

Hong Kong Face Off

Reviews by Anu Shea

Rock stars and corporate sharks alike do business in the Pearl of the Orient. Here's the when, where and how of it.

EXEC SLEEP

If you're here for corporate work, chances are you'll be on the Hong Kong side, where all the banks and multinationals have their offices. For a change of scenery, shack up on the Kowloon bank: recently renovated bay-side **InterContinental Grand Stanford** (hongkong.intercontinental.com) is just beyond the frenzy, yet only a 15-minute walk to the Star Ferry Service. Go for a **Harbour View Suite** to get great cityscape views in well-appointed surroundings, plus access to the Club Lounge on the 18th floor, where there's complimentary breakfast, canapés and cocktails and free WiFi. Club InterContinental guests also get two free hours' use of a conference room in the Business Centre. There are plenty of places to eat at the Grand Stanford (Café Rendezvous, which serves a great buffet breakfast, and The Mistral for Italian lunch and dinner, to name two), and the refurbished gym gets points for top-of-the-range machines with individual TV screens. Downtime, go shopping: Kowloon's mega-malls and knock-off joints are all within striking distance.

Rates from USD 321 for a Deluxe Room; USD 650 for a Harbour View Suite.

Also Of Note: Grand Hyatt; Island-Shangri-La



EXEC LUNCH

The place to lunch in the commercial district, **Toscana** at the **Ritz Carlton** (ritzcarlton.com) exudes grandeur from every heavy brocade drape and crystal chandelier adorning its neo-classicist interior. The Executive Set meal features creations by Chef de Cuisine Umberto Bombana, named Best Italian Chef in Asia and "Worldwide Ambassador of the White Truffle". Start with delicate anti-pasta buffet or soup, followed by a choice of two mains (usually homemade pasta, plus a *carne* or *pesce* dish; Pappardelle with Lamb Ragout and Boletus Mushrooms is a winner) and choice of two desserts, plus coffee and pasticcini. (Another must-try: lavender ice cream with Muscat jelly and mini malt balls.)

Executive Set meal: noon to 2.30pm, Monday to Saturday, USD 50.

Also Of Note: Harlan's in the IFC; Cipriani's in the Bank of China Building

EXEC DINE

Treat clients (or demand to be treated) to more than a spoonful of decadence at Alain Ducasse's **Spoon** in the **InterContinental** (hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com), where top-class ingredients are spun into unfathomable creations, like Steamed Foie Gras, and Tuna Jelly. The menu does not editorialise: Chilean Seabass with pistachio/macadamia Viennoise arrives with an inch-thick crust of bright green nuts in a swell of coconut/lemongrass condiment. Desserts are mind-blowing: French diners swear the sticky-sweet ice-cream flavours recall summers on *la plaque*. Graze



with the six-course Sexy Spoon Menu (USD 96+), and ask savant Sommelier Thomas Scheidt to guide you through the traditional wine menu (i.e. organised by region, not grape). Moody Tony-Chi lighting, dramatic views and un-inflated prices that won't call for the black company card (though hell, you may as well) make this an impressive spot.

Also Of Note: M at the Fringe

EXEC DRINK

For a real throw-back, hop on the **Aqua Luna Junk** (aqua.com.hk; USD 23, includes a drink), a re-crafted, three-sail Chinese junk with restaurant and cocktail bar that runs between banks and lands you at One Peking Road. Ascend to **Aqua Bar** (same company), which boasts sky-scraping views and hyper-suave style.

Also Of Note: Feather Boa; MO Bar in the Landmark Oriental; Lotus



HIPSTER SLEEP

If partying, or something related, is your business in Hong Kong, then you'll want to be close to the action - preferably near SoHo and the Lan Kwai Fong area on Hong Kong island. **Hotel LKF** (hotel-lkf.com.hk) is ground zero in that respect, with all manner of hipster anarchy going on outside the place (three cheers for soundproofed rooms). The hotel itself looks, smells and feels new, but décor here is mature and contemporary. Rooms are quite big (500 - 900 sq.-ft) and styled thus: white bed; blond wood floor; photographic wall art; big, wide windows. There's also a plasma

TV, a funky red espresso machine, and a high-tech business desk with broadband and iPod-friendly stereo system. Instead of your usual gym/pool combo, the hotel's leisure facilities incorporate the neighbouring Yoga Plus studio with a variety of stretchy classes in which hotel guests get priority placement. Get fed at **Azure**, on the 29th and 30th floors of the hotel, though truthfully you'll never go hungry amid the fantastic network of neighbouring bars and restaurants.

Rates from USD 385 to 771.

Also Of Note: Jia in Causeway Bay; The Fleming in Wan Chai

HIPSTER LUNCH

Italian restaurant **Isola** clocks points for food and location. This bleach-white, open-kitchen space occupies levels 3 and 4 of the gleaming International Finance Centre Mall, granting enviable waterfront views. Monday through Friday, the lunch buffet is USD 29+ (USD 31 on Saturday and Sunday) for buffet-style appetiser and dessert, and a choice of mains. Pizzas are decadent, stone-fired things lavished with delicacies like black truffles. Book ahead, especially for a seat on that lovely terrace. Level 3, Two IFC, Central (+852 2383 8765).

Also Of Note: Dragon-I for an all-you-can-eat dim sum buffet

HIPSTER DINE

Hipsters and business folk alike are vying for tables at **Pierre**, the tour de force of new kid on the block **Mandarin Oriental** (mandarinoriental.com). Franchise of eponymous Parisian Chef Gagnaire, the restaurant makes a sophisticated design statement with a range of textures and deep, rich colours. But you're here for the food: expect what Head Chef and Gagnair protégé Philippe Orrico calls "structured, clear and singular" plates: Beef Fillet with melted butter; Poached Oysters with beaufort and sour beetroot juice, and the evocative-sounding Popcorn Soup. Book ahead for this one. Tel: +852 2522 0111.

Also Of Note: Nobu at the Inter-Continental; Hutong



HIPSTER DRINKS

In LKF Tower on D'Aguilar Street is **FINDS** (finds.com.hk), a restaurant and bar running with the Scandinavian theme (the name's an acronym of Nordic countries - figure it out). FINDS pulls in the after-work crowd for its Scando-bites (great Black Forest Mushroom Quiche), cocktails and a fine wine-by-the-glass list. They're also quite clever with special events and private dinners.

Also Of Note: Blue Bar at the Four Seasons; Armani Bar in Armani House



FLY

GETTING THERE: One uncomfortable morning after a rock-star 'night before', I boarded the CX 700 flight from Bangkok to Hong Kong. Fragile stomach, pending work; needless to say, the conditions were not in my favour. So imagine my intense happiness at discovering that Cathay Pacific (cathaypacific.com) and I have one thing in common: the staunch belief that in this day and age, no Economy class seat should be without a personal TV. Hallelujah. I even managed a spot of work on my laptop until breakfast arrived: Real Food - omelette/mushrooms/grilled tomato, fruit, croissants, drip coffee, cow's milk - in Economy, on a short-haul flight! Extraordinary. I switched on *The Office* and milled into breakfast, thinking how strange it was that, with the exception of being above the stratosphere, I was engaging in true-to-form recovery activities.

GETTING BACK: Six days later, exhausted, fingers chafed from shuffling name cards all week I was on my way back to Bangkok. But not without a little reward: a dip into Cathay's Sky Lounge. Expected was the free WiFi and broadband computers, private meeting rooms, etc.; what I didn't count on were the sets of four-seat cubicles with individual, bilingual TVs and headsets (12 channels, 100 music stations, plus weather and flight info), nor the above-grade fare: a noodle bar, quality sandwiches and a proper tea/coffee station. Showers stocked with Elemis products further enhanced the illusion that I had wandered into a boutique hotel. Needless to say, I rejoiced when my flight was delayed.

Poshest lounge in Asia? Quite possibly. Best airline? Some have said it. I won't make any claims, but let's say that the expectations of this frequent flyer have been raised dangerously high.