

VISITING HONG KONG?

WHAT THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION WILL NOT TELL YOU ABOUT *FRAGRANT HARBOUR*

Dear Holidaymaker,

So it's 1991 already, Christmas and New Year have come and gone, and before you know it, you'll be off on your holidays again. Where to this year? Not Blackpool Pleasure Beach for you, nor somewhere as crass and distinctly uncontinental as the Costa Del Sol; this year you're off to somewhere exotic: the Orient, the Far East, a distant, mysterious, romantic place. And where better than Hong Kong where you'll not only be able to sightsee, shop, wine, dine and do a hundred other things people do on their holidays, but where, as well as observing those curious squint-eyed Chinese with much amusement, you'll also be able to communicate in English? Doesn't that sound like the perfect Far Eastern holiday? No tongue-twisting foreign languages to learn, no visa problems, and, best of all, although you're thousands of miles from home, Hong Kong is still in many ways, typically British, so that even if the unthinkable were to happen and you were to find yourself on the wrong side of the law, you wouldn't be in real trouble - as for instance you might be if you were caught drinking alcohol in Saudi Arabia, or smoking grass in Thailand - there would be no real problems; all it would take would be a phone call to the British High Commission and everything would be taken care of; Hong Kong is a democracy, it must be, after all, its administration is appointed by Britain, right? Wrong!

Unfortunately, there is probably more democracy in Iraq than in Hong Kong, and before you visit the inappropriately named *Fragrant Harbour*, there are a few things you should know about it, important things which you should seriously consider before you spend two or three thousand pounds on a dream holiday which could easily turn into a nightmare. They are the things the Hong Kong Tourist Association will not tell you about *Fragrant Harbour*.

For instance, did you know that:

There is no true democracy in Hong Kong, unless you're either well heeled or white, preferably both.

In Hong Kong, organised crime is rife. Triads aren't an invention of low budget kung fu films, they really exist, and they are just as much a cancer in Hong Kong as is the IRA in Ireland.

Amnesty International, the human rights organisation has published a number of reports condemning the suppression of basic human rights in Hong Kong. The following is extracted from an Amnesty press release dated 3rd August 1989:

".....riot police used batons to indiscriminately beat a large number of asylum seekers, including women and children, elderly Vietnamese and one handicapped person."

"Just over a year ago, on 19 July 1988, a similar incident took place at the Hei Ling Chau Detention Centre, when anti-riot police systematically beat up approximately one hundred refugees in the camp who were made to run the gauntlet between two lines of anti-riot squad officers."

These are not isolated incidents; Hong Kong has one of the most corrupt police forces in the world.

It also has an organisation called the *Independent Commission Against Corruption* (ICAC), which has Gestapo-like powers and can bring charges of corruption against anyone it likes virtually with impunity. This is a case of the cure being worse than the disease.

In Hong Kong you can be accused of and charged with an extremely serious offence, arrested and held without due process for over two years. The quality of evidence needed to deprive you of your liberty need be no more substantial than the word of a self-confessed swindler and liar. In fact, if you are accused of a crime in Hong Kong, and manage to return home, that is not necessarily the end of it.

Did you know for example that at this very moment, there is a Malaysian businessman on remand in Brixton Prison, London, who has been held, without trial on a warrant issued by the Hong Kong authorities since 1985? Lorrain Osman was arrested on the word of a self-professed liar, a man whose testimony was described by a judge as "monumentally unreal", a man who admitted accepting bribes and yet was given Crown Immunity provided he testifies against his former employer.

The full facts of this particular case involve political dirty dealings between the governments of Hong Kong, Malaysia and Britain which cannot be easily summarised in a leaflet, but regardless of that, just think for a moment, if you were to visit Hong Kong, this could happen to you. Don't say it couldn't, Lorrain Osman once said the same thing, and he is sixty years old, a Cambridge graduate and a man of exemplary character. He went to Hong Kong on business, but the same thing could just as easily happen to a tourist. What if someone tried to use you as a *mule* to carry drugs through customs, or if you were set up by the local police either for financial reasons or just for the hell of it?

These are all things you should consider before taking that holiday of a lifetime. Even if you think the chances of your being fitted up by the local police or robbed by a street gang or triad are too remote to be worth worrying about, do you really want to visit a place where ordinary working people are treated like dirt? A report in *The Times* (2nd August 1990) claims that ".....the territory's jails overflow with Chinese sentenced to a recommended 15 months in custody for working illegally on construction sites....." Do you really want to visit a place where it is a crime for ordinary people to try to make an honest living? If you want to go somewhere warm and exotic for your summer holidays, why not try somewhere a little more civilised? Like South Africa.