

# Hong Kong International: Definitely Not Faking It

You may know Hong Kong as the place to buy a fake Rolex for less than a tenner, but at the airport you'll get the real deal as the hub is a magnet for luxury brands.

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Go to the East Hall of Hong Kong International airport (HKIA) and you will be in designer heaven. There you can feast your eyes on a combination of brands that some of the world's best shopping streets would be hard pushed to match. They include: Agnes b, Bottega Veneta, Celine, Chanel, Coach, Dunhill, Gucci, Hermes, Loewe, Montblanc and Prada but this list is by no means exhaustive.

From conception, the airport has had a wow factor - from its impressive terminal design to the fact that it was built on what is essentially a manmade island - and, although it did have a lot of teething problems when opened in 1998, it is now regularly vying with Singapore Changi for various global awards as the world's best airport.

For shopping, HKIA is among the innovators. It had the first Prada boutique in an airport and the first Ralph Lauren, both of which had turned up their noses at the airport channel in the past because they did not think it was up to the luxury standards they were looking for. The airport has also had a number of firsts in the beauty category: the first Giorgio Armani Cosmetics store - still one of just a handful in airports, the first Kiehls, and the first La Prairie treatment room in Asia.

If this all sounds a bit too upmarket, and a bit too pricey, don't despair; it's not all Bally and Burberry. The airport offer is fairly broad today. For example the landside SkyMart which links the other road, rail and ferry transport services at the airport has a mix of stores. Among them are Folli Follie jewellery, Giorgio Fedon 1919 for accessories, sports and outdoor retailer Quiksilver, Samsung and one of the airport's seven Temptation perfume and cosmetics stores. Also, in Terminal 2 which opened in 2007, designer boutiques are much less evident. In the T2's SkyPlaza, the shopping experience is more akin to the high street with the likes of Giordano, G2000, 7-Eleven and Circle K to be found, mixed in with some upscale brands like luggage brand Tumi or Calvin Klein.



The bottom line when shopping at an airport like HKIA is to first compare prices downtown so that you get the best deal. Hong Kong operates as a low tax economy – one of the reasons it has flourished so well and still continues to do so under ‘special administrative region’ privileges granted by the Chinese government when it took control in 1997 – so retail prices are already low. It is therefore difficult for airport stores to offer a strong price-off incentive to get passengers to buy. Where HKIA wins out is in its ability to offer the luxury brand mentioned above in a compact space, making it a convenient spot to pick up that Prada bag or those Jimmy Choo shoes before jetting home.



## Hong Kong International Fact File

### Passengers:

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46.2 million in 2009 (48.6 million in 2008)

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Terminals 2, plus North Satellite Concourse.

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Main retail areas East Hall in Terminal 1, the land-side SkyMart, and SkyPlaza in Terminal 2

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Hub airlines Cathay Pacific, Dragonair, Hong Kong Express, Hong Kong Airlines

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