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asia
HONG KONG

HONG KONG HEIGHTS

For fun-fuelled days spent in luxury,
Hong Kong is the place to be

Views across Victoria Harbour to Hong Kong's urban jungle from the 312 rooms of the Ritz Carlton, Hong Kong (ritzcarlton.com) prove just how far this former colony has come since 19th-century British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston called it 'a barren rock with hardly a house upon it'. The just-opened hotel on floors 102-118 of the International Commerce Centre on Kowloon, tops the list of world's tallest, for now.

Down below, Hong Kong is firmly established as Asia's pre-eminent business and financial crossroads between East and West, but at least one English vestige remains. Every March, even the most buttoned-up bankers let loose during the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens (hksevencs.com) a riotous bacchanal masquerading as serious sport. A more cross-cultural interface can be found from May 26-29 at Art HK (hongkongartfair.com). The provocative gathering of 161 galleries includes international stalwarts like Leo Castelli, Larry Gagosian and Marianne Boesky, plus homegrown talents Ooi Botos (oobotos.com) and Cat St Gallery (thecatstreetgallery.com).

One overhears not only Cantonese, the local Chinese dialect, but also the scholarly Mandarin of Beijing business types and a smattering of European tongues at Cafe Gray Deluxe, itself a New York transplant from Michelin-starred chef Gray Kunz. Conferring its own shimmering city views from the 49th floor of Upper House (upperhouse.com), Hong Kong's sleekest modern accommodations, this low-lit eatery delivers a sublime steamed Tasmanian salmon with fresh ginger and leeks to local socialites watching their waists, and braised short ribs plus chocolate rum toast to those who are not.

Also new on the scene, 208 Duecento Otto (208.com.hk) serves up true Napolitano pizzas. Chef Vinny Lauria, who came from Babbo in New York, recommends the pan-roasted mullet with braised artichokes, charred lemon and chili citronette. Those still on generous expense accounts should book a banquet under the chandelier made of 4,320 bronze rods, designed by Adam Tihany, at Amber (amberhongkong.com) inside the Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

Seasonal dishes like duck foie gras and Australian lobster ravioli with black truffle and Bresse pigeon breast with wild cep mushrooms earn this elegant dining room its spot among Asia's top tables.

Also in Hong Kong's hippest hood, everyone can get their late night game going on the ping pong tables at Tazmania Ballroom (tazmaniaballroom.com), or tear up the dance floor with HK nightlife impresario Gilbert Yeung in the metallic, Buckminster Fuller-inspired interiors by Tom Dixon of London's Shoreditch House.

MAIN IMAGE:
LOBBY OF THE CAFE
GRAY DELUXE
RESTAURANT;
BELOW: SUITE AT
THE RITZ CARLTON

