

UNIVERSITY ^{OF}
BIRMINGHAM

WANT TO WORK IN HONG KONG?

GET TIPS FROM YOUR
ALUMNI NETWORK!

Young professionals and
graduate employers from
the Birmingham alumni
community share their
experiences of living and
working in Hong Kong.

With more than 300,000 alumni, there are Birmingham graduates across the globe. Hong Kong is one of the most popular destinations for our alumni, with almost 3,000 based there.

This guide will take you through the process of moving to Hong Kong, with insights from alumni who have already made the move. It will cover what to plan before leaving, how to find and apply for jobs and how to integrate into society.

THE BASICS

In case you haven't started your research yet, let our alumni talk you through the basics of life in Hong Kong.

MAIN NATIONALITY

CHINESE (94%)

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

999 (POLICE, AMBULANCE, FIRE)

MAIN TRANSPORT



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

‘The metro system (MTR) is frequent and reliable, and you can get virtually anywhere within an hour.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘There are excellent opportunities for travelling in Asia. Transport is easy and very affordable. There is also the benefit of being able to leave the city as Hong Kong is 75% countryside.’

Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

MAJOR RELIGIONS



DAOISM AND BUDDHISM

POPULATION

7.23 MILLION



‘Hong Kong is a city of diversity and people from everywhere in the world live here.’

Alexander Buencamino (MSc Money, Banking and Finance, 1994)

CURRENCY



HONG KONG DOLLAR (HKD OR HK\$)

INTERNET DOMAIN

WWW....

.HK

MAIN LANGUAGES



CANTONESE AND ENGLISH

‘Since English is widely adopted in Hong Kong it is very easy to get around and ask for help.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘People in Hong Kong speak excellent English, but we still need to be mindful of our accents, pace and the specific vocabulary we use.’

Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)



THE LABOUR MARKET

What can you expect from working in Hong Kong?

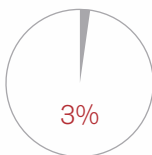
LABOUR FORCE

3.74 MILLION (2013)



AVERAGE AGE
AT GRADUATION

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE



HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

12 STATUTORY HOLIDAYS
AND FIVE ADDITIONAL DAYS

‘The frequent public holidays, Chinese New Year holidays, and use of Hong Kong as a travel hub make frequent trips abroad easily manageable.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)

AVERAGE STARTING SALARY

10,075 HKD PER MONTH

AT LEAST (DEPENDING ON SECTOR)



‘Salaries in Hong Kong tend to be good, so it’s easy to both save for holidays and still have enough left over to put away.’

Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)

AVERAGE WORKING WEEK

MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 9AM–6PM

WITH OCCASIONAL HALF DAYS ON SATURDAYS
(BUT MANY WILL WORK 50+ HOURS)

‘Since Hong Kong is a financial centre where commercial activity thrives, Hong Kong people tend to work longer hours than people in the UK and spend more time with their colleagues.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

COST OF LIVING

GENERALLY HIGHER THAN UK



TAX RATE

RANGES FROM 2%–17%
(DEPENDING ON SALARY)

‘The low tax rate is one of the main benefits of living in Hong Kong.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)

For more information about each of these areas, Google ‘TargetJobs Working Abroad’ or ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’.

Please note that these figures are averages or estimates that were deemed accurate at the time of print.

WHAT TO PLAN

Don't forget anything! Let our recent graduates talk you through what they planned before they left, as well as what you can leave until you arrive.



- ✓ FIND A JOB WHILST IN THE UK
- ✓ SORT OUT A VISA
- ✓ CONSIDER BOOKING YOUR RETURN FLIGHTS
- ✓ GET A HKID CARD
- ✓ SET UP A BANK ACCOUNT
- ✓ FIND ACCOMMODATION
- ✓ BUY A SIM CARD

‘It is a good idea to conduct a physical site visit before settling on a place. For young people seeking trendy and affordable accommodation in the city, places like Sai Ying Pun, Sheung Wan, Kennedy Town are very up and coming.’
Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘Phone SIM cards can be bought from a ‘7-Eleven’ shop or mobile phone shop. Data packages are available as well.’
Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

‘Unlike the UK, you can bargain the rental price of your flat. You normally have to pay three months’ deposit upfront. Shared apartments are often available on websites such as *Craigslist* and *Gumtree*.’
Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

‘Setting up a bank account is easy. You need a copy of your contract, proof of address and ID as you would in the UK.’
Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)

‘It is much easier to arrange something via transfer from a large firm with a presence in Hong Kong than to arrive jobless. I’m aware of people who have spent a year trying to find work.’
David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)

‘If you book a one-way flight, some airlines might challenge you on when you’d be moving on and refuse to fly you.’
Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)

‘Our company helps with Visa applications. Look into work/holiday Visas if the company does not sponsor them. Alternatively get a foot in the door in the company’s UK branch and then push for a move overseas.’
Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

‘As soon as you can, make an appointment to obtain a HKID card - this will make things a lot easier.’
Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

‘In order to obtain a working Visa, you must prove that you are required to do the job instead of a local person, so consider your skills carefully.’
Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

For more detailed information on the legalities of moving abroad, consult the Careers Network’s [International Work Experience page](#) or the British Consulate-General Hong Kong [website](#).

FINDING JOBS

Our alumni have pursued a wide range of careers, but there are some key sources that they all advise you use when searching for a job in Hong Kong.



WEBSITES

hk.jobssdb.com
www.cpjobs.com
www.labour.gov.hk

‘Nowadays websites, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites provide information about most vacancies.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘Networking skills and making yourself known are important skills to ensure you’re not just another CV in the pile.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)



NETWORKING

‘I often find out about jobs through head-hunters.’

Alexander Buencamino (MSc Money, Banking and Finance, 1994)

‘I’d advise not to hesitate using (and abusing) your personal networks to get a foot in the door. If you don’t have any, build them yourself.’

Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

‘Word of mouth is still a common way to find jobs in Hong Kong, as many job vacancies still go unpublished.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)



RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

‘I usually use recruitment agents and personal connections to find jobs.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)



PUBLICATIONS

Recruit magazine
South China Morning Post (SCMP) newspaper

‘Local magazines such as *Recruit* are good sources to find openings.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

For more information on where to look, use the [TargetJobs Working Abroad pages](#).

APPLYING FOR JOBS

Our alumni talk through some of their experiences of applying for jobs in Hong Kong.



- ‘Generally speaking, large corporations hold several rounds of interviews and set numeracy and/or literacy tests. Small to mid-size companies just hold one interview. Beware that HR representatives can be quite subtle. They may say that they simply want to ‘chat’ but treat any attempts to get in touch as an invitation for interview!’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

CAREERS TO CONSIDER



- ‘A number of foreign grads teach English and use the opportunity to learn/perfect their Chinese. This is a way in to get a Visa and to build networks in order to move into a different industry. The legal and financial sectors may feel more familiar as the British business culture remains influential in these.’

Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

Make the most of the Careers Network (CN). They can discuss your career options, give guidance on your CV, conduct mock interviews and much more. Google ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’ for more info.

Remember that CN is also available to you for two years after you graduate.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES IN HONG KONG COMPARED TO THE UK?

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION?



DESIRABLE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- ‘There are a string of qualities we look for: interpersonal and networking skills, resilience, curiosity, drive, a work hard/play hard mind-set and self-discipline.’

Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE



- ‘Often local staff will say yes to a request, but actually didn’t understand and were embarrassed to say. It’s important to be mindful of this so communicating at work remains strong.’

Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)

- ‘You should always carry business cards with you, and give and receive business cards with two hands.’

Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

- ‘The importance of “face”, reputation and respect are key aspects of business. This can be reflected in a sometimes arduous internal decision-making process (approval from the top is essential).’

Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

HOW TO INTEGRATE

So you've made your plans, you've booked your flights and you've found your job...but what should you do when you actually arrive? Our alumni have loads of advice to give you to ensure that you feel a part of Hong Kong society as quickly as possible.

ADAPT TO THE LIFESTYLE

‘The pace of life is much faster in Hong Kong than the UK. People here are generally less patient and everyone tends to pack more activities into a day.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘Try spending a summer in Hong Kong before moving, this will help you to avoid any culture shock.’

Jonathan Wong (BEng & BCom Engineering Production and Economics, 1990)



BE RESPECTFUL

‘Hong Kong is quite a conservative place; people generally follow the rules. Avoid placing chopsticks vertically (this can be a sign of death) and giving people white flowers (these are for funerals).’

Jennifer Greaves (BSc Psychology, 2007)

LEARN THE LANGUAGE

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE CULTURE

‘Traditions in Hong Kong society run deep and there is a fascinating local culture which you can understand if you put the time into it.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)

‘Hong Kong people appreciate it when foreigners take the time to learn the language.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

Enjoy yourself!

GET TO KNOW THE EX-PATS



GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL ACTIVITIES

‘Although most people in Hong Kong are Chinese, there are a lot of expatriates, and a lot of people who have lived overseas.’

Jonathan Wong (BEng & BCom Engineering Production and Economics, 1990)

‘Hong Kong is a very sociable place as the expat community share common experiences. Forums on websites such as *Geoexpat* or *Asiaexpat* are good places to find out about activities.’

Freya Deveney-Kelly (MA International Studies, 2010)

‘Known as the ‘city that never sleeps’, Hong Kong caters to a wide range of hobbies. Activities like hiking, water sports, the night life, the outlying islands and theme parks are all within reach.’

Desiree Ho (LLB Law, 2012)

‘Join a sports team and do not turn down any social invitations.’

David Greaves (MRes Science and Engineering of Materials, 2005)

YOUR ALUMNI

A wide variety of alumni contributed to this guide. Here are just a few examples of what they're up to at the moment.

Degree: LLB Law
Year of graduation: 2012

Role: Performing Arts Production Manager and Choreographer

Responsibilities: Curating and managing performing arts projects such as dance productions, musicals, stage productions, concerts and outreach programmes



DESIREE HO

Degree: BA International Studies with French
Year of graduation: 2009

Role: Senior Consultant, Human Capital Search and Co-founder of Hirely

Responsibilities: Developing client base and networks in new markets and segments, running recruitment mandates and managing client relationships



THOMAS MERRITT

Degree: BSc Psychology
Year of graduation: 2007

Role: Group Fitness Coordinator, Pure Group International

Responsibilities: Organising scheduling and events for nine fitness studios across Hong Kong and Singapore



JENNIFER GREAVES

Degree: BA Media, Culture & Society & MA International Studies (International Peacekeeping)

Year of graduation: 2009 and 2010

Role: Teaching Manager, English Excel School of English

Responsibilities: Training of new teachers and overseeing the curriculum production

Reason for moving : I left the UK as I felt there were not many job prospects at the time, was keen to try living somewhere new, and my now husband got a position working in Hong Kong



FREYA DEVENEY-KELLY

Want to stay in touch with other Birmingham graduates once you're in Hong Kong?



University of Birmingham Alumni



University of Birmingham Alumni and Friends



@birminghamalum

Our Hong Kong alumni society also meets regularly and will give you the opportunity to meet and network with fellow alumni in the area.



Birmingham University Alumni Association Hong Kong

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