



A „Welcome“-sign at Hong Kong-Airport

On May 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:25 pm (GMT+1) we took off from Hamburg Airport in Germany. 16 hours and 15 minutes later our plane arrived at Hong Kong International Airport, where we were welcomed by Martin. This was the beginning of our exciting journey into the heart and spirit of the metropolis Hong Kong.

Read our report and follow us on our discovery tour, share our experiences and learn about the different faces of a fascinating city.

But first let us introduce ourselves:

We are Ashkan Naebian and Leon Ahmadi, students at “Gymnasium Oberalster”, a secondary school in Hamburg, Germany. Mrs. Monika Scheurmann, our teacher, encouraged us to participate in the **HK-EU e-Learning School Project**.

In December 2016 we were happy to welcome our Hong Kong teammates to Hamburg and in May 2017 it was finally our turn to visit our partners’ city - Hong Kong.

**Day 1 (08.05.)**

On the train from the airport to our hotel we immediately remembered what our team-mates had told us about the cool air conditioning in public places in Hong Kong. Yes, indeed, the air in this train (and in all other trains and malls we visited later) was pretty cold. But it was no big deal for us - probably because we are used to cool air in Hamburg!

On the way to the hotel, we had a first impression of what living in Hong Kong means – high-rise apartment blocks, side by side, wherever we looked, almost touching the clouds. The cityscape really looked extraordinary to us, even the lower buildings seemed to be taller than those we are used to in Hamburg! And obviously Hong Kong is a growing city, telling from the number of cranes and huge construction sites that we saw from the train window. An impressive bridge, connecting Hong Kong with mainland China (as Martin explained) caught our particular attention – it was just sooooo long! Hong Kong seemed to be so different from Hamburg and we were keen on discovering more...

Our first impression was further strengthened when we entered our hotel-room. Sleeping and living on the 69<sup>th</sup> floor was a whole new experience and the view from the window was incredible! We had a view of the whole new town “Tsuen Wan” and the people and cars on the street seemed as small as ants, walking, crawling their way amidst towering buildings.



The view from our hotel room

In the evening, we met our teammates and went to a restaurant for dinner. Looking at the menu and making a choice was quite a challenge, not to mention eating with chopsticks! Thanks to the explanations and tips from our partners we were not only very satisfied with what we had



Our dinner: Eating with chopsticks

ordered, but had also mastered the chopstick challenge. So we spoilt ourselves with a delicious dessert! Speaking about food, we had the impression that the Hong Kong cuisine with fish, meat, eggs and rice as the main ingredients, is enormously diverse. The range of flavors and spices seems to be endless – quite different from Germany, but very, very tasty.

With our stomachs filled and very happy about our first restaurant “success story”, we were ready to explore the area around our hotel. The number of malls that we crossed on our little tour left us speechless. You leave one, walk across a connecting bridge and enter another!!!! And they all look exactly the same, at least this is what we thought at first. Easy to get lost, if you don’t pay attention to certain signposts or street names. Hong Kong seems to be a shopper’s paradise and malls important public places. This is also very different from Hamburg, where we have malls as well, but not that big and not that many.

## Day 2 (09.05.)



In the S.K.H. Lam Woo Memorial Secondary School

On our second day in Hong Kong, Ms. Lee picked us up from the hotel and took us to our teammates' school, the "S.K.H. Lam Woo Memorial Secondary School". On our tour of the building, led by Ms. Yeung, we repeatedly noticed the glass cabinets presenting the numerous awards and cups, won by the students. We do not get such recognition from our school and are deeply impressed by the ambition the students have to do their best to obtain these special achievements. Thus, we got the impression that the determination to succeed in certain areas is supported and valued a lot more in Hong Kong schools than it is in Hamburg, and of course this will influence the motivation and success of the students in different areas. Therefore, congratulations to everyone for their achievements!



Glass cabinet with cups in the school

After our tour through the school we had the chance to attend three lessons: Chemistry, Mathematics and Home Economics. The latter was absolutely new to us, as we do not have such lessons. This is why we really admired this concept of teaching cooking and at the same time learning about the nutritional value of food components. We think that this prepares pupils for life and is an ideal combination of academic learning and practical skills, even more so, as healthy eating is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle that is so important not only for the individual, but also for society in general. So also in this respect our school could learn from Hong Kong.

The teaching methods in Chemistry and Mathematics were quite similar to our lessons in Hamburg – apart from the teacher using a microphone!

After our visit to "Lam Woo" we were treated to a fantastic meal in a nearby, obviously very popular restaurant, and even the principal, vice principal and department head were present – a very special gesture, we thought and enjoyed every minute of it.



The fishing village “Tai O”

tranquil atmosphere, quickly adjusted our pace to the slowness of the place and felt like being part of a film bringing the past back to life. The private boat tour that we were able to book was another unforgettable experience – just unlucky that the view was not clear and we did not see the white dolphins.

In the afternoon, we went to the fishing village “Tai O” on Lantau Island. To be honest, we didn’t know at all that Hong Kong also has more rural and remote areas, sparsely populated with wonderful nature for hiking before we went there. But considering the fact that 75% of the total area of Hong Kong are rural, we were completely wrong. And so far we had only seen the bustling city.

Consequently, we experienced a contrast here in this quaint fishing village that could not have been bigger. The very traditional way of life here, the food that was on display, the smells, the rubbish, the rickety shelters used for accommodation – all that impressed us deeply and contrasted sharply with the fast-paced modern life we had just come from. We took in the

**Day 3 (10.05.)**

In the morning, we went to explore the wet market next to our hotel. This was a real must, as it is the place our Hong Kong teammates had talked about so often and had used as a location in their video. Seeing everything with our own eyes and the atmosphere there overwhelmed us. The amount of vegetables, meat and fish on display was unbelievable. On three floors, countless vendors offered their produce to the costumers. We discovered fruits we had never seen before and watched



On the Wet-Market

how the fresh food was prepared right in front of the customers. Considering the focus of our project, the reduction of plastic in our daily life, we think that buying food on these markets is a good contribution to a better environment that everyone can make.

Later that day we took a ferry to the island “Ma Wan” and had a good view of stretches of shoreline from the water. Most striking again was the number of bridges we passed. On “Ma Wan” we spent a relaxing time in the park opposite Noah’s Arc, a botanist’s paradise. With all its trees, flowers, shrubs and lizards it made a nice contrast to the densely populated parts of Hong Kong and certainly looked like an ideal place to unwind. Visitors can almost feel the peace and tranquility of the place and those interested in the environment can learn from the boards on display with plenty of information. The park also presents the ways to gain renewable energies, such as wind energy and solar energy – there is even a small solar power station. Again, we felt reminded of our project’s topic: sustainability. Also learning that Ma Wan restricts the number of cars entering the island via a licence system and has other environment-friendly traffic and building regulations in place, we think that Ma Wan can be seen as a role model for a more sustainable and energy-efficient way of life.

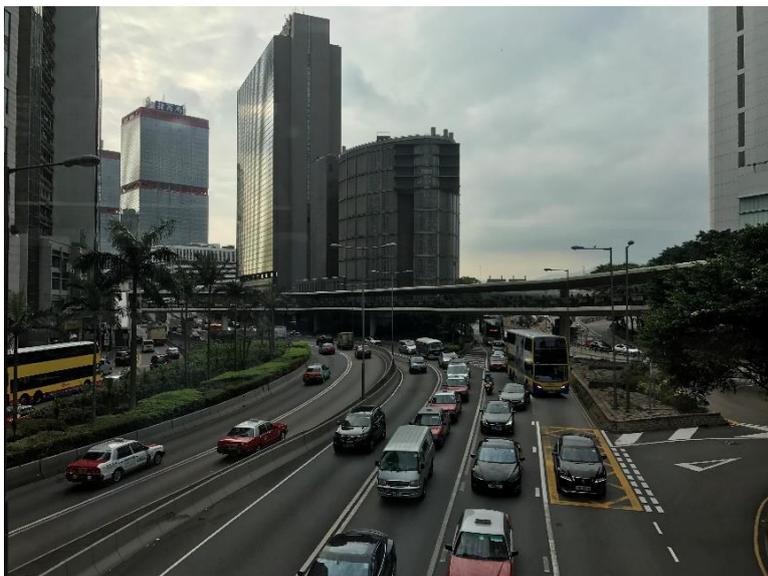
**Day 4 (11.05.)**

Before we went to Hong Kong we thought that travelling by train would be a nightmare due to the high number of inhabitants. But even when we travelled to the city center we did not experience overcrowdedness. Probably we missed the rush hours, and so our train journeys on the whole were quite relaxed and not much different from those in Hamburg, apart from fewer passenger seats and more straps to hold on to in the middle of the train. The reason must be more space for standing passengers, thus to “squeeze in” more people. So to get a seat is more than luck.

We got off at “Tsim Sha Tsui” station and arrived in the middle of Kowloon. Immediately we felt the different spirit, compared to that of the new territories, where our hotel was. More people, more hectic, more traffic, more noise and - hard to believe - even more shopping: We were right in the heart, on Nathan Road. Here we felt the influences of globalization the most. One international shop next to another: Prada only a few steps away from Gucci and almost everywhere a McDonald’s or Starbucks! The number of luxury shops was staggering and the rushing and endless flow of eager shoppers, loaded with bags, was overwhelming, but also strange and discomforting. Obviously a lot of spending power in their pockets, but no happiness to be seen in most people’s faces. More relaxed seemed the Peninsula Hotel, a place breathing with the spirit of times gone by. It was interesting to watch guests arriving and leaving by taxi, some even come by helicopter, as we saw.

Our next stop was Victoria Harbor pier, the view on that clear day was fantastic. What almost unreal skyline right in front of us! And again, we could see the effects of a globalised world: all international banks and institutions of name and rank greeted the visitor from the other side of the water. But all these skyscrapers also tell the success story of Hong Kong as a global city and important centre of banking and finance. And it is not only competition that has led to even more prestigious and higher buildings, but also the lack of space in an expanding global centre.

We crossed Victoria Harbor on a Star Ferry boat and started our tour through Hong Kong Island in the Maritime Museum, where the history of Hong Kong from a trading post to the modern city of today can be studied in all its different phases and aspects. After that we started walking until our feet became sore and we were completely worn-out. We cut across malls, galleries and stations, zig-zagging along pavements until we finally reached the central mid-levels Escalator. Standing on it was an extraordinary experience and showed us the contrast between ultra-modern buildings and nostalgic narrow streets, between modern and traditional life, between business and private life.



In Hongkong Island: Modern Buildings

By the way, we were surprised about the high number of electric cars driving on the streets of Hong Kong Island. Constantly, we saw these environment-friendly cars and we can imagine that this development could reduce the level of air pollution in Hong Kong a lot.



The outlook from Victoria Peak

But now back to sightseeing: Our last destination on Hong Kong Island and one of the highlights of our visit was Victoria Peak. Even the journey on the tram was spectacular and compensated us for the pushing crowds at the bottom. We arrived there in the evening after sunset, when the countless lights of the buildings were illuminating the city. The view over the city and the harbor with the sparkling and colorful lights was incredible and left us stand in admiration and lost for words! There are no words to describe this, one just has to experience it. And again it is more than clear that Hong Kong is a major financial center in Asia and a metropolis of international importance!

**Day 5 (12.05.)**

Our journey now came to an end and we felt the urge to do some last things, take some last pictures etc. So the first thing we did after breakfast was a dip in the hotel pool among towering buildings - quite a new experience! After check-out we spent a few hours in Kowloon again. We could now take it easy, as time was too short to go to sights far away. So we strolled along the streets, took some last photos, took in the atmosphere a last time and got some presents to take home. In the evening we met our group mates for a last meal together and then had to go to the hotel to change clothes for the flight and to pick up our luggage. As every journey has an end, time came to say goodbye. Tears made it hard to go, as our teammates had become our friends and the teachers had become friends. The girls and Ms. Yeung even accompanied us to the airport, although it was late in the evening. But time passes mercilessly and the final farewell came.

So we boarded the plane, full of emotions, but very happy to have had this wonderful journey and our hearts filled with gratitude to all those wonderful people who had helped to make all this happen and who did everything to make us feel welcomed and comfortable, to made plans for us, who showed us what is worth seeing, who invited us, who picked us up, who explained.

A big THANK YOU to everyone. We have enjoyed the trip to its fullest and have wonderful memories for a lifetime.