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COVER **CHRISTIAAN GREYLING**, STELLENBOSCH
PHOTO **BRETT NATTRASS**

Surprising Hong Kong

Richard and Bev are Team Eat.Run.See, two former South Africans now living in Vancouver. Follow their insights, experiences, and culinary quirks issue by issue from the countries and trails they visit on their multi-year vegan globe-running adventure.

Easy does it on the slippery rock stairs on the descent from Lantau Peak.

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. Home to over seven million people, it's one of the world's most densely populated metropolises. It's an incredible melting pot of people, customs, and cultures seen, smelled, and heard in the myriad of streets, alleyways, and waterways. It has one of the world's most recognisable skylines and harbours, with giant, towering skyscrapers, and row after row of tall residential buildings perched on the edge of mountainous landscapes.

We wondered how we'd connect with nature and put foot to trail amidst this concrete jungle. Boy, were we surprised! Our six-day visit to Hong Kong blew our Injinji toe-socks off for so many reasons. There's the lush, hilly, scenic trails nestled in verdant greenery on Hong Kong and its surrounding islands, the amazing range of delicious Asian-inspired veggie food, an efficient transport system that moves millions of people daily, and its fascinating

history with many visible remnants of its roots.

We split our time between the islands of Hong Kong and Lantau.

VICTORIA PEAK

On Hong Kong we stayed at a hostel in the Fortress Hill district. We focused our running on urban trails through the streets and up to and around the forest land at the top of Victoria Peak. In the city we discovered a delightful urban recreation area called Victoria Park where locals jog around the running track and practice tai chi daily. A quintessential Hong Kong experience!

Topping out at 552m, Victoria Peak is the highest mountain on Hong Kong island. While the summit itself is off-limits as a telecommunications base, *The Peak* is home to a popular lookout over the sprawling cityscape, Victoria Harbour, Kowloon, parts of the New Territories, and several of Hong Kong's outlying islands.

It's possible to get close to the summit and enjoy the scenic and serene Victoria Peak Garden, a short distance from the frenzy of the tourist-saturated Peak complex.

There are several ways up to the Peak and its access to nature, including a historic funicular railway dating back to 1926. For the avid trail runner or hiker, there are a few options to reach the Peak. Google this and you'll be amazed at how many pathways there





A meditative run up and down Lantau Peak under the gaze of Buddha.

are to the top at both day and night - including an incredibly intricate set of stairs that run up alongside the tram. We didn't have time to get up to the Peak on foot, but we did spend time running along the trails once at the top.

From this vantage point, there are views across the many bays and over Hong Kong's neighbouring islands. The trail system criss-crosses the mountain side and top, meandering through lush jungle vines and banyan tree canopy. There's roughly 25km of trail if you follow the Hong Kong Trail system. We ran 10km out and back from the main Peak visitor area, stopping along the way to enjoy the views of nature and city alike. The pathway is easy to follow and mostly paved

underfoot. We wish we'd had more time to get into the backcountry and explore the extensive network of trails on Hong Kong.

But, it's always good to leave something to come back to!

LANTAU ISLAND

Leaving the hustle, bustle, and bright lights behind us, we moved on from Hong Kong Island to nearby Lantau Island. We arrived by ferry and caught the bus to the village close to our next hostel. The village is home to the Po Lin monastery and a 34m-tall bronze Buddha. After a bit of bushwhacking we arrived at our hostel, just before the first of many intense downpours began.

Determined not to let the rain dampen our spirits, we grabbed a break in the weather and set out on an exploratory run to get a taste of the 70km Lantau Trail. This is a circular hiking trail that explores the southern half of the island. It includes a hike up the island's highest mountain, Lantau Peak, at 934m. With no intention of completing the full circuit (this time!), we did manage a three-hour out-and-back run which included going up and down the peak. The foliage

and surroundings were far more wild and jungle-like than the trails we explored on Hong Kong Island.

The run was quite a slog, with soggy, slippery surfaces underfoot. Much of the trail was either rock stair or hardpacked earth. There was a lot of water pouring down the mountain from earlier rain showers, making for tricky footfalls and a constant threat of slipping.

It was also very misty when we were on the trail, so our views were limited. However, on our way back, we were blessed with a brief clearing which gave a magnificent view over the island with the giant Buddha floating peacefully on a lower hilltop.

We wrapped up our time on Lantau with lots of inside time due to the poor weather (which eventually became a cyclone warning!), a visit to the monastery and its amazing array of vegan food and baked goods, and

a stairway sprint to get up close and personal with the big Buddha.

Hong Kong and Lantau Islands were an incredible introduction to what was previously a mystical part of the world to us both.

We were fortunate enough to meet a local trail runner while on one of our outings. He happened to have run the OCC-UTMB race with us in France last year. It was great to get his perspective on trail running in Hong Kong, and this encounter reminded us just how amazing the global trail running community is.

We left with positive memories and a strong desire to return to uncover much more of this spectacular and surprising place. 🏔️



BEV & RICHARD ATFIELD

Their journey started in Belize, Central America, and has taken them through 30 countries, including South Africa. www.eatrunsee.com
[eatrunsee](#) [eatrunsee](#)



A magnificent sunset view over Hong Kong from The Peak.

GOOD TO KNOW

- There are direct flights from SA to HK.
- SA citizens don't need a visa to visit HK for stays shorter than 30 days.
- Currency is the HK Dollar.
- Official languages are Cantonese and English.
- Excellent transportation network on Hong Kong and surrounding islands.
- Hong Kong will likely be hot, humid, sunny, and rainy - all in the same hour!

BEFORE YOU BOOK...

YOUR RESEARCH STARTS HERE

- hktrailrunner.blogspot.ca ■ asiatrailmag.com
- irunfar.com ■ discoverhongkong.com
- lantauonline.com

TRAIL RUNNING RACES

January [Hong Kong 100 Ultra Trail Race](#) (100km) hk100-ultra.com
March [TransLantau](#) (15km/25km/50km/100km) translantau.com
Hong Kong race calendar: ow.ly/Vt6i2