

Shopping for Nirvana in Hong Kong



by Anita Rosenberg

Spirited Adventures

Inside this deck find 50 “*Shopping for Nirvana*” spirited activities. Nirvana is about the objects you collect, the people you meet and the experiences you have. Join me - Anita Rosenberg, global traveler, photographer and expert in Chinese Metaphysics as I take you to the city of Feng Shui and high finance to dine on delicious dim sum and go **Giant Buddha** day tripping to **Lantau Island** during a monsoon storm. We will pick up Money Toads at **Man Mo Temple** and toss joss sticks at **Wong Tai Sin** to learn our futures. Don't forget to dodge the sacred black ash dropping from hanging incense coils - it doesn't come out in the wash!

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Travel in Style



Antique rickshaw at The Peak for tourists

Rickshaw Rides

Rickshaws are an iconic image of old China and here in Hong Kong, they were the most popular mode of transportation for the top class Europeans called *tai-pans*. Invented in Japan in the 1860s and brought over to Asia and India, Hong Kong imported rickshaws in 1880. By 1920 there were over 3,000 for the important people of the city who traveled exclusively by rickshaws. Being a rickshaw driver was considered one of the deadliest occupations in the East. In Hong Kong of today, they can only be seen at **The Peak** as a tourist attraction.

INTERESTING INFO: Hong Kong has its own unique flavor from the rest of China because of its strong Western influence and being the “Wall Street of the East.” Rickshaws are one of the remnants of a British-ruled era.

Find the Foo Dogs



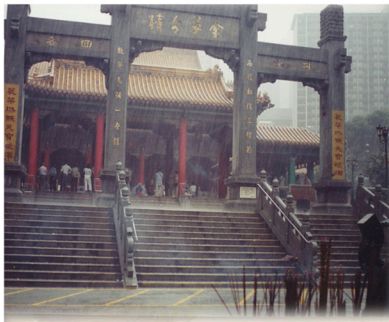
Foo Dog statue at The Peak lookout

Guardians & Protectors

Sometimes you need a little extra protection and that's where **Foo Dogs** aka *Fu Dogs* come in handy. They ward off evil spirits and dispel negativity aimed at entrances. The name comes from the Chinese word "fu" meaning luck or prosperity. They are protectors of truth and defenders against evil. Are they lions or are they dogs? They have manes, large paws and large teeth. At the time they first appeared along the Silk Trade Route, Buddhist artisans had never seen a lion. They had only heard of their reputation so they stylized their faces more friendly than fierce. Foo Dogs gather near temples, garden gates, homes and doorsteps. They cleanse the Qi (energy) so only good fortune enters.

FOO DOG TIP: social creatures they work in pairs. The girl sits on the right looking out and has a pup under one paw. The boy on the left with a ball under his. Only place outside.

Visit the God of Gambling



Atrium at Wong Tai Sin Temple

Wong Tai Sin Temple

Gambling and superstition are an important part of every day life in China and it is at the gigantic **Wong Tai Sin Temple** (built in 1921) that crowds line up to consult joss sticks and gamble on their future. Yes, Wong Tai Sin, *the god of gambling*, has his own temple and it's always crowded. When visiting the gambling god, light a handful of incense sticks outside for good luck. Once inside, take a few lit sticks and poke them an orange (used for offerings.) A few stabs at the peel will do the trick. Then you are ready to shake a can of joss sticks and ask Wong Tai Sin about your future. Visiting this temple with my friend Mable and having our fortunes told was one of my favorite things to do in Hong Kong.

WHERE TO GO:

Wong Tai Sin - Kowloon, open from early morning until 5:30pm.

Lighting Incense



Mable trying to light incense at Wong Tai Sin

Smoke & Spirits

When Mable and I arrived at **Wong Tai Sin Temple**, it started raining. Pouring actually. Monsoon season was coming early and it was a challenge juggling the umbrella with a handful of incense sticks while lighting the match and making an offering. It was worth it to ensure good luck.

INCENSE LESSON: Dating back to 6000 to 8500, the trend took off spreading to Greece and Rome where they wafted incense during prayers. Peddlers along the Silk Road turned incense sales into big business, changing the famous trade route into the "*Incense Route*."

INCENSE BASICS: incense is lit for spiritual reasons and each scent vibrates on a different level: **Sandalwood** attracts prosperity, **Frankincense** consecrates a space, and **Sage** protects against evil.

Toss Joss Sticks



Me tossing joss sticks at Wong Tai Sin

Consulting the Spirits

My friend, Mabel suggested, “*Let’s throw joss sticks and learn our futures.*” We entered **Wong Tai Sin Temple**, which was actually a massive atrium covered by a roof and completely exposed to the elements. As the rain swept in from all sides, I knelt on an old newspaper to avoid getting my pants soaked and threw the joss sticks. I held the weathered cup full of numbered wooden sticks also called **Chinese Fortune Sticks** or “*Qiu Qian*” and asked my question. I shook the can, and magically only one stick popped out. The universe heard my question and this was my answer. And to understand what the universe told me, I had to pay the soothsayer outside to tell me what my number meant.

ANITA’S TIP: ask one question because greedy me asked three and had to ante up and pay for every answer. It was worth it!

Man Mo Temple



Coiled incense at Man Mo Temple

Gods of Literature & War

Large incense coils hang from the ceiling of the tiny crumbling **Man Mo Temple** (1847) on Hollywood Rd. You better duck or ashes will hit you on the head and ruin a perfectly good hair day. Scenes from the 1960 movie "*The World of Suzy Wong*" were filmed next-door. Dedicated to *Man*, the god of literature and *Mo*, the god of war, this temple is known for its signature coiled incense. Suspended from the roof are dozens of giant incense coils. Each takes days to burn and are considered "*food for the spirits*." Lighting incense is a mystical practice thought to purify the surroundings to keep the ancestors and gods happy.

WHERE TO GO:

Man Mo Temple - Hollywood & Ladder St

ANITA'S TIP: *note to self:* duck and dodge - those ashes do not come out in the wash.

Money Toad



My Money Toad from Man Mo Temple

Man Mo Temple Gift Shop

Do you believe a lumpy bumpy creature with three legs called a **Money Toad** aka “*Chan Chu*” can attract abundance and wealth? I didn’t either until I bought my first one at the sacred **Man Mo Temple** on Hollywood Rd. After lighting incense and saying a few prayers, I stepped into the temple gift shop as I usually do and spied these cute brass frog creatures on the shelf. The saleslady told me to place him by my front door. When I leave I should face him outwards for protection. When I return home, turn him inwards to hold in my good luck. I brought home my first of many Money Toads from Man Mo, he is at my front door and I abide by her strict magical rules every day.

WHERE TO SHOP:

Man Mo Temple - gift shop for money toad

Neon Jungle



Neon signs light up Nathan Road

City of Lights

"Without neon signs, the city is like a ghost town." During the small business boom in Hong Kong of the 80s and 90s, everyone was into the new and trendy and making money so neon fit right in. The neon signs, especially on Nathan Rd in Kowloon, are the heart and soul of the city. They are vibrant and garish and the craftsmanship combines English and Cantonese letters with fanciful images, mostly drawn free-hand. Neon sign making is seen as a repetitive factory job and a dying art. Thousands of old signs are being taken down, which is a real shame. Plans for a permanent collection is underway so we will have to wait and see.

BEST PLACES TO VIEW:

Nathan Rd - the main thoroughfare in Kowloon is jam-packed, I suggest photographing before they come down.