

# Hong Kong – The History

Excerpted from Wikipedia

**H**ong Kong became a colony of the British Empire after the First Opium War (1839–42).

Hong Kong Island was first ceded to Great Britain in perpetuity, followed by Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 and then the New Territories was put under lease in 1898. It was occupied by Japan during The Second World War (1941–45), after which the British resumed control until 1997.

The amalgam of British and Chinese culture during the colonial era shaped the current culture of Hong Kong. For example, the educational system followed the British English model until 2009.

As a result of the negotiations and the 1984 agreement between China and Britain, Hong Kong was handed over to the People's Republic of China and became its first Special Administrative Region on 1 July 1997, under the principle of “one country, two systems” (the other special region, Macau, attained that status when Portugal handed it over in December 1999).

Hong Kong has a different political system from mainland China. Hong Kong's independent judiciary functions under the common law framework. The Hong Kong Basic Law, the constitutional document drafted by the Chinese side before the handover, based on the terms enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed by Prime Ministers Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China and Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, governs its



political system, and stipulates that Hong Kong shall have a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign relations and military defense.

Hong Kong, today officially known as Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, is a region on the southern coast of China geographically enclosed by the Pearl River Delta and South China Sea. Hong Kong is known for its expansive skyline and deep natural harbor, and with a land mass of 1,104 km (426 sq mi) and a population of over seven million people, is one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

Hong Kong's population is 93.6% ethnic Chinese and 6.4% from other groups. Hong Kong's Cantonese-speaking majority originate mainly from the neighboring Guangdong province, from which many of them fled to escape wars in mainland China from the 1930s to 1960s.

Hong Kong is a world city. It has the largest income inequality among advanced economies. It also has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, and has a high Human Development

Index and high international rankings in financial and economic competitiveness.

As Hong Kong ranks as the third most important international financial center, after London and New York City, it has a major capitalist service economy characterized by low taxation and free trade, and the currency, the Hong Kong dollar, is the eighth most traded currency in the world.

The limited space created demand for denser construction, which developed the city into a center for modern architecture and the world's most vertical city. The confined area has also led to a highly developed transportation network with the public transport travelling rate exceeding 90 percent, the highest in the world. Air pollution and smog is a serious problem with loose emission standards and a high level of atmospheric particulates compared to other advanced economies.