Space is at a premium in Hong Kong, and as a consequence, housing is an expensive commodity. Majority of private housing are in the form of apartments in high-rise buildings. An apartment of 800-1,200 square feet is considered as medium-sized housing for locals.

Prices fluctuate, and generally reflect the state of the property market. Private housing in certain districts such as Hong Kong Island South and Mid-levels, village houses, and apartments with sea view are particularly expensive. In recent years, many new private housing estates are established in newly developed areas like Tseung Kwan O, West Kowloon, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long.

Major Housing Estates

- Parc Oasis (Kowloon Tong)
- City One (Shatin)
- Telford Garden (Kowloon Bay)
- Laguna City (Lam Tin)
- Metro City (Tseung Kwan O)
- Whampoa Garden (Hung Hom)
- Mei Foo Sun Chuen (Mei Foo)
- Heng Fa Chuen (Hong Kong East)
- Taikoo Shing (Hong Kong East)
- Fairview Park (Yuen Long)
- Discovery Bay (Lantau Island)
Kowloon Tong

Kowloon Tong is a famous upscale residential district with many garden houses, villas and luxury apartments. The district is quiet and has excellent school networks, making it popular among the upper class and upper middle class in the city. Many well-known kindergartens, top primary and secondary schools and international schools are located in the district. It is also where the two major campuses of Hong Kong Baptist University are situated. Kowloon Tong is a major interchange station of MTR railway network, connecting the Kwun Tong Line serving the East Kowloon and the East Rail Line serving the New Territories East. It is easy to get to any part of Hong Kong from Kowloon Tong via public transport. Besides convenient transportation, shopping is easy as one of the biggest shopping malls in town - "Festival Walk" is built above the Kowloon Tong Station.

Kowloon East

Kowloon East includes Wong Tai Sin District and Kwun Tong District. The two districts mainly contain areas of Lei Yu Mun, Yau Tong, Lam Tin, Kwun Tong, Ngau Tau Kok, Kowloon Bay, Choi Hung, Diamond Hill, Tsz Wan Shan, Wong Tai Sin and Lok Fu. Kwun Tong District was once a major industrial area in Hong Kong. Due to the downfall of local light industries, many factories have been torn down and replaced by commercial buildings. Millennium Cities (創紀之城), housed with a 7-storey shopping arcade named “APM” is the newest commercial and shopping complex of the district. Wong Tai Sin District takes its name from the Wong Tai Sin Temple, a landmark of the District. It used to have numerous squatter huts which are homes to the refugees from Mainland China and it was developed into a residential district for the lower class. Both the Kwun Tong and Wong Tai Sin Districts are characterized by having extensive public housing, a dense and aging population. Transport network, community and recreation facilities and medical services are well-developed to meet demands of the local community.

Shatin (South of New Territories)

Shatin was formerly agricultural farmland and was developed into a modern new town in the New Territories by the Hong Kong Government in 1970s. It is a well-planned new town with residential areas, schools, universities, hospitals, parks, town hall and shopping malls. The University's Shek Mun (Shatin) Campus and HKBU Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary & Primary School are located in the district. Shatin, including an extension at Ma On Shan, has now become a major new community having almost the highest population (when compared with other Hong Kong districts). Shatin has a well-established external transport network comprising the East Rail Line of MTR network, Lion Rock Tunnel, Tate's Cairn Tunnel, Tolo Highway, etc. The Ma On Shan Railway, which connects Ma On Shan with Tai Wai in Shatin commenced operation in December 2004. The construction of a new railway line, Shatin to Central Link - which will run from Tai Wai to Central - is planned to start in around 2010. Local and tourist attractions in Shatin include, most famously, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, which is Hong Kong’s newest museum. Other attractions include Shatin Racecourse, Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery (萬佛寺), Tsang Tai Uk (曾大屋), Amah Rock (望夫石), Shing Mun River and Lion Rock.
Kowloon West

Kowloon West includes Yau Tsim Mong District, Sham Shui Po District, and Kowloon City District, the three districts having their very own and distinctive characteristics. Kowloon City District has the highest concentration of schools in the territory. Its Kowloon Walled City was one of the earliest developments in the territory and was reconstructed in 1993 as the Walled City Park where many relics of historical value have been preserved. The premises of the old Kai Tak Airport will soon be redeveloped. Yau Tsim Mong District is one of the busiest areas of the city. Commercial activities, tourism, hotel industries, entertainment businesses and financial services flourish in the district. Tourists love to visit the various well-known shopping venues such as Ladies’ Market, Flower Market and Temple Street night market. Shopping malls, department stores, boutiques, retail and wholesale shops, and hawker stalls can be found everywhere. It is also a hub of cultural activities with the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Science Museum and Hong Kong Museum of History located here. Sham Shui Po District was one of the earliest developed districts in Hong Kong. It was once the commercial, industrial and transportation hub of the territory. Today’s Sham Shui Po District mainly consists of residential buildings. In recent years re-development projects have taken place and given the district a new look.

Alongside with the urban renewal and reclamation projects in Kowloon West, the area is zoned for mixed commercial, residential and leisure development. Some residential projects have been realized, such as Sorrento, The Harbourside and The Arch. The West Kowloon Cultural District project, which proposes to transform the waterfront reclaimed land in Yau Ma Tei into a district of concentration for arts, cultural and entertainment establishments, is currently in the public consultation stage. Construction is planned from 2007 onwards and is expected to be operational in 2011 if the project is approved.

Hong Kong East

Hong Kong East comprises the areas of Tin Hau, North Point, Quarry Bay, Shau Kei Wan, Heng Fa Chuen, Siu Sai Wan and Chai Wan. Originally a backwater of fishing villages, quarries and dockyards, the district is now mostly residential, with some industrial areas and several large shopping malls, and it is densely populated. A number of large public and private housing estates are located within the district. These include Tai Koo Shing, Kom Hill and Heng Fa Shuen. A commercial hub has been developed from the former industrial areas in the western part of Quarry Bay. The district is well-served by the MTR, buses, trams, and ferries. One of the famous attractions is the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defense, which has been converted from the more than one century old Lei Yue Mun Fort.

Discovery Bay

Discovery Bay is a purpose built housing and resort complex located on Lantau Island, one of the outlying islands in Hong Kong. It has a pleasant green environment and a long sandy beach close to the ferry pier, offering a slower paced, relaxed style of living. Residents can enjoy water sports and a wide range of recreational facilities offered by different clubs. Shopping and fine dining are also available in the Discovery Bay Plaza. The Discovery Bay Plaza is housed with shops, cafes, restaurants as well as a well-stocked supermarket and there is an outdoor seating area that creates a popular central meeting place. Discovery Bay is served by a high-speed catamaran service to and from the Outlying Ferry Pier in Central on Hong Kong Island. The journey takes about 25 minutes and costs ~ HK$ 27 for a one-way ticket. No private cars are permitted on Discovery Bay, but shuttle buses regularly travel between the ferry pier and different housing locations. Residents have easy access to Tung Chung MTR station, and buses run directly to and from Hong Kong’s International Airport at Chek Lap Kok.

For more on Discovery Bay, see:

tobe continued....
**The Private Housing Market**

*Property for rent or sale* is advertised through various media and estate agents. Agents can show you different premises with reference to your selection criteria. They can provide information, make reasonable enquiries, conduct negotiation on your behalf and assist in entering into an enforceable Tenancy Agreement or Sales & Purchase Agreement as appropriate. In seeking assistance from property agents, a prospective tenant/purchaser will be asked to sign an *Engagement Agreement of Property Agents*. Usually, the charges of the commission will be stated in the Agreement. Agents normally charge both the tenant and the landlord each at half a month’s agreed rental. Regarding sale and purchase, the agent would charge as commission, both the purchaser and the vendor each at not higher than 1% (negotiable) of the transaction value.

**Tips**

**Online Keyword search:**
property agency

**Renting a Flat**

In the event of renting a flat, the owner will require a two-month deposit – not including the first month’s rent – and together with the aforementioned commission, the tenant needs to pay an amount equals to 3.5 months’ rent in advance to move into a chosen flat. Rents do not normally include rates, and may or may not include management fees, which are paid for such services as security and garbage collection. Additional charges are normally required for leasing car park spaces. You may also need to pay a deposit towards the phone and other utilities. The installation of a phone may take a couple of days.

The terms of lease vary, but generally the first year is a fixed term period and the second year is an open one. By fixed term, it means the rental cannot be changed and if the tenants intend to move out, s/he still has to pay to the landlord rental of the remaining month(s) in the one year period as penalty. When the fixed term period is over, the major terms normally remain unchanged, but both parties can terminate the lease by serving the other party one or two months’ notice as stipulated in the tenancy/agreement.

**Contact Point:**

Should you have any questions about the property search, please send email to eo@hkbu.edu.hk