



Harvard Club May Hike 2
NORTHEASTERN ISLAND EXPEDITION
Saturday, 29th May 2010



The Harvard Club of Hong Kong finishes the season in style with a very special “Northeastern Islands Expedition” - a combined walking and boating trip exploring the Plover Cove Country Park, the Yan Chau Tong Marine Park and the Kat O, Ap Chau and Tap Mun islands.

The outing will take you to remote, yet inhabited islands, a number of old villages - some abandoned, others not - interesting countryside and beautiful coastal sceneries.

We have also planned to stop for a great lunch amongst the mangroves, so hurry to contact Janny Leung on **9155-2295** or via janny@se.cuhk.edu.hk to sign up. A minimum number of sign-ups are required, yet spaces on this special outing are limited. Therefore we expect everybody who puts forward their name to honour their commitment, even if circumstances don't permit them to actually come along on the day!

Here is a summary of the day's schedule:

- 8:15am: Meet at Tai Po Market Railway Station and proceed by taxi to Plover Cove Country Park
8:30am: Walk from Wu Kau Tang via Kau Tam Tso to Sam A Tsuen
10:00am: Motor-boat from Sam A to Kat O
Explore this remote outpost...
11:00am: Motor-boat from Kat O via Ap Chau to Lai Chi Wo
We will have a good look at the unique geological features of Ap Chau from the sea-side before exploring the large traditional village of Lai Chi Wo, its fung shui wood and unique mangrove forest before walking across to Sam A Tsuen
1:30pm: Superb Chinese lunch at small restaurant in Sam A
2:30pm: Long motor-boat ride from Sam A to Tap Mun via Hung Shek Mun
Time and tide permitting we stop briefly at Wong Wan on Double Island
We will explore as much of Tap Mun as possible before taking the
4:20pm: ferry to Wong Shek Pier.
5:00pm: The bus from Wong Shek Pier to Sai Kung departs immediately after the ferry arrives.
5:30pm: Finish the outing in Sai Kung...
It shouldn't take you much more than 1 hour to get from Sai Kung back to HK island.

The total walking distance of the day is 14 km and it is mostly flat or downhill. The longest continuous stretch of walking comes at the very beginning as we cover the 5.5 km from Wu Kau Tang down to Sam A Tsuen. Solely for that reason, the walk is rated as having a difficulty level of **2** out of **10**. The remaining 8.5 km of walking are nice and easy and split into 4 sections over 6 hours.

The next page will give you a little information on a few of the day's highlights. There are also links to websites with photos / videos from some of the places we will visit.

The Basics:

- Length: **14 km**
Difficulty: **2** out of **10**
Highest Point: **105 metres** (= the starting point of hike)
Meeting Place and Time: **Tai Po Market Railway Station at 8:15am**

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Wu Kau Tang

Surrounded by the Plover Cove Country Park, Wu Kau Tang is actually made up of several villages built by Hakka clans in the early Qing Dynasty.

The villagers once built a stone wall to segregate the fields. Shortly after the wall had been completed, a large hole appeared as many rocks went missing. A serious investigation solved the mystery: Some of the “rocks” that had been used were in fact tortoises which later crawled away.

Tortoises were once very common in the area, so much so that the area was known as Tortoise Field. When villagers traded in the rural market, they were often nicknamed “tortoise kids”. Determined to end this humiliation, village elders asked a scholar to rename the village and, thus, it is now known as Wu Kau Tang. In Chinese, it means a formidable dragon in motion.

Kat O

The Hakka first settled on the island, then called Gu Chau (lone island), during the early Qing dynasty. There are two schools of thought as to why the island was renamed Kat O, one being that the inhabitants used the word kat, meaning prosperity, for luck, the other being that there was an abundance of mandarine (also pronounced kat) trees growing on the island. The British later called it Crooked Island inspired by its shape.

There are six villages on the island: Tung O, Chung Kan O, Sai O, Kat O Sheung Wai, Au Pui Tong and Chek Kok Tau inhabited by members of the Lam, Tsang, Chow, Yau, Cheung and Chung clans. Fishing was the major industry.

Ap Chau

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?hl=en-GB&v=Bf-Yz77wA-Q>

Ap Chau, meaning duck island, also known as Robinson Island, is an esoteric island in the Crooked Harbour, in the north-eastern New Territories of Hong Kong. It is located in Ap Chau Bay. The island once had over 1,000 inhabitants. These were all Tankas, an originally non-Chinese ethnic minority who were mostly fishermen but most have moved over to cities in the United Kingdom such as Newcastle upon Tyne, Leicester, Sunderland and Edinburgh. Incidentally, all inhabitants are members of the True Jesus Church.

Trivia Fact: Fresh water in Ap Chau is obtained from the mainland China using an underground pipe.

Lai Chi Wo

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNb0v1uvaUI>

More than a hundred years ago, Lai Chi Wo was a poor village. On the advice of a geomancy expert, a fung shui wall was built around the village to retain wealth and ward off bad luck. Soon the village's luck changed. Lai Chi Wo produced a number of famous scholars and residents were better off financially. Since then the villagers of Lai Chi Wo became faithful believers of fung shui and used every effort to protect their fung shui wood, including marking boundaries and banning the destruction of local forests. Anyone causing damage to the fung shui wood would be fined and publicly denounced. For only one or two days in a year, villagers are allowed to enter the wood to gather sticks for firewood. This may well be the reason why Lai Chi Wo's fung shui wood has remained lush and verdant today

Yan Chau Tong Marine Park

http://www.afcd.gov.hk/English/country/cou_vis/cou_vis_mar/cou_vis_mar_des/cou_vis_mar_des_yan.html

Two important mangrove sites in Yan Chau Tong Marine Park located at Lai Chi Wo and Sam A which covers an area of about 2.7 hectares and 3 hectares, respectively. All the eight species of true mangrove recorded in Hong Kong can be found at Lai Chi Wo while 7 species of true mangroves in Hong Kong except the *Heritiera littoralis* were recorded at Sam A

Tap Mun

<http://www.tapmun.hk/photo.htm>

Tap Mun's twin villages, strung along the south-western shore, are home to the majority of the island's approximate 100 residents. Hakka and Tanka fishermen's homes rise on stilts above the water and small shops selling anything from kites to dried oysters line the main drag.

The late 17th century Tin Hau temple sits proud and vibrant at the north end of the island's twin villages. This traditional temple dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea is in excellent repair owing to a number of well-funded renovations over the years.

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Meeting Place & Time:

We meet at **Tai Po Market Railway Station** (just after the turnstiles by the Starbucks) at **8:15am**.

Please allow a **minimum of 50 minutes** from Admiralty to Tai Po Market on the MTR, changing from the *Tsuen Wan line* to the *Kwun Tong line* at *Mong Kok* and from the *Kwun Tong line* to the *East Rail line* at *Kowloon Tong*.

As a sign of respect for those who turn up on time and in order to cram in the full itinerary, we are NOT able to wait for latecomers!

What to bring and wear:

Please bring your **Octopus Card**, money, **hat**, sun-screen, mosquito spray, a snack and some **water**. Don't forget your camera either.

It is important to wear light and comfortable clothes and you should seriously consider bringing an extra (dry) shirt for the journey home. Should the weather be overcast, a wind-breaker might come in useful on the boatrides...

Food & Drink:

There are kiosks on Kat O and Tap Mun and we will stop for a superb cooked lunch at Sam A, but you are recommended to bring **at least one bottle of water** per person all the same. As we will be gone for the full day, you might even want to bring a snack...

Price & Payment:

At some point during the day, **Janny Leung of The Harvard Club of Hong Kong** be asking you for payment for the outing. The price for this tour is just **HK\$380** per person for members and **HK\$400** per person for non-members/prospects, **which includes motorboat transfers, lunch at Sam A, and the ferry from Tap Mun to Wong Shek Pier**. Your transportation to Wu Kau Tang and from Wong Shek Pier plus any drinks are extra. Payment to be made in **cash**.

Transportation Time & Cost:

Wherever possible, The Harvard Club of Hong Kong take full advantage of Hong Kong's unequalled public transport system, so here is an estimate of the approximate cost of transport and time spent traveling:

Out:

MTR: Admiralty – Tai Po Market (via Mong Kok and Kowloon Tong): 42 minutes – HK\$16.50
Taxi: Tai Po – Wu Kau Tang: 20 minutes – HK\$100/taxi (**cash only**)

Home:

Tsui Wah Ferry: Tap Mun – Wong Shek: 35 minutes – **included**
KMB Bus No. 94: Wong Shek Pier – Sai Kung Town: 30 minutes -- HK\$5.80
Minibus No. 1: Sai Kung – Choi Hung: 25 minutes – HK\$7.50
MTR: Choi Hung - Admiralty: 24 minutes -- HK\$11.50

The **Octopus Card** is accepted on all modes of transportation used during this outing & would save you time + **HK\$2.20**.

Finishing Place & Time:

We expect to reach **Sai Kung** by about **5:30pm**, which could have you back in Admiralty by 6:30pm.

Finally...

Should you be unable to attend or encounter any problems on the day, please call **Janny Leung** on **9155-2295**. You can also e-mail our guide, **Michael Hansen**, info@hansens-hikes.com, if you have any questions regarding this outing.

In case of bad weather, we will contact all confirmed participants approximately one hour before the meeting time to decide whether the hike will go ahead or not. Thus, if you haven't already done so, please provide us with a contact number.