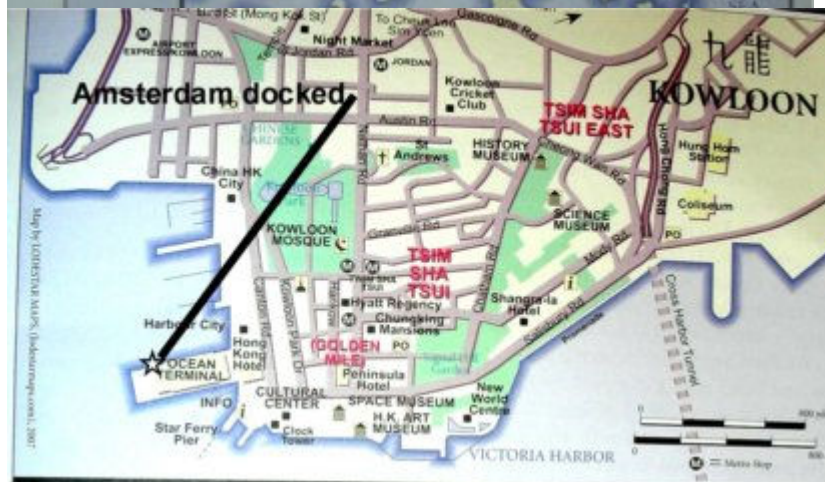
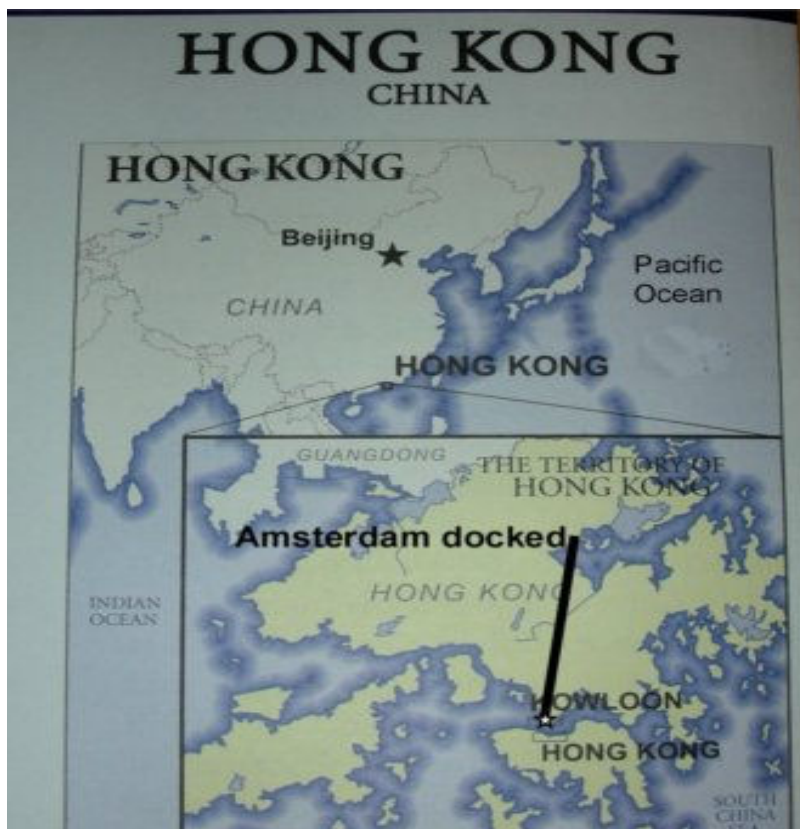


3/4-5-6/07 Days 48,49 and 50 – Hong Kong, SAR – Sunday, Monday, Tuesday - 4, 5 and 6 March 2007: The SAR in the Hong Kong name stands for 'Special Administrative Region'. When the British turned Hong Kong over to The People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997 the Chinese government granted special commercial and political freedoms to Hong Kong that are not available to most of Chinese provinces. The SAR status for Hong Kong will expire in 2047. Macau, a nearby former Portuguese colony, now belongs to the PRC and also has the SAR status. The Hong Kong region has a total population of about 7 million people and contains several communities, such as Kowloon, Stanley and Aberdeen. Hong Kong and Kowloon contain most of the people, about 5 million, but when speaking about the area people generally just use the name of Hong Kong.

We arrived in Hong Kong at about 2pm and the Amsterdam docked at the Ocean Terminal on the Kowloon side of Victoria Harbor. Here are some maps showing the location of Hong Kong and the Amsterdam.



In spite of the hazy and misty conditions that existed the introduction to Hong Kong as

we cruised into the Harbor was magnificent. The number of tall apartment houses and business buildings was much larger than we had imagined. This city dwarfed the image Orlin had from his visit on a Navy ship back in 1960. Here are some views of the panorama that greeted us as we came into Victoria Harbor at Hong Kong city. While touring the region it seemed we were never out of sight of large buildings.



In every direction on both sides of the harbor there was a wall of tall buildings.

In this view on the right the contrast between the new Hong Kong and one of the poorer sections of the city stands in stark



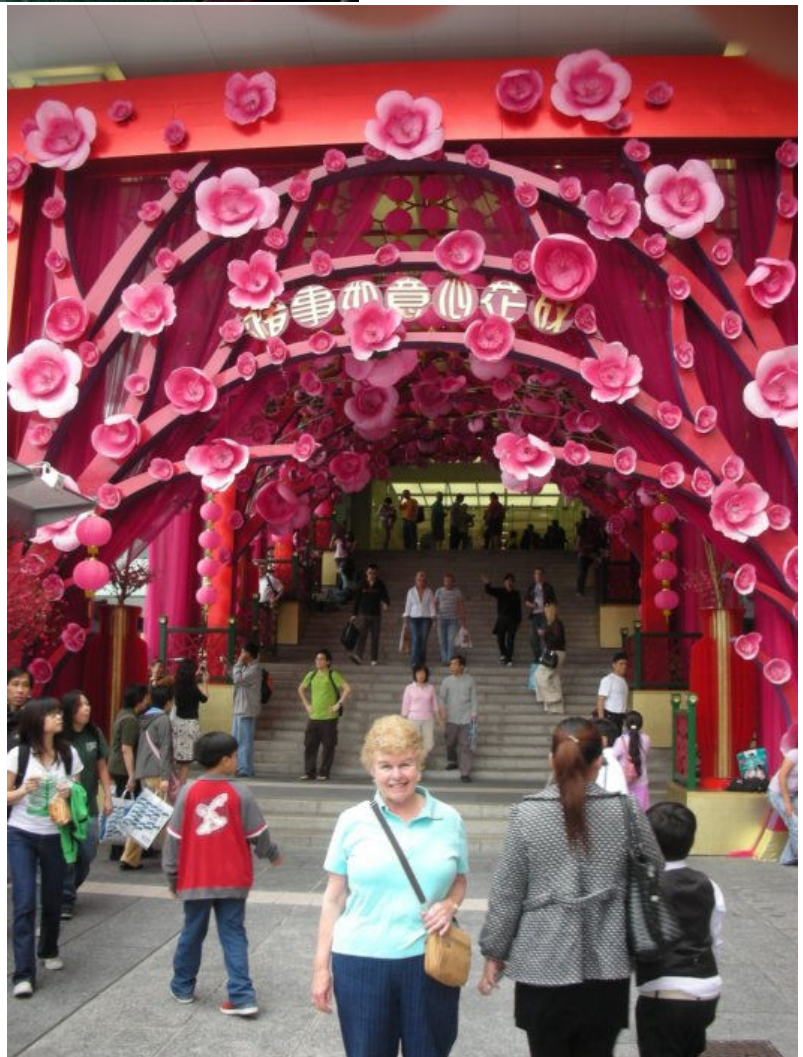
contrast.

The Hong Kong Convention Center on has some resemblance to the Sydney, Australia Opera House. Downtown Hong Kong and Victoria Peak are in the background.



The tallest building in Hong Kong is in this view taken from across the harbor in Kowloon. Victoria Peak is in the background. The hazy conditions never lifted while we were there so the pictures don't do the city justice.

As soon as the ship was docked we rushed to get out on the streets with the natives. The entrance to the Ocean Terminal in Kowloon was still beautifully decorated for the Chinese New Year celebration. This is the year of the pig!!



We were greeted by an American fast food icon on Salisbury Road in Kowloon.



On Salisbury Road we visited the exclusive Peninsula Hotel which is a five star establishment with international reputation.

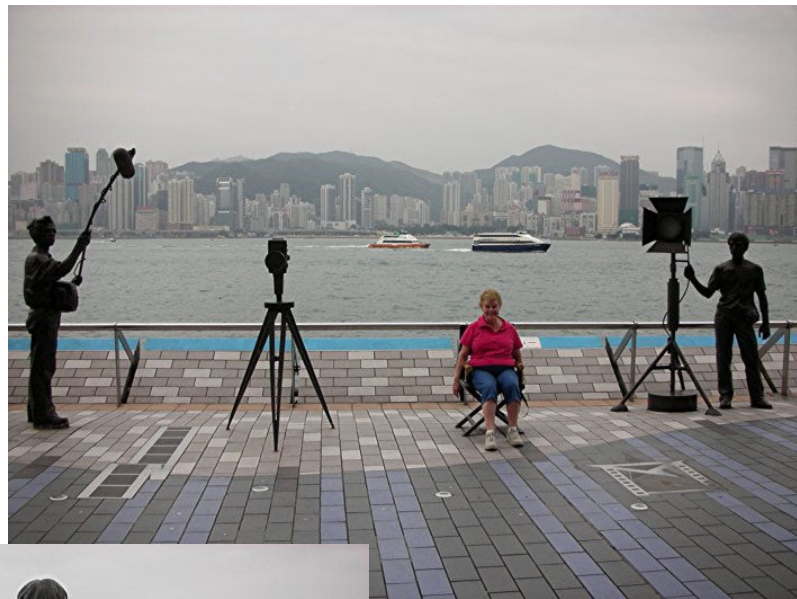
Here is view of the Peninsula Hotel lobby where tea is being served. Note the orchestra on the balcony at the rear playing chamber music for the occasion.



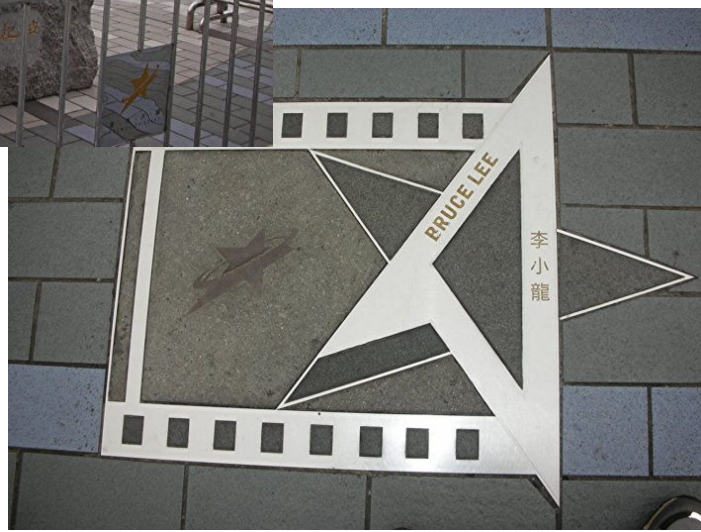
Hong Kong apparently has a significant interest in the movie industry. They have what they call the Avenue of Stars in park like setting along the harbor. It was a favorite walk for us.

They have put up a group of bronze statues simulating a crew taking moving pictures. They have also imbedded markers into the walkway with the names of prominent Chinese movie stars. Some of the markers contain the hand print of the star permanently molded into the concrete.

On the right Barbara takes the director's chair for a moment. Hong Kong is across the bay.



Here is the statue in memory of Bruce Lee.





We saw two teenage girls giggling while they put their hands into the prints left by Jackie Chan.

We took a tour to the town of Stanley where they have a large street market. We had fun going down the narrow streets with the other tourists and bargaining for souvenirs. Here are some photos of the Stanley Market.



On the way back from Stanley Market we stopped at a Jade Jewelry Factory. They gave us a brief tour of the workshop and sales area. One of the most interesting items was a display of a large piece of native mineral containing jade. A photo of the piece is shown on the right where the green portion on the cut surface is jade.



In the evening we went to the Night Market near Temple Street in Kowloon. The Night Market is a huge swap meet like street market that opens about 7pm and closes about 2 am. They sell all kinds of merchandise and some handicraft items. Mostly they sell inexpensive goods like

clothing, jewelry, watches, luggage and souvenir type stuff. Here on the left and below are some scenes.

It was very crowded and we had to work at pushing our way through the crowd.

Open air restaurants like the one on the right are available at the Night Market.



The next day we took a tour to the top of Victoria Peak and also to the town of Aberdeen on the other side of the island of Hong Kong. The top of Victoria Peak is accessible by way of a tram that is pulled up the steep hill by a cable. It is called the Funicular. We took the Funicular up to the station on Victoria Peak.

On a clear day the view from Victoria Peak is magnificent but on the day of our visit Hong Kong was shrouded in mist and haze. This is about the best picture we could get.



After Victoria Peak we got into the bus and drove to the town of Aberdeen where we took a 20 minute ride in a motorized sampan. Most of the sampans that used to be in Aberdeen have been replaced by luxury yachts. The sampan ride was very useful because we were able to see that some of the old sampans that Orlin remembered from the 1960s were still here in Hong Kong. Here are some photos from our sampan ride.



Aberdeen, which used to be just a fishing village is now a suburb closely linked with Hong Kong with towering apartment houses just like in Hong Kong.



Our trusty sampan driver took us through the crowded harbor with ease.



Our tour included a stop at a public beach within a 20 minute drive from Hong Kong. The temperature was cool so there weren't any swimmers the day we were there.

Near the beach were many apartment buildings. We learned about a superstition of the Chinese that influences the shape of their large buildings. Some believe that dragons which bring good luck live in the hills and the dragons like to come down the hills to the ocean. When large

buildings are constructed they can block the dragons and that could bring bad luck. To avoid this blockage of the dragons some of the large buildings are designed and constructed with large openings through which the dragons can freely pass. Shown below are some examples of those types of buildings.



Our guide told us that a typical apartment in Hong Kong with 300 to 900 square feet of living space would sell for \$300,000 to \$900,000 USD. Very few people own their apartment and rent of about \$3000 USD per month is typical. On the subject of cost of living, gasoline costs about \$7 USD per gallon in Hong Kong. Because of the high cost of owning a car there are only 80 cars for every 1000 people living in Hong Kong. Obviously the public transportation system makes it possible for most people to get to their jobs and daily functions. School is compulsory

and free up through the ninth grade. After that there are scholarships and other aids for promising students to continue education through grade 12. Mandarin Chinese is taught as the first language and English is the second language taught in the schools.

One evening about 200 passengers from the Amsterdam were treated to a ride in a large sampan from Hong Kong to Aberdeen. That is about a 45 minute boat ride. It was great fun getting there on the sampan as we cruised among the other boats and viewed Hong Kong and Aberdeen from the water.



We were landed at the Aberdeen Yacht Club where we enjoyed a 10 course authentic Chinese banquet.

For the most part the food was delicious but we all had a little trouble with one course that consisted of boiled goose feet. The procedure was to cut the web out from between the toes and eat the web. The rest of the courses went down just fine.

On the final day in Hong Kong we spent some time just browsing around Kowloon near the ship. The automobile traffic in Hong Kong is left hand drive just like in the UK. This is consistent with the British heritage of Hong Kong. One thing we have noticed as kind of strange is that while the highway traffic in these countries with left hand drive is very well behaved, when you walk down the sidewalks of the cities there does not seem to be a consistent rule. It seems that people walk on either side of the sidewalk. In fact it almost seems like they tend to walk more on the right hand side than on the left. Escalators are well controlled and you move up or down on the left side as if on a highway. Walking on the sidewalks is more chaotic.

We found an interesting store in Kowloon for the purchase of Chinese goods. The store was the Yue Hwa Chinese Products Emporium Ltd located on Peking Street near the Ocean Terminal. We found China dolls, tea cups, pillow covers and Chinese wine there at very reasonable prices. On the way back to the ship on that last day we walked by a construction site where the foundation of a major new building was being prepared. What caught our eye was the care that had been put into planning to save some large trees that were on the property. Apparently the original lay of the land included a small hill that the large trees had grown on. There were also some historic buildings they wanted to save. However, all the soil not under the trees and old buildings had to be removed. They had constructed heavy steel reinforced supports for the

historic buildings and ancient live tree on the property. Below is a photo showing one of the old trees being held up in its original location and also a round building that has been preserved in its original location.



It was impressive that so much effort had been put into preserving these artifacts of the past.

That evening it was time for the Amsterdam to leave Hong Kong. Luckily the departure was after sundown and we got one last look at the Hong Kong skyline after dark. The light show was amazing and left a lasting memory with everyone.

