

# Embracing Hong Kong's Cultural Identity: A Three-Day Exploration of Spiritual Traditions and Festivals

Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and tastes of Hong Kong's rich heritage

If you're visiting the city this month, join in on the celebrations of several traditional festivals from 25 to 27 May! This three-day itinerary offers an immersive way to explore the neighbourhoods where the festivities take place. Take in the vibrant sights and sounds of colourful processions, and participate in the time-honoured customs that have defined Hong Kong's cultural heritage for centuries.

## Day 1 | 25 May

Get ready to discover Hong Kong's spiritual scene and let the ancient wisdom of the Buddha guide your journey through various hidden gems. With Ngong Ping and Tai O as the first stops, hop between enchanting temples and take part in a traditional ritual to purify your mind and soul.



### Morning Ngong Ping: a journey of spiritual enlightenment

Sitting majestically atop Lantau Island, the Tian Tan Buddha is one of the largest outdoor seated Buddha statues in the world, measuring 34 metres tall from the lotus throne and base to the top of his head. Visitors can see it up close by climbing 268 steps. Refurbished in 2022, the statue and stairs exude a renewed, awe-inspiring vibrancy. From there, continue your journey to the Po Lin Monastery, where you can immerse yourself in a serene atmosphere and partake in an ancient cleansing ritual — pouring water over the baby Buddha statue in the Main Shrine Hall — to foster inner peace and harmony. Finally, complete your spiritual journey by indulging in a sumptuous vegetarian feast at the monastery's renowned restaurant.

### Birthday of Buddha Celebrations at Po Lin Monastery

**Date:** 20-26 May  
**Time:** 9:30am to 4:30pm  
**Venue:** Buddha bathing ritual for public — The Hall of Great Hero, Po Lin Monastery, Lantau Island  
**Admission:** Free  
**Website:** <https://plm.org.hk/eng/home.php>  
**Enquiry:** +852 2985 5248

### How to get there:

**Ferry and Bus:** Take the ferry from Central Ferry Pier No. 6 in Central to Mui Wo on Lantau Island. For enquiries, call the Sun Ferry Customer Service Hotline at +852 2131 8181 during office hours. Adjacent to the pier in Mui Wo, you'll find bus 2, which will take you to Ngong Ping in about 45 minutes.

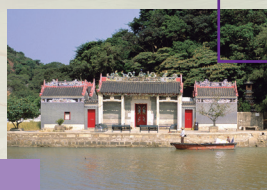
**MTR and Bus:** Take the MTR to Tung Chung Station on the Tung Chung Line. From there, take bus 23 to Ngong Ping. The bus ride takes about 20 to 25 minutes.

**Cable Car:** You can also take the Ngong Ping 360 Cable Car from Tung Chung to Ngong Ping. The cable car offers a scenic view of Lantau Island and takes about 25 minutes.

### Afternoon Tai O: temple hopping and fishing village experience

Having retained much of its historic charm, the remote fishing village Tai O boasts traditional stilt houses, food stalls, and local souvenirs. There are also plenty of temples in the historic area, four of which are part of the Dragon Boat Water Parade on 22 June this year.

- Kwan Tai Temple
- Yeung Hau Temple
- Tin Hau Temple at San Tsuen
- Hung Shing Temple



The custom has been inscribed on the third national list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China. Deity statues from each temple are paraded in sacred sampans tugged by dragon boats through the waters of Tai O to ward off wandering spirits in the water. Afterwards, a boat tour at sunset is the perfect way to end your day in Tai O.

### How to get there:

**From Ngong Ping:** Take bus 21 to reach the Tai O bus terminus.

**MTR and Bus:** Take the MTR to Tung Chung Station on the Tung Chung Line. From there, take bus 11 to Tai O. The bus ride takes about 50 minutes.

**Ferry and Bus:** Take the ferry from Central Pier No. 6 on Hong Kong Island to Mui Wo on Lantau Island. Adjacent to the pier in Mui Wo, you'll find bus 1, which will take you to Tai O in about 45 minutes.





# Day 2

## 26 May

The eighth day of the fourth lunar month holds great significance as several traditional festivals and celebrations — the Birthday of Tam Kung, the Buddha's Birthday and the Cheung Chau Bun Festival — take place on the same day in Hong Kong. These lively and colourful celebrations are deeply rooted in Hong Kong's culture and history, and they offer visitors a unique and authentic glimpse into the city's traditions.

### Morning **Shau Kei Wan: Birthday of Tam Kung celebrations**

The Birthday of Tam Kung is typically celebrated with a street parade, lion dances, martial art performances and *fa pau* (floral wreaths) along the streets around the Tam Kung Temple. This reflects the strong connection between the fishermen's community and their protector, Tam Kung, who was said to be capable of forecasting the weather. The temple houses a Tam Kung statue that depicts him as an 80-year-old man with a boy's face, as he was also known for his healing powers and ability to remain young forever.



**Date:** 26 May  
**Time:** 9am to 5pm  
**Venue:** Tam Kung Temple Road (the parade team will depart from the Factory Street Playground, proceed along Shau Kei Wan Main Street East, and march to the Tam Kung Temple)

#### How to get there:

**MTR:** Take the Island Line to MTR Shau Kei Wan station.  
**Tram:** If you're on Hong Kong Island, take the tram, otherwise known as the 'ding ding' all the way to Shau Kei Wan, the tram terminus.

### Morning **Causeway Bay: The celebration Carnival for Buddha's Birthday**

Or you may join The Celebration Carnival for Buddha's Birthday held in Victoria Park. Try sutra calligraphy, a traditional Buddhist practice of copying Buddhist scriptures with a brush and ink. Don't miss the delicious vegetarian feast and the colourful and vibrant flower shows! It doesn't matter whether you're a Buddhist — the carnival is an enjoyable and memorable experience for all ages.



#### 2023 The Celebration Carnival for Buddha's Birthday

**Date:** 26 May  
**Time:** 10am to 6pm  
**Venue:** Soccer Pitch No. 4-6, Victoria Park, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island  
**Admission:** Free  
**Website:** <http://fgshk.org.hk/> (Only available in Chinese)  
**Enquiry:** +852 3110 9000

#### How to get there:

**MTR:** Take the Island Line to MTR Causeway Bay or Tin Hau station.  
**Tram:** Take the tram to Causeway Bay.





# Day 2 | 26 May

## Afternoon to midnight Cheung Chau Bun Festival

Immerse yourself in the unique cultural experience of the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, a centuries-old tradition, from 23 to 27 May. Known for its iconic bun towers and traditional lion dances, the festival is a must for anyone interested in the rich history and customs of Hong Kong. During the festival, you can also enjoy various experiences inscribed in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong, including papercrafts, bamboo theatres, flower plaques, dragon and lion dances, *qilin* (a legendary creature in Chinese mythology) dances, and Cantonese Opera performances.



Attend the *piu sik* parade from 2pm to see colourful floats of performers donning traditional costumes and children dressed as iconic figures from Chinese folklore and modern celebrities.

### How to get there:

**Ferry:** Take the ferry from Central Ferry Pier No. 5 on Hong Kong Island.

#### Remarks

Sun Ferry will increase the frequency of its ferry services between Central and Cheung Chau for the Bun Festival. An additional ferry will depart from Cheung Chau to Central after the Bun Scrambling competition finishes at 1:15am on Saturday, 27 May 2023. Please visit Sun Ferry's website for updates on the event day. For enquiries, call Sun Ferry Customer Service Hotline at +852 2131 8181 during office hours. As the festival is very popular, visitors are advised to arrive early at Central Pier No. 5 for the ferry to Cheung Chau.

While waiting for the Bun Tower Climbing Competition, don't miss out on the special dishes served during this week-long celebration! Most restaurants will exclusively serve vegetarian food. Even McDonald's is offering a limited-edition McVeggie™ Burger for the occasion!



In preparation for the competition, visit Pak Tai Temple. It plays a central role in the Bun Festival as it is believed to provide protection and blessings for all competition participants.

And last but not least, brace yourself for the ultimate highlight of the festival — the Bun Tower Climbing Competition. At the stroke of midnight, brave participants will scale a 14-metre-tall tower adorned with imitation buns, competing to collect the most buns possible for good fortune.





# Cheng Chau Bun Festival

## Learn more about the traditional festivities!

### Piu Sik (Floating Colours) Parade

When a plague devastated Cheung Chau more than a century ago, villagers paraded through the island's narrow streets disguised as deities to drive away evil spirits. Today, small children are dressed up in costumes to re-enact the parade, in which they appear to 'float' in the air.



### Piu Sik Performers

Each float consists of two child performers (aged five to six) sit on chairs hidden under their costumes. The chairs are secured by rods decorated with symbolic items. The floats are then wheeled through the streets or sometimes carried on villagers' shoulders.

Information provided by Mr Tsang Ka Ming of the Petrel Athletic Association Limited

### Bun Scrambling Competition

Competitors scramble up a bamboo tower covered with imitation buns, trying to collect as many buns as possible to earn points (buns located at the top have the most points) and good fortune. The winner bags the coveted title of 'King or Queen of the Buns'!

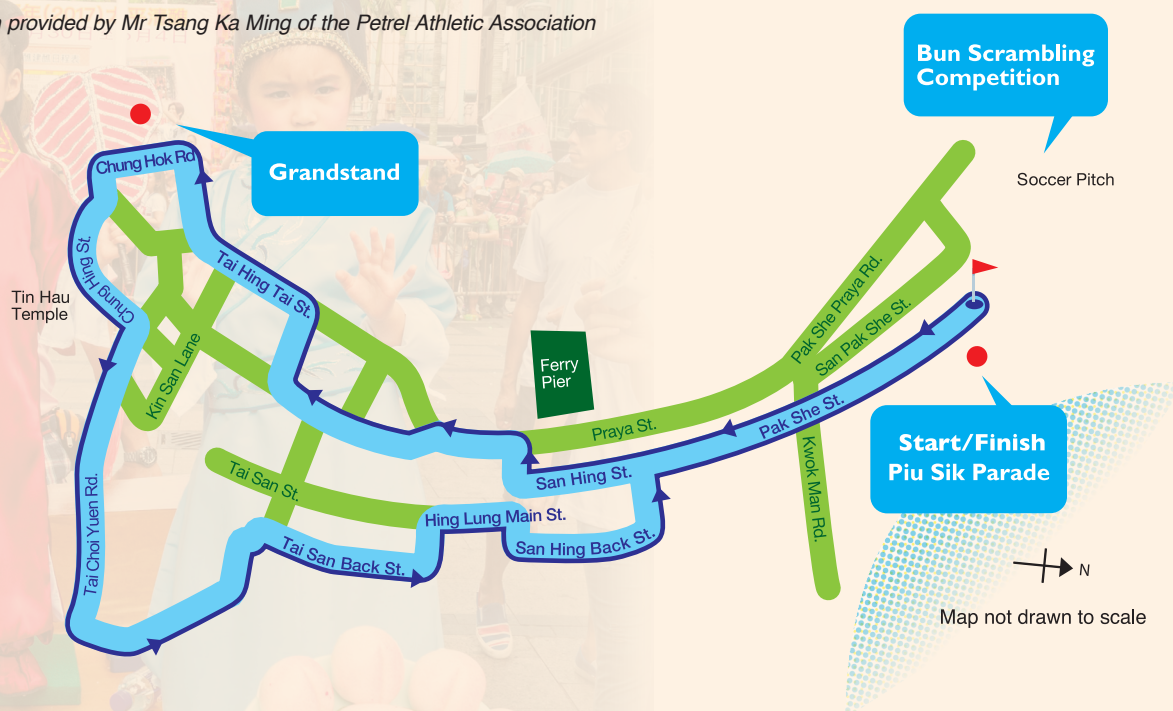
### Bun Tower

Nine thousand buns cover the 14-metre-tall tower. In the past, they were real buns, but to avoid wasting food, plastic imitations are used nowadays. Scramblers have three minutes and usually race to the top first to collect the buns with the highest points.

Information provided by Mr Yung Chi Ming, Chairman of Hong Kong Cheung Chau Bun Festival Committee

### Timetable for major events of the Cheung Chau Bun Festival

Dates & Times	Events & Venues
7:30pm to 11pm, 23 to 26 May	• Chinese opera performances at Pak Tai Temple Plaza
2:30pm, 25 May	• Lion and <i>qilin</i> dances at Pak Tai Temple Plaza
9:30am, 26 May	• <i>Qilin</i> and kung fu performance at Pak Tai Temple Plaza
2pm to 4pm, 26 May	• <i>Piu sik</i> Parade (please refer to the parade route for details)
11:30pm, 26 May	• Bun Scrambling Competition at the Soccer Pitch at Pak Tai Temple Playground
9am, 27 May	• Distribution of buns at Pak Tai Temple Plaza
2pm, 27 May	• Ceremony to send the deities back to their temples





# Day 3

## 27 May

Embark on a cultural adventure that will take you through bustling Wan Chai and Causeway Bay, tranquil Happy Valley and charming Tai Hang. Discover the rich history and diversity of this vibrant city as you visit temples and shrines that document the city's multicultural heritage. Today's itinerary offers a glimpse into the spiritual practices and traditions of different local communities.

### Yuk Hui Temple (Pak Tai Temple)

Yuk Hui Temple, also known as Pak Tai Temple, was built by the locals in 1863 to honour the Taoist deity of the same name. It's known for its colourful and intricate architecture with wooden carvings, porcelain figurines and murals depicting various scenes from Chinese mythology.

Address: Lung On Street, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island



### Hung Shing Temple

The sea-facing Hung Shing Temple was originally built in the early 1800s next to the shoreline for Hung Shing, the god of the Southern Ocean. Today, the temple remains an important cultural landmark that offers visitors a glimpse into the traditional way of life of Hong Kong's fishing communities.

Address: 129 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island



### Hindu Temple

Opposite the Happy Valley Racecourse entrance is the Hindu Temple. Considered one of the most sacred religious sites for Hong Kong's Hindu population, it offers a insight into the history of the ancient religion. Its dazzling facade, intricate carvings and vivid colours are a sight to behold.



Address: 1B, Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong Island

### Khalsa Diwan Sikh Temple



The Khalsa Diwan Sikh Temple in Causeway Bay stands as a testament to the rich heritage and spiritual traditions of the Sikh community in Hong Kong. Redeveloped and reopened in 2022, the new temple is adorned with intricate marble

carvings, mesmerising mosaics and glorious stained-glass windows that showcase the beauty of Sikh artistry. Experience the temple's peaceful atmosphere and soul-stirring hymns in the vast prayer hall.

Address: 371 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island

### Petty person beating

Under the Ngo Keng Kiu or Canal Road Flyover, a unique and intriguing practice has been performed here for over a century. 'Petty person beating' is a fascinating and enduring tradition that involves beating the effigies of those who have caused trouble or bad luck, with shoes or bamboo sticks, to ward off misfortune and bring good luck.

Address: Canal Road Flyover, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island





## Trace the Spiritual and Cultural Roots of Tai Hang

As you enter Tai Hang via Tung Lo Wan Road from Causeway Bay, you'll find the St. Mary's Church, an architectural gem that stands out from the city's high-rise buildings, thanks to its distinct fusion of Western and Chinese construction.

The church's striking red-brick facade is complemented by a beautifully designed Chinese-style roof adorned with porcelain tiles and auspicious motifs.



*Address : 2A Tung Lo Wan Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island*

Next, a visit to Lin Fa Temple is a must. What truly sets this temple apart is its close association with the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, a centuries-old tradition that has become a cherished part of Hong Kong's cultural heritage. Every year during the Mid-Autumn Festival, a 67-metre-long dragon made up of thousands of burning incense sticks is first blessed by Kwun Yam (Goddess of Mercy) of Lin Fa Temple, before winding its way through the streets of Tai Hang.

*Address: Lily Street, Tai Hang, Hong Kong Island*



Another site worth visiting is the Fire Dragon and Heritage Centre. Built in 1909 as the Hung Shing Yi Hok (literally, 'Confucius free school for the poor'), a free school for the underprivileged, the current Grade 3 Historic Building features an exhibition centre on the ground floor displaying the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance and history of Tai Hang, a themed restaurant on the first floor offering fusion cuisine, and a versatile event space on the second floor.

*Address: 12 School Street, Tai Hang, Hong Kong Island*

Mark your calendars to revisit Tai Hang to witness the Fire Dragon Dance during the Mid-Autumn Festival (28-30 September, 2023).



Hong Kong Tourism Board Visitor Services

Visitor Hotline: +852 2508 1234

Website: [DiscoverHongKong.com](https://www.discoverhongkong.com)

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