



A Walk On The Wild Side – In Hong Kong

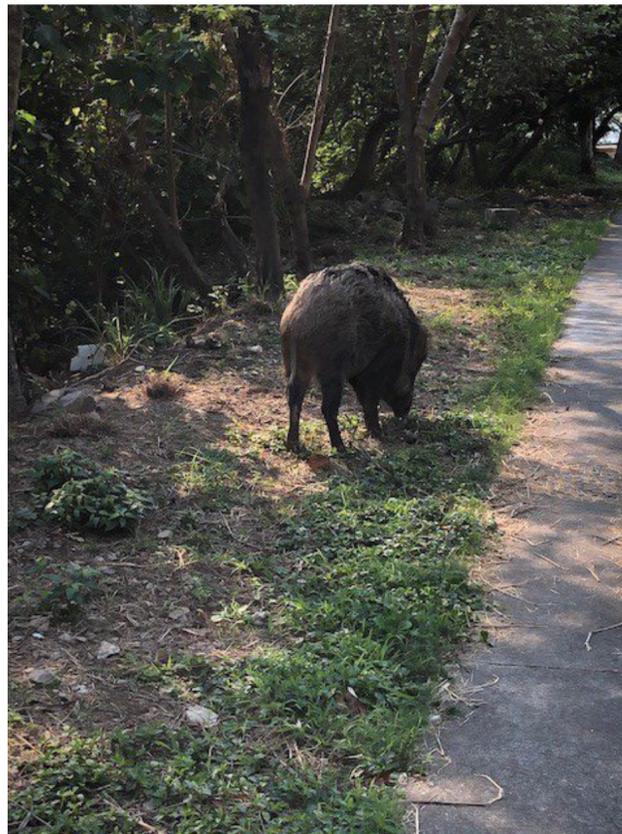
BY TREVOR HUGHES

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You'd never think that not far from the madding crowds and concrete jungle of Hong Kong are some of the most beautiful wooded walks, deserted beaches and a host of flora and fauna.

Hong Kong is famed for its dramatic harbour, for skyscrapers crowding together up the steep hills leading to Victoria Peak, for its crowded streets, shopping malls full of designer goods, and soaring high-rise hotels and office blocks.

Yet just 15 minutes away from the crowded, bustling centre of the city are tranquil walks through deserted woods, empty beaches and an abundance of wildlife: wild boar, butterflies, dragonflies and at least six species of snakes.



Wild boar roam the hillsides

If you were to explore the south-east corner of Hong Kong Island, at the junction of Sassoon Road in Pokfulam district, a few minutes walk will bring you to a deserted path leading down through woodland and the remains of long-gone squatter villages until you arrive at Cyberport, Hong Kong's attempt to replicate Silicon Valley.

Walk west along the main street for a few 100 metres and on your right there is a small, unobtrusive gate with a step below it. Climb over the gate and walk down the hill along a deserted pathway.

You will hear it first before you see it and you will realize then why this little-known corner of Hong Kong is called Waterfall Bay.





One of only five waterfalls in Asia falling directly into the sea

In the early days of Hong Kong, sailing ships would queue here to replenish their stock of fresh water. Today, of course, most of the flow is diverted into reservoirs, but it still remains a lovely retreat from Hong Kong's packed urban jungle.

On the cool, cloudy morning when I visited, there was not a single person to be seen.

For the second part of our walk, it is first necessary to explain a little about the old Chinese custom of *Fung Shui*. Most Chinese families have, in their homes, representations of the figures they know as the Three Wise Men or the Three Immortals. *Fuk* is the god of luck, health and happiness and is usually shown carrying a child. *Luk* is the god of wealth and carries a gold bar or sceptre. *Sau* is a wise old man who symbolizes long life. He holds a staff which represents longevity and also a peach which symbolizes youth and beauty. These three figures are an essential part of the *Fung Shui* that protects Chinese homes.



The three immortals, Fuk, Luk and Sau must be ordered correctly with Luk in the centre

These are by no means the only figures you might find in Chinese homes: there are many other gods. There may be one or more depictions of the Buddha too. But what happens to these household gods when the owners die, or if they wish to replace them? To simply throw them away would bring tremendous bad fortune, so they are carefully placed in tiny shrines which are found in secluded spots all over Hong Kong. The very best position for these shrines, the place with the best *Fung Shui*, is on a hillside with a view of the sea.

Now on with our walk. Leave Waterfall Bay and continue along the main road for a few minutes until you come to the township of Wah Fu. Walk through the park heading down towards the sea and you will see quite an astonishing sight.

Stretching away up the hillside overlooking the sea, are thousands upon thousands of household gods.





Every incarnation of god is represented, especially depictions of Buddha

Locally it is known as the Hill of a Thousand Buddhas.

Legend has it that an old man made it his life's work to collect old or unwanted Buddha statues, repair them if need be and that he chose this spot to as a permanent shrine for them before he died.

It may or may not be true: the old man, if he ever existed, is gone and no one seems to know who he was. Still, someone must have been responsible for choosing this place and still today Chinese families place their unwanted household gods in this auspicious spot; a place where they will have the very best possible *Fung Shui*: on a tranquil hillside, overlooking the sea.



Phyllis Lee

I live in HK but I didn't know there was a Waterfall Bay. Need to start my hiking in October!

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Good idea. Tell us when you find it.

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PAMELA BEN MARDHIA

I visited HK in 2002 but sadly never discovered this walk. Maybe some far distant post-pandemic time will present a further opportunity. I wonder if thieves are ever tempted by the statues or whether there is too much respect for the gods to risk purloining one which takes the eye. I can't imagine their fate were they to be situated on Ashurst Beacon! A really lovely article which gives a totally different image of Hong Kong.

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