

Experience Report

Hong Kong Baptist University
(Hong Kong SAR, China)



Exchange Programme: Joint Study

Field of Study: Law (Diplomstudium Rechtswissenschaften)

Host University: Hong Kong Baptist University

Length of Stay: 2 semesters (September 2018 – May 2019)

Hong Kong

Hong Kong, a former British colony, is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Since the handover of Hong Kong (UK → China) in 1997, Hong Kong is governed under the "one country, two systems" principle. Thus, the city has its own legal and economic system, which is different from that of Mainland China.

Language, Culture, Food

The official languages in Hong Kong are Cantonese, Mandarin and English, but Cantonese is the most widely used. Getting around with English is, however, quite easy.

Hong Kong is well known for its great variety of food. As an exchange student you get to try traditional Hong Kong dishes such as Dim Sum, Hong Kong style noodles (i.e. Wontons), desserts such as Pineapple Buns in Hong Kong's Cha Chaan Teng's (Tea Houses) and sweet, refreshing stews at dessert places as well as different kinds of street food at Dai Pai Dongs ("cooked-food stalls"). Since Hong Kong is located at the seaside, seafood makes up a great part of Hong Kong's cuisine. Apart from its local cuisine, Hong Kong has a great offer of international dishes such as South-East Asian, Korean, Japanese, Indian, Nepalese or Western cuisine. Hong Kong's nightlife is also worth exploring. Apart from several events for international students, Hong Kong offers a great range of live concerts, rooftop bars and happy hour deals. For tips on how to spend your leisure time, just check out the website <https://www.timeout.com/hong-kong>.

Hong Kong's Nature

That Hong Kong is an amazing, colourful, fascinating, diverse and vibrant city comes without saying. However, the beauty of its nature should not be underestimated. Hiking and also camping in the green hills and bays around the city are a great balance to the busy life in the city. Just check out these websites for more information:

https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/country/cou_vis/cou_vis_cam/cou_vis_cam_cam/cou_vis_cam_cam.html ; <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/in/see-do/great-outdoors/hikes/index.jsp>

Public Transport

Hong Kong's Public Transport System is well interconnected and efficient. The so-called Octopus Card is the best ticket to get around with since it counts on busses, the MTR (subway) as well as certain ferries and since it comes with a student discount (you have to apply for it after the semester started). The Hong Kong MTR is the least complicated way to get around the city. Busses connect to more remote places. Since several bus companies are operating in Hong Kong, it can be hard at the beginning to keep track of the bus routes. Google Maps is probably the easiest way to navigate yourself around Hong Kong by bus. The MTR only operates until midnight. After midnight taxis or night busses are still available (night busses, however, are hard to find – ask a local friend for help).

“Österreich Stammtisch” of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce

The “Österreich Stammtisch” takes place every first Tuesday of the month at the Island Shangri-La Hotel at Hong Kong Island. If you feel homesick, want to get to know other Austrians living in Hong Kong or if you crave Austrian food, this is the place to go. You can find more information on this website: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-general-consulate-hongkong/service-for-citizens/meeting-point-austrians-abroad/>

The Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)

HKBU is located at Kowloon Tong which is quite close to the city centre. The campus is modern and well-equipped, and the course offer is wide-ranged. HKBU is very well organised. Before the semester starts, HKBU organises an orientation week, which introduces new exchange students to the university and the course system as well as to life on campus.

Most courses at HKBU are in English. Exchange Students have to sign up for the courses before their arrival in Hong Kong via the HKBU platform BUP. This is, however, quite easy since the Academic Registry of HKBU sends out a detailed guideline in advance. If you are not satisfied with the results of the course preregistration online, there is still the chance to add and drop courses during the first two weeks of the semester (“add and drop out week”).

I attended eight courses altogether at the Department of Government and International Studies and the European Studies Institute as well as one sports class (Tai Chi). The courses were highly interesting, I learned a lot and they broadened my academic horizon. Most courses require students to take a midterm as well as a final exam and to submit a term paper and/or to deliver

a presentation. Thus, courses are usually quite interactive. The final exams are taken during a specific examination period and all courses end about one week before this period starts. This gives students extra time to prepare.

Professors at HKBU are committed and the learning environment is great. HKBU cares for its students. During examination periods, for instance, therapy dogs are brought to the library to cheer students up.

Transferring the courses back to Karl-Franzens-University was easier than expected since all courses were pre-approved on my "Vorausbescheid".

Living situation

Living in Hong Kong on your own is quite expensive since rental rates are high. Staying on campus in the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Halls is thus the cheapest option. Exchange Students can apply for a stay in the Halls for the duration of their studies. Since space is scarce in Hong Kong students have to share a room with one or two other students, which is, however, less inconvenient than it may sound. When you sign up for a stay in the Halls you can choose whether you would prefer to stay with a local, an international or an exchange student.

Travel

Hong Kong is not only a great city to live in, but it is also an excellent starting point for trips through South-East Asia, Japan, South Korea and especially Mainland China. I highly recommend taking the chance of travelling through China. The Chinese culture, food, cities and scenery are impressive and worth exploring. You can apply for the Chinese Visa at the Chinese Visa Application Service Centre (the Hong Kong Visa and Study Permit alone do not allow you to travel through China). I would recommend scheduling an appointment online in advance since waiting times are long otherwise. You can find all the necessary information on this website: https://bio.visaforchina.org/HKG2_EN/. Make sure you know basic Mandarin or that you have access to an offline translator during your trip.

Conclusion

I enjoyed my year abroad in Hong Kong to its fullest. I can only recommend every student to take the chance of studying abroad. Living in a foreign country broadens your horizon and studying at a university in another country and a foreign language also increases your academic knowledge.