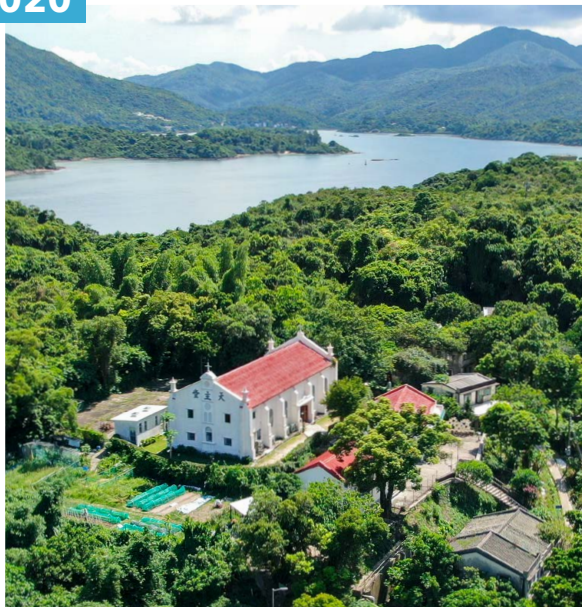




A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO  
**SAI KUNG**

2020



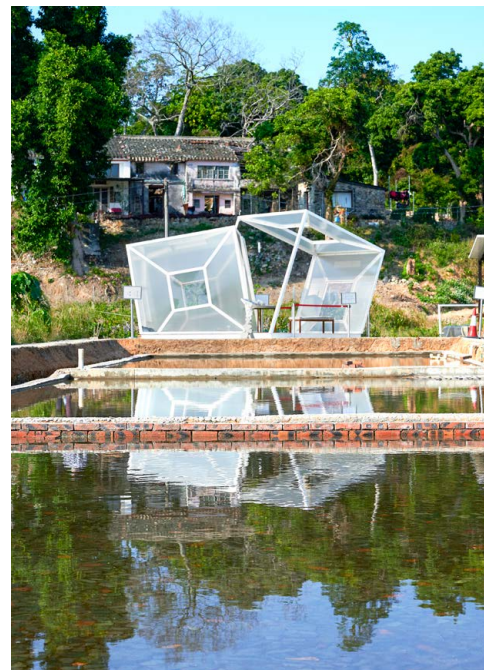


## A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO SAI KUNG

Sai Kung is synonymous with some of Hong Kong's most beautiful natural landscapes, and stands in stark contrast to the city's infamous skyline, concentrated with skyscrapers and dancing LED lights. Located in the most eastern part of the New Territories, the district of Sai Kung is rich in geology, culture and history, and is one of the Hong Kong Back Gardens attracting city dwellers from all over. Boasting with ample opportunities for exploration, not only is it home to treasured remnants of well-preserved Hakka culture, Sai Kung offers sweeping mountain views, gorgeous beaches, scenic trails, marine parks, the Hong Kong UNESCO Geopark, two UNESCO-merited landmarks, and charming fishing villages.

The beating heart is Sai Kung Town Centre where visitors can easily spend a day exploring the floating fresh seafood market, the waterfront eateries, and the many shops and cafes tucked along the inner streets. Serving as a backdrop to the bustling shorefront promenade are lush greenery and natural rock formations. And with pristine beaches and islands lying only a stone's throw away, it is a promised land for water sport enthusiasts, adventure seekers and sunbathers alike.

This is a guide on how to get the most out of one of Hong Kong's best escapes, and it begins with Sai Kung's earliest settlers, the Hakka villagers and their linkage to the fishermen who exist today. Whether you fancy an authentic seafood feast, shopping for unique finds, connecting with nature, or getting a dose of culture and history, Sai Kung has it all.



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# A QUIET, SCARCELY INHABITED ISLAND

**SAI KUNG HAS** a rich Hakka history and Yim Tin Tsai — a small offshore island about a 15-minute speedboat ride from Sai Kung Town — is a large part of that storied past. Over 300 years ago, it was a settlement for a thriving Hakka community, whom are Han Chinese people whose ancestry is linked to provinces in the Mainland. The Chan family, the original Hakka family, were from Guangdong and were the first of the island's inhabitants beginning from the 1740s. The Chan descendants were farmers, anglers and salt harvesters. Hakka clan members developed salt farms on the island and made their living selling the salt. However, as the salt industry declined, so did the population. By the late 1990s, the last of the villagers had left for booming city centres. Today, the island sees weekend visitors exploring one of the last bastions of Hakka history. Follow the trail, and you'll go by the abandoned village houses. They still reveal remnants of the last people to live there. Parts of the island are undergoing a painstaking preservation process after receiving UNESCO recognition for intangible cultural heritage.


*See our Tranquil Trail on p.14-15.*



Photo: Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival 2019



### 1 The Yim Tin Tsai salt pans

 Award of Distinction, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, 2015

With *yim tin tsai* translating to ‘small salt pan’ in Cantonese, it’s clear to see that the island’s prominent industry had a significant impact. Hakka settlers developed salt farms on the island and made their living from its sale. The salt pans were used to dry out the salt before it was used as a prime trading good. However, with international competition, Hakka villagers were eventually priced out of the global market. The area once had around 1,000 inhabitants, but the villagers fled the island for opportunities in urban communities and the salt farms were converted into fish ponds. Today, the salt pans have been restored and are fully functioning, making it a prominent site for day trippers. The revitalised salt pans are for demonstration purposes only, but the finished product can be taken home as souvenirs by its visitors.





## 2 St Joseph's Chapel

 Award of Merit, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, 2005

Built in 1890, St Joseph's Chapel was erected in Romanesque style by visiting PIME missionaries who developed a strong relationship with the Hakka Chan clan. Before the turn of the century, the Hakka people had largely converted to Catholicism under the influence of a Roman Catholic priest Joseph Freinademetz. Some years later, the entire village was baptised in a ceremony. The chapel was dedicated to the island's patron saint, and has since been named a UNESCO-listed heritage building as well as a Grade II historic building, standing as a physical reminder of the impact St Joseph made on the villagers.



## 3 Yim Tin Tsai Heritage Exhibition Centre

Drawing the elements of Hakka history together is a visitor's centre designed to celebrate Yim Tin Tsai's rich heritage. The Heritage Exhibition Centre is next to St Joseph's Chapel and occupies a section of the village's former primary school, Ching Po School. It's home to a small collection of artefacts showcasing the village's unique history and what life was like in its heyday. From ceramics and homeware to everyday items, the centre is an homage to Hakka culture on the island.



## 4 The Mangroves and 'Jade Bridge'

Though the island is small — just 0.24sq km — there are several places to explore, making it more than worthy of a day trip. Once you arrive, explore the surrounding coastline, which is encompassed by marshy mangroves. After getting yourself acquainted with the island's heritage and culture, explore its surrounding scenery. Elsewhere on Yim Tin Tsai, the 'Jade Bridge' connects Yim Tin Tsai to Kau Sai Chau, its larger neighbouring island that is best known today as the site of a popular public golf course.



# SEAS THE DAY

**SAI KUNG TOWN** retains its old-world charm and small-town vibes, holding onto its history as a vibrant fishing town and trading port, with a rich heritage both on land and at sea. More than a century ago, it was a rural settlement populated by anglers who made a living by trading freshly caught fish on the waterfront, which became a popular meeting point and focal area within the town. As such, Tin Hau, Goddess of the Sea and patron saint of fishermen, plays an important role in the community with a temple erected in her honour. By the 1970s, the industry was in decline and families were enticed by urbanising city centres. However, Sai Kung's rich fisherfolk culture and history lives on. Anglers still moor their boats alongside the pier showcasing the catch of the day to customers and the allure of the sea is still strong for those who spend a weekend afternoon on its shores. Sampans shuttle tourists and locals around nearby islands for a day spent out on its pristine beaches, and you'll see a number of small boats selling a wide range of dried and fresh seafood at this unique floating seafood market.

## 1 Tin Hau Temple

A popular attraction is the Tin Hau Temple — a Grade II-listed building, which maintains its original early 20<sup>th</sup> century facade. Dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea, Tin Hau temples were common features in the fishing villages of Hong Kong. Fishermen would pay respect to the goddess and ask her to protect them while they were out at sea. This Tin Hau temple happens to be particularly decorative and worth a visit. Located just off Po Tung Road, the temple is filled with worshippers during the annual Tin Hau Festival, in celebration of the birthday of the sea goddess, which falls on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the third lunar month.

*See our Tranquil Trail on p.14-15.*

## Q VENTURE OUT

Sai Kung Town is easily accessible to a host of surrounding areas within the Sai Kung District. Other Tin Hau temples that lie slightly farther out are also worth putting on your travel agenda.



### 2 Joss House Bay Tin Hau Temple

Tin Hau temples are prevalent across Hong Kong, but none is bigger or older than the one in Joss House Bay, near Clearwater Bay. While the exact date of construction is unknown, a rock next to the temple bears an inscription dating back to the year 1274. Today, Joss House Bay Temple — now a Grade I historic building — hosts up to 50,000 people for festivities marking Tin Hau's birthday.

### 3 Leung Shuen Wan Tin Hau Temple

Better known as High Island, Leung Shuen Wan lies within the Sai Kung East Country Park and is connected to the Sai Kung Peninsula by the High Island Reservoir. It's home to a designated fishing zone and a Tin Hau temple that was built by fishermen in 1741. This Tin Hau temple is listed as a Grade III historic building. Thousands of worshippers still visit to pray for bountiful catches and protection from the tempestuous sea. Every two years, it celebrates the eve of Tin Hau's birthday with a marine parade.



## THE DAILY CATCH



Even with its development over the years, Sai Kung Town remains a lively fishing village, and it's no wonder that the town centre's gorgeous waterfront — appropriately known as Seafood Street — is lined with award-winning seafood restaurants. As you walk along the promenade, tanks outside Michelin-starred eateries are brimming with all kinds of fish and shellfish, while on the other side of the strip, floating fishermen line the dock, proudly putting their best catches of the day on display. To this day, Seafood Street still supplies many restaurants across Hong Kong with fresh product. Enjoy an al fresco seafood feast by selecting right from the restaurants' tanks, or — for a small surcharge — bring in your own catch of the day to be prepared as you wish, or better yet, let the chef decide for you.

See our *Tranquil Trail* on p14-15.

# SAI KUNG TOWN



## ONE-OF-A-KIND FINDS

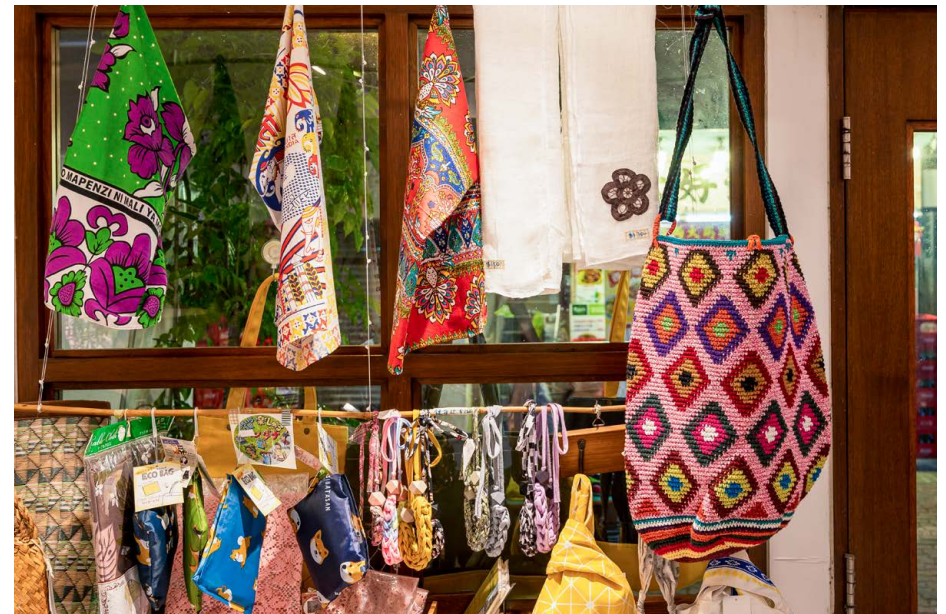
Sai Kung Town is only a hop, skip and minibus ride away from most major districts, making it the perfect getaway for city-dwellers looking to unwind. Here, generation-old shops rub shoulders with modern health food shops and quirky boutiques. Some of the main tenets of Sai Kung sensibility are sustainability and community. Sai Kung is home to zero-waste stores, mom-and-pop grocers that have become fixtures in the town, and a broad range of shops selling organic personal care products, handmade homewares and clothing, eco-wood furniture, collectors' items, craft spirits, beer and wine, and even vinyl records. The town has also become home to a collective of local artisans specialising in leather goods, paper crafts, ceramic artwork, and candle-making.



## FLAVOURS OF THE WORLD



Sai Kung Town is sprawling with food options and international flavours. With each street adopting its own culinary identity, options vary from street food to Michelin-starred experiences. Fuk Man Road transports you to the Land of Smiles with its authentic and unfussy Thai joints. And in recent years, Sai Kung has become home to many artisan cafes, where you can easily spend an afternoon people- (and puppy-) watching along See Cheung Street and in Sai Kung Hoi Pong Square. You can also find European, Japanese and Indonesian fusion restaurants hiding on Wan King Path. While Sai Kung offers an array of contemporary dining options, its old town charm remains in many elements, especially in its local food, offering nostalgic Hong Kong favourites like freshly baked pineapple buns, traditional Chinese rice pudding, cart noodles and more.







# TRANQUIL TRAIL

A scenic and satiating day in Sai Kung

- 1 Fuel up in **Sai Kung Town** with a specialty coffee and a freshly baked good →
- 2 Learn about Hong Kong's geological history at the **Volcano Discovery Centre** →
- 3 Take a 15-minute speedboat to **Yim Tin Tsai** and explore the history of the Hakka people or head to **Sharp Island's Hap Mun Bay Beach** for a dip
- 4 Take the boat back to Sai Kung Town for some grub along **Fuk Man Road** aka Thai Food Street



- 5 Get a dose of culture at Sai Kung Town's **Tin Hau Temple complex** →
- 6 Pick up some boutique, local finds and stock up on bulk groceries in **Sai Kung Town** →
- 7 Feast on the catch of the day at Sai Kung's **Seafood Street**



Take in Sai Kung's beaches and islands. Gorgeous coastlines, picturesque hiking views, colossal rock formations and uninterrupted panoramas await. See p.16-20

# FOR SUNSEEKERS AND EXPLORERS

**WHITE SANDY BEACHES,** crystal clear waters and weird and wonderful wildlife around seemingly every corner — you'd be forgiven for thinking we were painting a picture of a tropical destination outside of Hong Kong. But in the city's far-reaching corners, the Sai Kung District is home to some pristine beaches that could rival those on a destination holiday. Hike through country parks and get a bird's-eye view of your destination or take a sampan from the Sai Kung Town Public Pier, and you'll enter a whole new world on arrival. Beyond the beaches, the district is also home to a wealth of exploration opportunities across its many islands. These are just some of the far-flung places and spaces well worth venturing to for a day trip.

Photo: Tugo Cheng



## LIFE'S A BEACH

### 1 Tai Long Sai Wan

Cantonese for 'Big Wave Bay', this bay isn't to be confused with the Shek O stretch of sand of the same name. The area is made up of four beaches, but Sai Wan is one of the quieter ones and perfect for those looking for a quiet afternoon. Accessible by sampan or by hiking Stage 2 of the MacLehose Trail, it boasts several kiosks to stock up on snacks and water for hungry hikers looking to refuel and rehydrate.



### 2 Trio Beach

Hidden behind the Hebe Haven harbour, Trio Beach is one of the most accessible beaches in Sai Kung. But thanks to its discreet location, it's also one of the quietest. A short 30-minute hike from Hebe Haven (Pak Sha Wan) or an even shorter sampan from the public pier at Hebe Haven, the beach has a snacks kiosk, showers and lifeguard towers on-site, making it a great family-friendly option for beachgoers.



### 3 Hap Mun Bay Beach

Located on Sharp Island, Hap Mun Bay (known as Half Moon Bay in English) is one of the most consistently clean beaches in Hong Kong. It's within the UNESCO Global Geopark, so visitors benefit from unbeatable views of the region's unique rock formations and picturesque scenery. The gazetted beach is small, but offers a wide range of facilities including changing rooms, toilets and barbecue pits for prepared travellers looking to make the most of their day.

See our *Tranquil Trail* on p.14-15.



## GEOLOGICAL WONDERS



### 4 Sharp Island

Spanning just 2.5km in length, Sharp Island is a small island within the geopark that is home to unique attractions, including the comically dubbed 'pineapple bun' rock formations. There are also two beautiful beaches — Hap Mun Bay and Kiu Tsui. If a visit coincides with low tide, the tombolo presents itself to walk directly onto nearby Kiu Tau Island, while a short hike enables visitors to walk from one side of the island to the other. Boats shuttle visitors to Sharp Island from Sai Kung Public Pier at 30-minute intervals.



### 5 Ung Kong Group

Made up of three islands — Wang Chau, Basalt Island and Bluff Island — the Ung Kong Group of islands are located just south of the High Island Peninsula. They're best known for the unique arches and caves that have been carved into the land by years of wear and tear at the hands of the sea. Wang Chau is home to stunning sea caves while Basalt Island showcases an array of wave-cut terrain and Bluff Island is known for its marine life and ecology.



Photo: Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

## 6 Ninepin Group

Home to three main islands — North, South and East — the Ninepin Group are volcanic rock formations that date back more than 140 million years to the Cretaceous period. The hexagonal rocky cliff sides are best seen by boat (as the islands aren't inhabited, there is no public ferry service). Popular points of exploration include the 'Sunken Ship Crack' on North Ninepin Island, as well as the archway on South Ninepin Island.

## 7 High Island

High Island was once an island in the southeast corner of Sai Kung Peninsula, but now lies connected through the High Island Reservoir. High Island is also home to a historic Tin Hau temple (built in dedication to the sea goddess), a fishing district and seafood restaurant. There is road access to the northern tip of High Island for those looking for direct access, but it's also become a popular hiking route along the geotrail.



## DISCOVER MORE

### 8 Volcano Discovery Centre

Hong Kong has a reputation for its juxtaposition of urban vista and timeless nature. Sai Kung's Volcanic Rock Region has been identified by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. Enrich your geopark experience with a visit to the Volcano Discovery Centre located in Sai Kung Waterfront Park. Learn about the formation of Hong Kong's unique rock columns, volcanic history and features of the various geosites before heading out for a day of exploration. See our *Tranquil Trail* on p.14-15.



# HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

### Hong Kong International Airport Visitor Centre

📍 Buffer Halls A and B, Arrivals Level,  
Terminal 1

### Hong Kong West Kowloon Station Visitor Centre

📍 B2 Level, Arrival Concourse,  
Hong Kong West Kowloon Station

### Hong Kong Island Visitor Centre

📍 The Peak Piazza (between The Peak  
Tower and the Peak Galleria)

### Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port Visitor Centre

📍 G/F, Passenger Clearance Building,  
Hong Kong Port

### Kowloon Visitor Centre

📍 Star Ferry Concourse, Tsim Sha Tsui

☎ **Visitor Hotline:** +852 2508 1234

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