

G L O B A L

D E S T I N A T I O N S

A Guide to the world of Hospitality, MICE and Tourism

• Hong Kong • Kerry Hotel • Express Inn • Fern • Hilton • Singapore



Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

A family outing in Hong Kong

Kerry Hotel: Stunning views with exemplary service



Kerry Hotel though located on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong is right on the waterfront and caters to most needs of a business and leisure traveller – spacious, modern, tech savvy rooms with great amenities, bright and airy lobby, excellent food including Indian, warm service and much more feels **Chandragupta Amritkar** who paid a visit with his family.

In October I was invited to attend the HICAP (Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific) event in Kerry hotel Hong Kong – again the only Indian journalist. Pretty impressed by the size of the hotel (546 rooms) and the excellent meeting spaces including



the pillar less Grand Ballroom I thought it should be an ideal hotel for my august readers – many of which are from corporate (for MICE or groups). I also had the pleasure of interacting with the charming Alice Miller, Senior Communications Manager, Kerry Hotel, Hong Kong and when I expressed the desire to cover this beautiful hotel, she was kind enough to extend hospitality. Having visited quite a few Shangri-La properties across the globe this was my first Kerry property. The Kerry Hotels brand is part of the Shangri-La Group and the first Kerry in Hong Kong.

Since I was visiting Hong Kong again in April, I decided to use this opportunity to not just cover the hotel but also look at promoting Hong Kong itself. So I contacted a few partners and all of them came forward – a few did mention that since Indians prefer to go on family holidays can it be possible to focus on a family oriented feature. The idea was good and I put forward the idea to my wife Varsha and daughter Pooja who agreed.

While Indian nationals continue to enjoy 14-day visa-free visit

to Hong Kong, they need to successfully complete Pre-arrival Registration (PAR) online. The process is easy, convenient, free-of-charge and quick.

On arrival after immigration and customs we found a representative from Kerry Hotel (well dressed) who then escorted us to our Limousine via a Limousine Lounge. The ride was excellent with complimentary WiFi being provided in the limousine. There are two advantages taking the hotel limousine – a. the driver knows the exact and quickest route to the hotel and b. the hotel knows exactly when you are arriving and can keep the room ready. That's exactly what happened. On arrival we were directly taken to our room- a Club Premier Sea View Room, where we were able to do a private check-in.

We loved the 560 sqft super spacious room (a rarity for Hong Kong hotels) which was going to be our home for 4 days. The room had a distinct living and dining area in the same room with a huge double bed and a nice full length sofa which was ideal for my daughter. The bathrooms are expansive with bathtubs. The welcome amenities included macarons, a fruit platter, cookies and a chocolate sculpture. Indians drink lots of water and there is plenty of in-room water also the first round of minibar is free. There's a Handy phone also but we did not use it. The harbour views from my room were simply stunning and my daughter went



trigger happy on her mobile (worth paying additional amount for a harbour view room). The free Wi-Fi has a strong signal across the property including open spaces.

After a little bit of rest I met Angela Wong, Director of Communications, Kerry Hotel, Hong Kong (Alice Miller was not there as she was required in Shangri-La, Fiji which was relaunching their property) who took me around for a show round.

With 546 rooms, it's a large hotel that sits right on the waterfront in Whampoa overlooking the magnificent harbour. Designed by award-winning architect Andre Fu 60% rooms feature spectacular harbour views. The room sizes range from the 42 sqm to the 294 sqm (The Presidential suite).

The hotel is ideal for business travellers as well as families. Its conveniently located to ferry terminal as well as metro - MTR station in Whampoa (a five minute walk). The hotel also provides frequent shuttle service to Hung Hom railway station and the famous Tsim Sha Tsui East shopping district. We used this service quite often.

The ever charming Alice Miller also provided us access to the Club Lounge. It's a wonderful place to relax and view the ocean and the city. We went on two evenings and all of us loved the variety of chocolates. Club guests also enjoy a two hour cocktail experience.



Though club guests have the option of having breakfast at the club lounge we preferred the Big Bay Café – the hotel's all day dining restaurant that offers a well spread breakfast and lunch buffets with both

Asian and Western options. It has a matrix of pavilions - Steam, Grill, Chill, Fry, Stew, and Dessert Lab. On our last night the Indian chef Pradeep Singh prepared some tasty Indian dishes and we all relished it. The dal makhani and nan were superb.

Red Sugar houses an impressive collection of craft beers, an extensive wine selection, oak barrel-aged cocktails and innovative bar snacks. With hints of the former Hung Hom entwined into the design and an outdoor terrace offering a 270-degree harbour view.

The Lobby Lounge offers local dishes, a drinks menu with Asian-inspired cocktails, homemade soft drinks and unique local specialities such as Yuanyang and Silk Stocking Tea. The international food court is another attraction with different kiosks including Indian and also has a Starbucks.

But it's the MICE that is making the hotel a popular destination. It's probably the largest hotel for meeting, event and catering facilities in the Hong Kong. Their Grand Ballroom spanning 1,756 sqm can accommodate a banquet of over 1,000 guests and a standing reception of up to 2,100 guests. There are also plenty of breakaway rooms. When we were there, a big tech event was being held. Fortunately during HICAP I had experienced the ballroom as well as some of the breakaway rooms.

Kerry Sports has a luxurious health club, swimming pool, a range of health and beauty treatments. The 25-metre outdoor pool overlooks Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island and is heated during the winter months. The only thing I missed out was experiencing their Spa.

I believe a major reason for their success in the long run will be the helpful attitude (friendliness and attentiveness) by most staff as its bound to bring repeat traffic to the hotel.



AWARDS

Kerry Hotel has received lots of awards proving their worldwide recognition. These include

- Best Bars in Hong Kong - Red Sugar, Conde Nast Traveler (United States), 2018
- Best New Hotel in Hong Kong, TTG China, 2018
- Top 20 Bars in Hong Kong - Red Sugar, Business Traveler Asia Pacific, 2018
- Bar, Club or Lounge - Red Sugar, AHEAD Awards (Singapore), 2018
- Best Urban Hotel New Build, AHEAD Awards (Singapore), 2018



Hong Kong: Tourism places and Experiences

Hong Kong is a great city and though allowed to operate as an independent country, it is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) and for official purposes a part of China. There's plenty to see and we all enjoyed the trip says **Chandragupta Amritkar**. A few not to be missed tourism places and experiences

Big Bus: As always the best

Having traversed across the globe (46 countries – 800 + hotels) I have always felt the Hop-on, Hop-off buses ideal to explore the city as they give you the freedom to plan what you want to see



and for how long. The buses are wifi enabled with pre-recorded commentary available in 10 languages. Even if you are on a business trip with limited leisure time this is a good option. I got in touch with Vicky Leung, Marketing Executive, Big Bus, Hong Kong who was kind enough to provide the

best tickets - Deluxe 2-day tickets.

The same afternoon of reaching Hong Kong we proceeded from Kerry hotel to Big Bus Tours Information Centre at Tsim Sha Tsui. Our ticket included all three different routes, a Night Tour, Star Ferry return ticket, walking tour, Sampan ride, and visit to the Peak. We took the ferry from Tsim Sha Tsui - a journey across Victoria Harbour on the iconic Star Ferry that has been linking Kowloon and Hong Kong Island since 1898. One has to experience the Star Ferry across Victoria Bay at least once. The views of both Kowloon and Hong Kong Island are incredible

Big Bus provides over 20 conveniently located bus stops covering most of Hong Kong tourist attractions. The three different routes include Blue Route, Green Route and Red Route with a frequency of 30-45 minutes. If you want to cover all the three routes you have to have a 3 day pass.

Victoria Peak

Our first stop on Big Bus was Victoria Peak. Soaring 1,811 feet above sea level, Victoria Peak is a must visit. The best way to start is with the 130-year-old historic red tram – a funicular railway to get up to Victoria Peak. There was a long queue for the tram but with Big Bus you get fast track entry to enter the Peak Tram and Peak Sky Terrace observation deck. The steep tram ride was great - a bit scary for a few – treating us to a visual experience.

The Peak Tower has lots of dining and retail outlets. Situated atop



the highest point on Hong Kong Island, The Peak provides views of one of the world's most spectacular cityscapes, skyscrapers as well as the city's beautiful blue waterways. The Sky Terrace 428, standing at 428 metres above sea level, is the highest viewing platform in Hong Kong offering a stunning 360-degree panoramic view across the Hong Kong. One sound advice - do check the weather forecast beforehand.

Madame Tussauds: Waxwork replicas of megastars

As I was planning the trip to The Peak, a visit to Madame Tussauds is a must. At Madame Tussauds one can get close and personal with celebrities, icons and historical leaders in a fully interactive experience.

The museum is divided into numerous sections. World Premiere is quite popular as it features a range of movie stars - Bollywood stars including Amitabh Bachchan, Varun Dhawan, Salman Khan etc and from Hollywood there were Audrey Hepburn, Marilyn



Monroe, Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp etc.

Historical And National Heroes showcases familiar faces from the political world and national heroes. There is the royal family of Britain, Mahatma Gandhi, Narendra Modi, Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and former president Barack Obama.

Then there is the Art Gallery, a Fashion Zone, Hong Kong Glamour, Kung Fu Zone that is a tribute to martial arts with Bruce

Lee, Jackie Chan and Michelle Yeoh, The Champions is for sports, Music Icons, Animated World which has Hello Kitty, The Hulk, Iron Man etc.

On an average keep at least a couple of hours to complete a visit of Madame Tussauds. There are plenty of photo opportunities so the time spent can increase. Infact there is a Selfie Gallery that was built for young adults (and also parents) and consists of two parts – silver color themed Cafe and pink color themed Ice Cream zone.

sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck

When I first met Josephine Lam, vice-chairman, sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck, six years back in India I was impressed by her dynamism and keenness to promote sky100. I decided to make it a point to include sky100 in my Hong Kong feature whenever I planned. Six years later co-ordinating with Stella Wong, GM of sky100 and Ellen Wong, Associate Director, Marketing, sky100, I visited this amazing deck. Stella Wong suggested if you are coming with wife evening would be the best time. And how right she was.

Arriving in the evening the charming and extremely knowledgeable Ellen Wong was there to receive us. "Most major cities around the world have their own iconic observation decks and now Hong Kong has one," said Ellen Wong. Developed by Sun Hung Kai Properties, sky100 is on the 100th floor of International Commerce Centre - the tallest building in Hong Kong. At 393 meters above sea level, it is the only indoor observation deck with 360-degree views of the city and Victoria Harbour.

Ellen Wong took us on Hong Kong's fastest double-deck high-speed elevators, which reached the 100th floor in just 60 seconds.



Entering it we were fascinated by the views. I was impressed by the 28-metre-long multimedia story wall, showcasing 100 fascinating local tales and anecdotes. The interactive sky100 mobile app also was superb. It provides an amazing experience of augmented reality (AR) where you can take pictures of paragliding above the world-famous Victoria Harbour or alongside the International Commerce Centre (ICC). As my wife's birthday was a few days later Ellen Wong created an image of all of us standing alongside ICC.

We also saw witnessed "Love is in the Sky" light show, featuring dreamlike 3D images with unique projection technology and music. If you are hungry there is Café 100 by The Ritz-Carlton.

Ngong Ping 360

I met Angela Sue, Manager, Sales & Distribution, Overseas & MICE, Ngong Ping 360 at ITB Berlin and she is quite bullish on the Indian market having visited India several times. She was more than happy to welcome us.

Leaving Kerry hotel early we reached the Ngong Ping Cable Car station. The crowds had already began queuing (and I would advise you to book tickets in advance) but as we were in VIP category we got the tickets immediately and moved on through a special lane. We took the crystal car that has a glass-bottom. Ngong Ping Cable Car connects downtown Tung Chung and Ngong Ping on Lantau Island. The 30 minutes ride covering a distance of 5.7km in length (longest bi-cable ropeway in Asia) provides the breathtaking panorama of the Hong Kong Airport, verdant, mountainous terrain of Lantau Island, the Big Buddha and the 360-degree view of Ngong Ping Plateau.



Arriving at Ngong Ping Village and after a photo at the selfie point, we walked through a series of cafes and tourist shops including an Indian restaurant - Ebenezeer's, one of Hong Kong's well-known eateries. Ngong Ping Village is a culturally themed village designed and landscaped to integrate into the scenic nature of Ngong Ping. On top of shopping, dining and entertainment, this "must-see" Hong Kong attraction also boasts three themed attractions – "VR 360", "Motion 360" and "Walking with Buddha". All of us enjoyed the three attractions. Apart from this one should visit the Big Buddha (At 34-meters literally dominates the Lantau Island), Po Lin Monastery and Tai O fishing village.

Hong Kong Disneyland

Hong Kong Disneyland was on the top list of my daughter. My first point of contact was the dynamic John Sinke, Director, Marketing, Hong Kong Disneyland who has been systematically promoting the destination with regular updates on LinkedIn.

He in turn connected me to their media consultant, Shuk Wa Tsang.





This was our last tour and it was the only day when we had to face the rains. Arriving into Hong Kong Disneyland at noon we were surprised to see crowds in spite of rains. There is something so magical about any Disneyland and its official tagline is "The Happiest Place On Earth" which is true.

There are several fun and themed rides and amazing live musicals for both kids and adults. Though we were there till late evening we would not even finish everything – though rain did hamper our visit – ideally visit least for a full day.

The park starts with Main Street that is full of shops and restaurants and we stopped on the way for souvenirs and photos. The Disneyland is split into Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, Grizzly Gulch, Mystic Point and Toy Story Land. The sad part was there were long queues most places.

One should not miss the Iron Man Experience, Hyperspace Mountain, Jungle River Cruise, Toy Story Land, Rafts to Tarzan's Treehouse, Mickey and the Wondrous Book. The Festival of The Lion King show was the last we attended and one of the best – worth the long wait. My daughter enjoyed the parades with Disney characters.

Ladies' Market

This is one place that my wife and daughter just simply loved and were reluctant to leave. Seeing the crowds – local and International Ladies Market for sure is Hong Kong's most popular market. Stretching more than a kilometer and with over 100 stalls of modern and traditional dresses, hand bags, watches, cosmetics, bags, home furnishings, CDs, trinkets accessories for women of all ages and souvenirs, the Ladies' Market is a shopping paradise. It's a great place to bargain and sellers expect you to bargain. Do look out as the market is flooded with fakes or copies.

Due to time constraints we missed out on Ocean Park Hong Kong. Over all it was a great trip and the Hong Kong people were too kind everywhere.

Relish the best vegetarian food in Hong Kong

Having visited Hong Kong a few times I was always on the look out for a good Indian vegetarian restaurant. That's when I met Aman Chawla, Director, Fusion Concepts Ltd, who is also into textiles and an excellent human being. He introduced me to his restaurant Khana Khazana and I was pretty impressed by the wide array of authentic North-Indian, South -Indian vegetarian cuisines and Indian street food options like chats. Apart from food spending time with Aman Chawla is such a pleasure – hearing to his experiences and anecdotes.

"At that time there was not a single place in Hong Kong where one could enjoy delicious and fresh Indian vegetarian dishes. With plenty of Indians and many locals as well as foreigners opting for vegetarian and vegan dishes, I think our launch of the first Indian vegetarian restaurant and bar in Hong Kong- Khana Khazana was at the right time. It received an overwhelming response and proved to be a motivation to launch more restaurants with different themes and positioning," said Aman Chawla.

Today, Fusion Concepts Ltd. owns and runs three food and beverage outlets -Khana Khazana, Spice8 and Legends of India. At Khana Khazana, located in Wan Chai and close to the trade fair grounds is my favourite with South Indian Platters, Chats like Paani Puri, Dahi Puri, Pay Bhaaji and the neumerous main dishes and desserts.

Legends of India is located at Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon and is probably the biggest Indian restaurant in Hong Kong with a seating capacity of over 150 pax at one time. "Spread over 3000+ Square feet area with a 1000+ Square feet open terrace it can be a perfect venue for corporate events, social events, private parties - big or small," said Aman Chawla.

So this time when I went with my family I told them that we will be going to the best restaurants in Hong Kong and meeting a fine human being. We tried both Khana Khazana and Legends of India. And my daughter on our return to India said it was a wonderful experience.



Aman Chawla