
Lunar New Year	2025: 29-31 Jan
Ching Ming	(2024: Apr 4 / 2025: Apr 4)
Good Friday	(2024: Mar 29 & 30 / 2025: Apr 18 & 19)
Easter Monday	(2024: Apr 1 / 2025: Apr 21)
Labour Day	May 1
Birthday of the Buddha	in May (2024: May 15 / 2025: May 5)
Tuen Ng Festival	in June (2024: June 10 / 2025: May 31)
Hong Kong SAR Establishment Day	July 1
Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival	in September (2024: Sept 18 / 2025: Oct 7)
Chinese National day	October 1
Chung Yeung Festival	in October (2024: Oct 11 / 2025: Oct 29)
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26

Hong Kong General holidays: <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/holiday/>

HEALTH AND INOCULATIONS

Normally, the Hong Kong authorities require no vaccinations. However, visitors should check with their travel agent when making reservations and/or the Department of Health, HKSAR Government www.dh.gov.hk/eindex.html as health regulations may change without notice.

Hong Kong has strict laws to maintain environmental hygiene, including fixed penalty fines for littering or spitting.

The general standard of health facilities is comparable to that of advanced countries in the world. Most medical staff members speak English and all the major medical specialties are available in Hong Kong. There are also a number of hospitals at a variety of prices for rooms and treatments.

TIME ZONES

UTC +8 hours (Winter)
UTC +7 hours (Day light saving time in Switzerland)

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

220 volts, 50 Hertz, Plug Type G (UK Type)

METHODS OF PAYMENT

The monetary unit is the Hong Kong dollar (HK\$ or HKD). It has been pegged to the US dollar at HK\$7.8 to US\$1 since October 1983. There is no foreign exchange control in Hong Kong. Currency exchange is available in several places at the airport and in many locations in the city.

In Hong Kong, most major international banks are present and ATM are widely accessible. Credit cards are commonly accepted, except at some small shops, restaurants, and taxis.

TRANSPORTATION

Hong Kong International Airport is located at Chek Lap Kok, Lantau Island. The airport is 35.2 kilometres from the Central District (prime commercial district) of Hong Kong Island and is served by airport buses, hotel buses, taxis, hire-cars and the Airport Express Railway (approximately 24 minutes to Central).

Information on flights and ground transportation is available at the website of Hong Kong International Airport www.hongkongairport.com/eng/index.html.

The address of **Swiss International Air Lines Ltd.** in Hong Kong: 35/F 118, Connaught Road West, Hong Kong. Tel.: +852 2846 6310 / website: www.swiss.com

Hong Kong has a very efficient public transport system including metro, trains, buses, trams, ferries, taxis, and minibuses.

HOTELS

Many of Hong Kong's luxury hotels are among the best in the world. All the major international chains are represented, along with an array of local and regional hotels.

Daily room rates of hotels for business travellers are around US\$180-300, depending on location, style, facilities and star rating. Visitors are advised to make advance reservations.

Hotel addresses and relevant hotel information are available at the website of the Hong Kong Tourism Board www.discoverhongkong.com.

COMMUNICATION

The area code of Hong Kong for international calls is +852.

The telecommunication system of Hong Kong is fully digitized.

- There were 6.97 million internet users in Hong Kong at the start of 2023, when internet penetration stood at 93%.
- Hong Kong was home to 6.73 million social media users in January 2023, equating to approx. 90% of the total population.
Instagram: 3.3mio / Facebook: 4.2mio / YouTube: 6.7mio / Facebook messenger: 2mio / LinkedIn: 2.8mio / SnapChat: 368'000 / Twitter: 4.2mio
- A total of 16.75 million cellular mobile connections were active in Hong Kong in early 2023, with this figure equivalent to 224% of the total population.
- Median mobile internet connection speed via cellular networks: 56.51 Mbps
Median fixed internet connection speed: 194.35 Mbps.

Postal service is inexpensive and the service is reliable.

CELL PHONES

Prepaid SIM-cards are widely available in a variety of telecommunication or convenience shops.

BUSINESS HOURS

Normal office hours are 9am-5pm on weekdays. Offices are closed on Sundays and public holidays. Many companies are also closed on Saturdays. With effect from 1 July 2006, the HKSAR Government has adopted a five-day week for civil servants.

The vast majority of shops are open every day. Generally, shops are open from 10:00am-10:00pm.

TIPS FOR INITIATING BUSINESS CONTACTS

About 95% of the population are made up of ethnic Chinese. Traditional Chinese culture, attitudes and

philosophy prevails, whereas Western business systems and customs also have a strong influence. It makes Hong Kong a unique society as a blend of Chinese tradition and Western culture.

Hong Kong is a place which means business. Hong Kong people are hardworking and known for their flexibility and business mind. The Hong Kong business climate is very dynamic. Decisions are made quickly, and companies need to be able to respond to inquiries, proposals and correspondence as soon as possible. If a quick reply is impossible, you should send an acknowledgement of receipt immediately stating that an answer will follow shortly. It shows interest and respect to your potential customers and partners.

One of the most effective ways to sell products in Hong Kong is through an agency or distributor. It can minimize the initial investment and fit the bills for those companies that cannot afford a full presence. To find a good and reliable agent is crucial to marketing your products in Hong Kong and even Mainland China, as many agents have a strong presence and good networks in both places. The process to identify ideal agents may take some time but it is worthwhile. Regular visits and correspondence exchanges as well as company reports or credit reports conducted by professional business information service firms will be useful to understand your potential partners better. [Switzerland Global Enterprise](#) and the [Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong](#) are pleased to assist Swiss firms in search of potential business partners.

Before initiating business contacts, documented information about your company, products and services should be prepared in English or in both English and Chinese. The documented information enclosed with original catalogues (no photocopy versions) should be sent to potential partners in advance of your first visit.

Do not try to make too many appointments in a single day. You may find it difficult to keep up or you may be embarrassed by arriving late. Business visitors should have a good knowledge beforehand about meeting venues and the estimated time to get there. Similar to Swiss, Hong Kong people put importance on punctuality. Visitors should do their best to avoid arriving late for appointments. Furthermore, follow-ups on your meetings in Hong Kong after your return to Switzerland are essential.

Personal contacts and relationships, though not as much weighted as in Mainland China, are very important for doing business in Hong Kong. It would be beneficial to share experiences with Swiss who are working or doing business in Hong Kong. Companies are therefore advised to join the [Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong](#). Membership is open to Swiss companies or to local companies that have strong ties with Switzerland and Swiss individuals working in Hong Kong. The Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong organizes monthly speaker luncheons.

Information on the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong is available at the website www.swisschamhk.org.

Information on the Swiss Association of Hong Kong can be obtained at the following address: www.swiss-hk.com/

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Business cards are widely exchanged upon introduction in Hong Kong. It is strongly advisable to take a very sizable quantity with you. Business cards should be printed with respective title in English and desirably in English/Chinese for frequent business visitors to Hong Kong and China. Should you need a Chinese name, you should ask someone who is good at Chinese to create a name for you. A business card should be presented and received with both hands. When you receive a card, take a moment to read it to show your respect to your counterpart. Do not fold, tear or write on the card.

Many Hong Kong people have an English first name, used with a Chinese family name, e.g. David Wong. In Chinese, the family name comes first, with the given name following. Mr. Wong Tai Man would be addressed as Mr. Wong in spoken form and in written form, Mr. T.M. Wong or Mr. Wong Tai Man. It

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is customary for the Chinese to address each other quite formally as Mr. or Mrs. unless they state that their first name should be used. When addressing business correspondence to Hong Kong, names should be written in full, with titles included.

Western business attire is appropriate for business meetings. Lunches and dinners with business acquaintances in restaurants are quite common in Hong Kong whereas breakfast meetings are less popular. For initial contacts, try to avoid offering dinner receptions on Friday evenings or lunch and dinner receptions on weekends, if possible. When invited to a meal by your Hong Kong counterpart, you are the guest. Do not offer to pay or share the fees. Chopsticks are invariably used in Chinese restaurants and food is eaten communally from large dishes placed in the centre of the table. In an up-market restaurant, a waiter may serve the food at the table. If chopsticks pose a problem, most restaurants can supply knife and fork.

Avoid embarrassing your Hong Kong counterparts in the presence of others. If a person causes another to lose face such as criticizing or pointing out mistakes in public, shouting at or humiliating someone, business transactions will be adversely affected.

Present or receive a gift with both hands. Gifts are **not** usually opened in front of other persons unless you are asked to do so. Gifts to avoid: clocks, knives (Swiss Army Knives do not belong to this category because Hong Kong people consider the said products as multi-functional tools rather than knives) as well as flowers associated with funerals and death (such as white and yellow chrysanthemums, please check with the florist for appropriate type).

SPECIAL FEATURES ON THE MARKET

1. Hong Kong is a mature, sophisticated and competitive market with a wide range of products and services at different prices and market segments.
2. As Hong Kong is a free port with minimal restrictions from the Government, products must be able to compete against others from all over the world on both price and quality.
3. Local consumers as well as tourists in particular from Mainland China possess considerable buying power and appreciate luxury products.
4. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for unique designs, branded products and foreign products. Mainland visitors, accounting for 62% of total tourist arrivals (605'000) in 2022, reached 375'000 (+568%). Hong Kong is a window of the world to visiting mainland tourists who have high consuming power¹.
5. Hong Kong is an important trading hub for Mainland China and other Asian countries. It re-exports over 90% (in 2023) of the imported goods.

Consulate General of Switzerland

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www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong
www.s-ge.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 9:00-12:00 (afternoons only by appointment), closed on Saturdays and Sundays. Please consult the website of the Consulate General of Switzerland for the upcoming public holidays.

¹ COVID travel restrictions were only lifted end of 2022 in Hong Kong. Tourism numbers for 2023 not available at the time of editing.
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