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# BNO Hong Kongers' Settlement in Westhoughton

Po Ling Chan

Westhoughton Local History Group





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## 6 Ws of Hong Kong

- Where is Hong Kong?
- How is the weather in Hong Kong?
- Who & Where are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?
- What were our lives in Hong Kong?
- Why did we leave Hong Kong?
- When did we leave Hong Kong?

# Where is HK?



## Administrative and Autonomous Regions on China's Periphery

- Special administrative regions
- Autonomous regions



Hong Kong is located on the coast of Southeast China

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# Where is HK?

## Distance from Manchester to Hong Kong

- Airline: 9612 km
- Driving route: 12339 km



Source: <https://www.distance.to/Manchester/Hong-Kong>

# Where is HK?

## Administrative and Autonomous Regions on China's Periphery

- Special administrative regions
- Autonomous regions



# Where is HK?

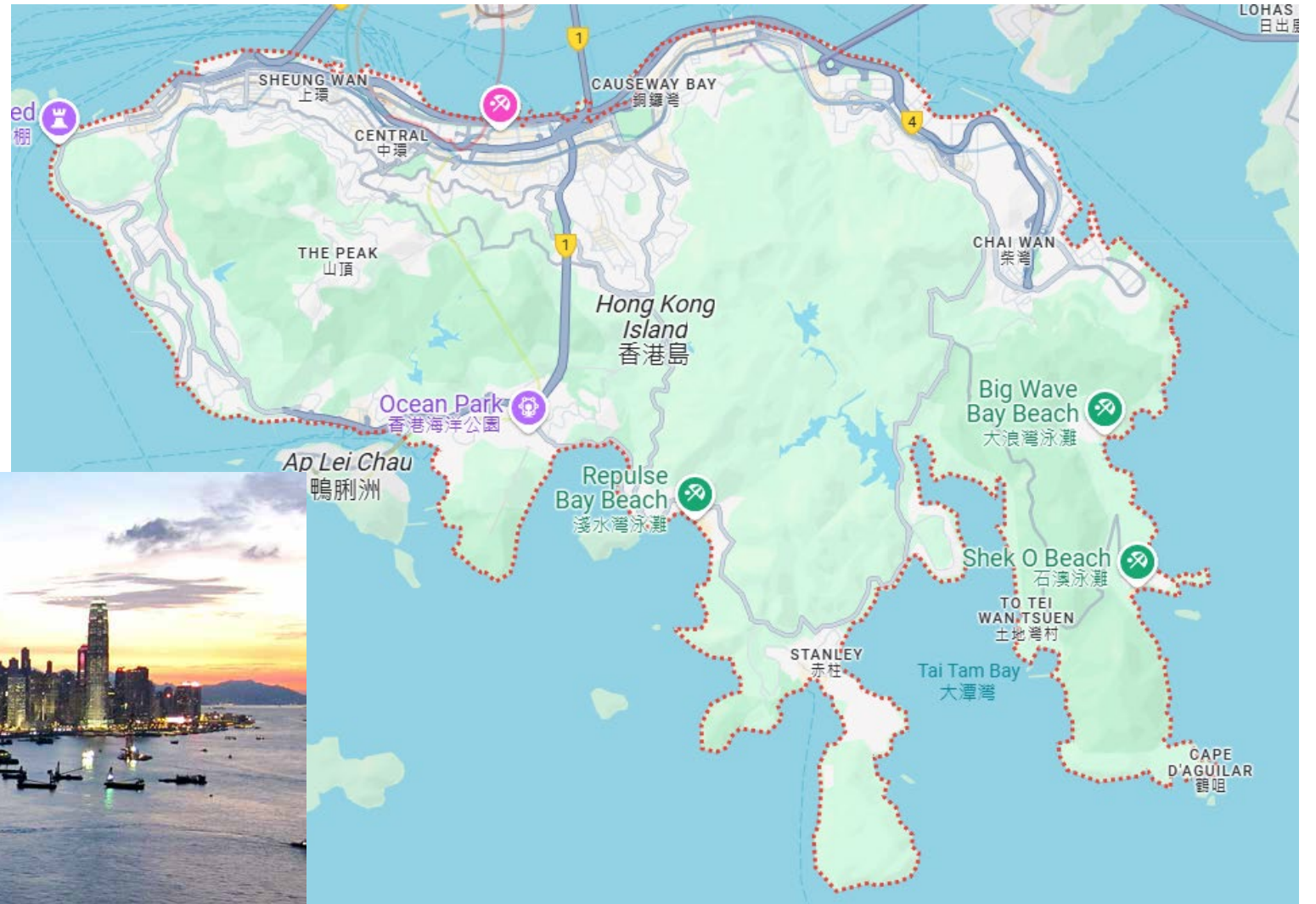
Hong Kong is a former British colony handed back to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997.



# Where is HK?

The city spreads across:

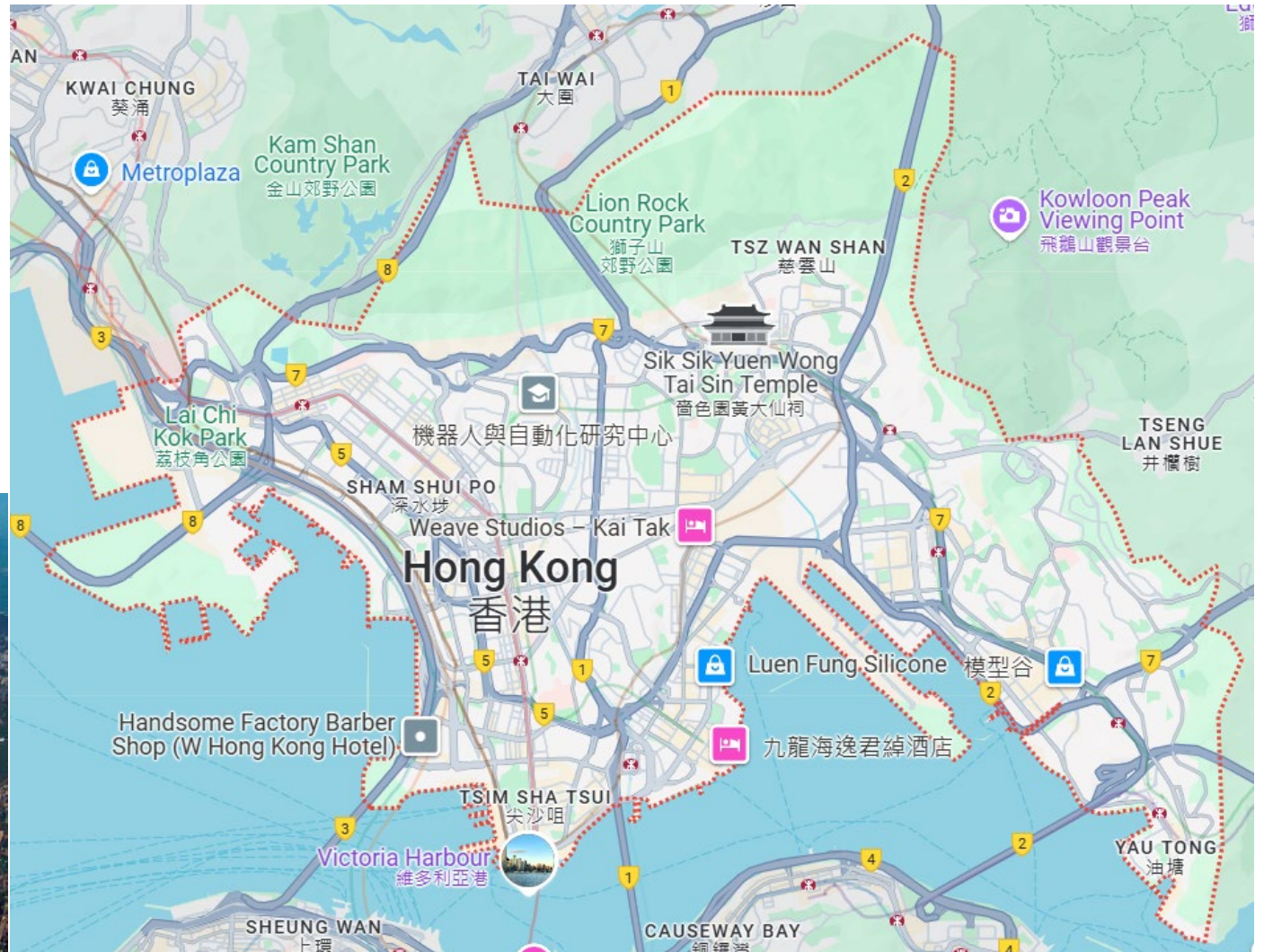
➤ Hong Kong Island



# Where is HK?

The city spreads across:

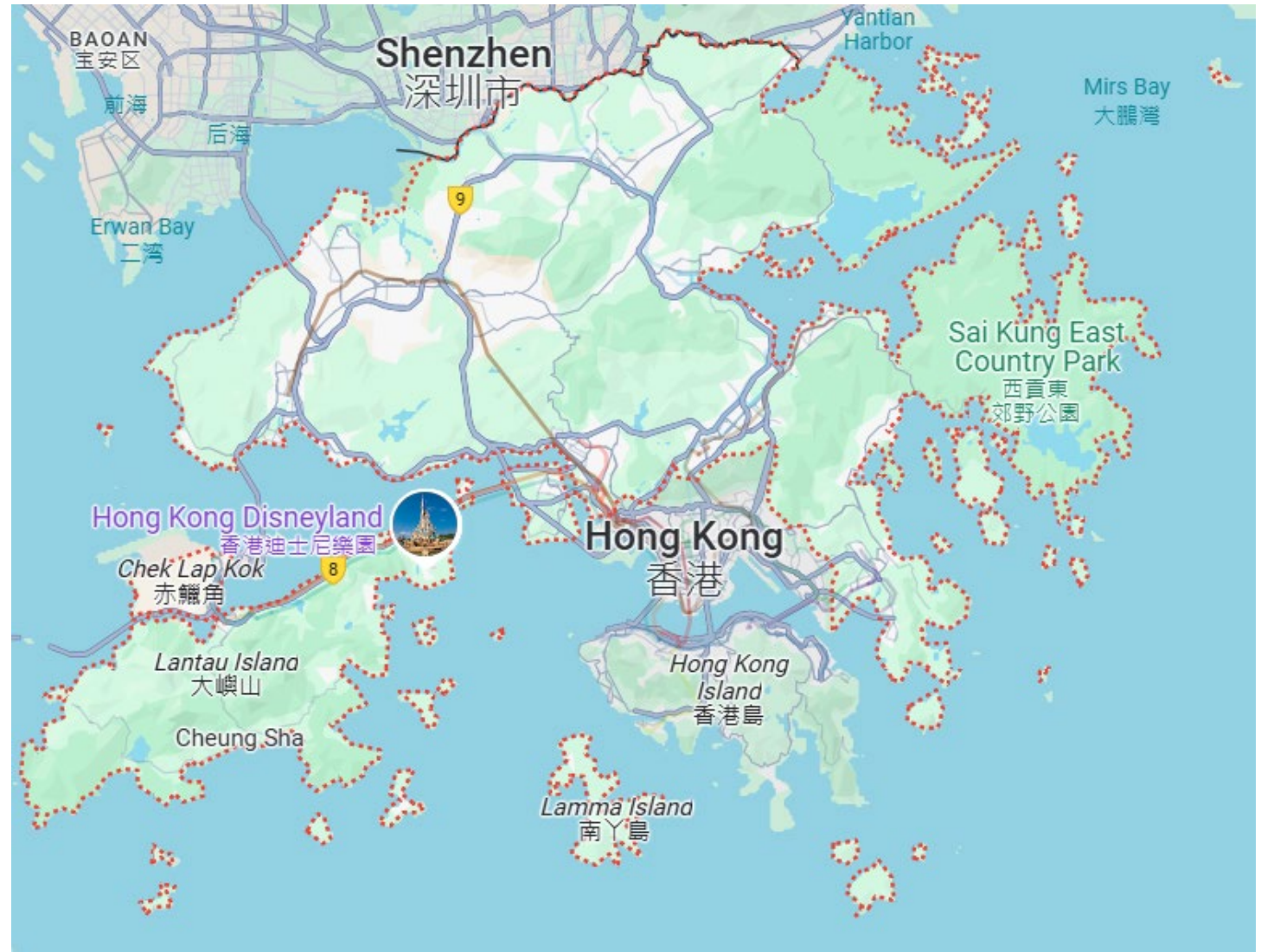
- Hong Kong Island
- The Kowloon Peninsula



# Where is HK?

The city spreads across:

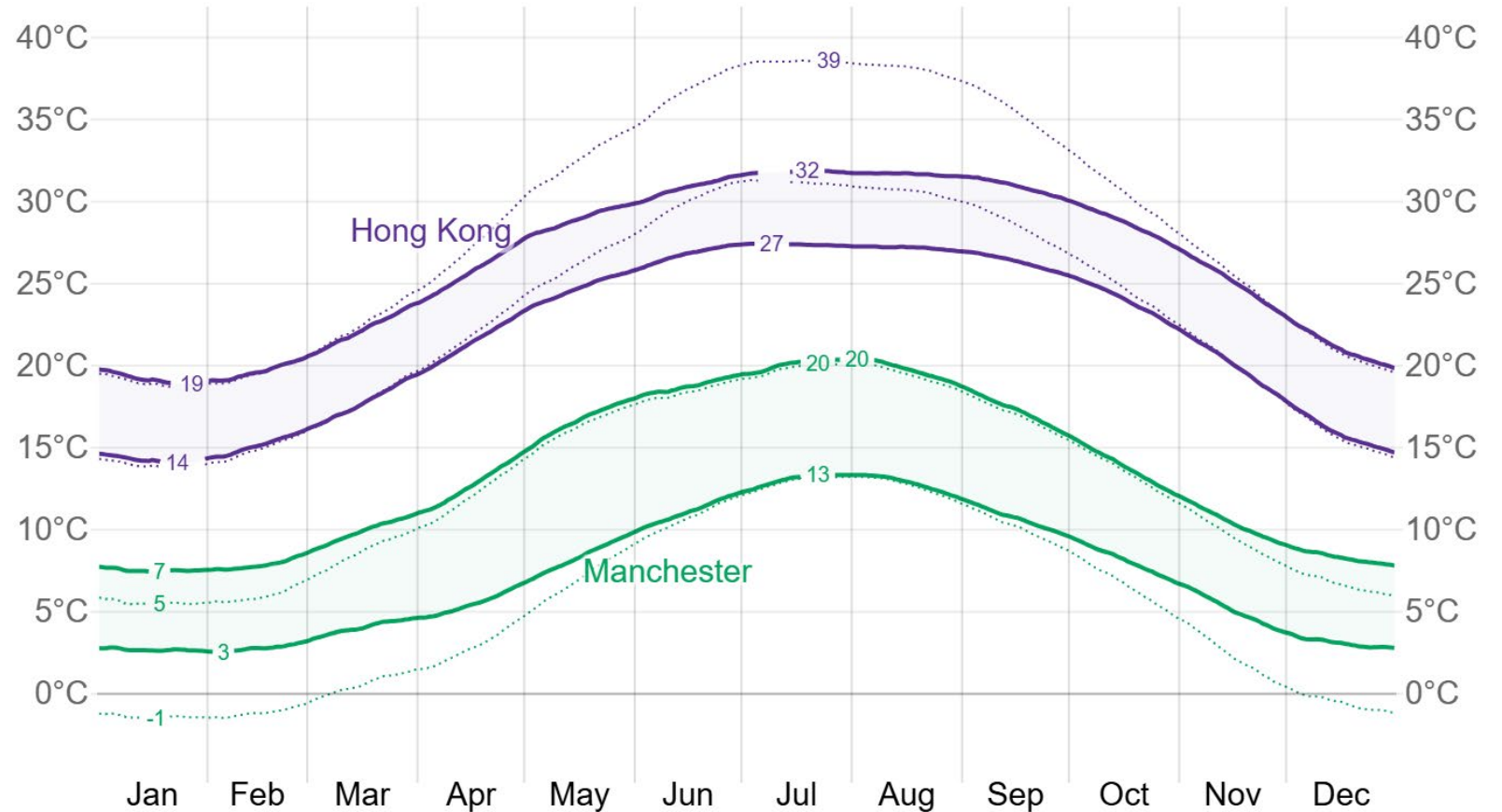
- Hong Kong Island
- the Kowloon Peninsula
- The New Territories and over 260 islands



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# How is the weather of HK?

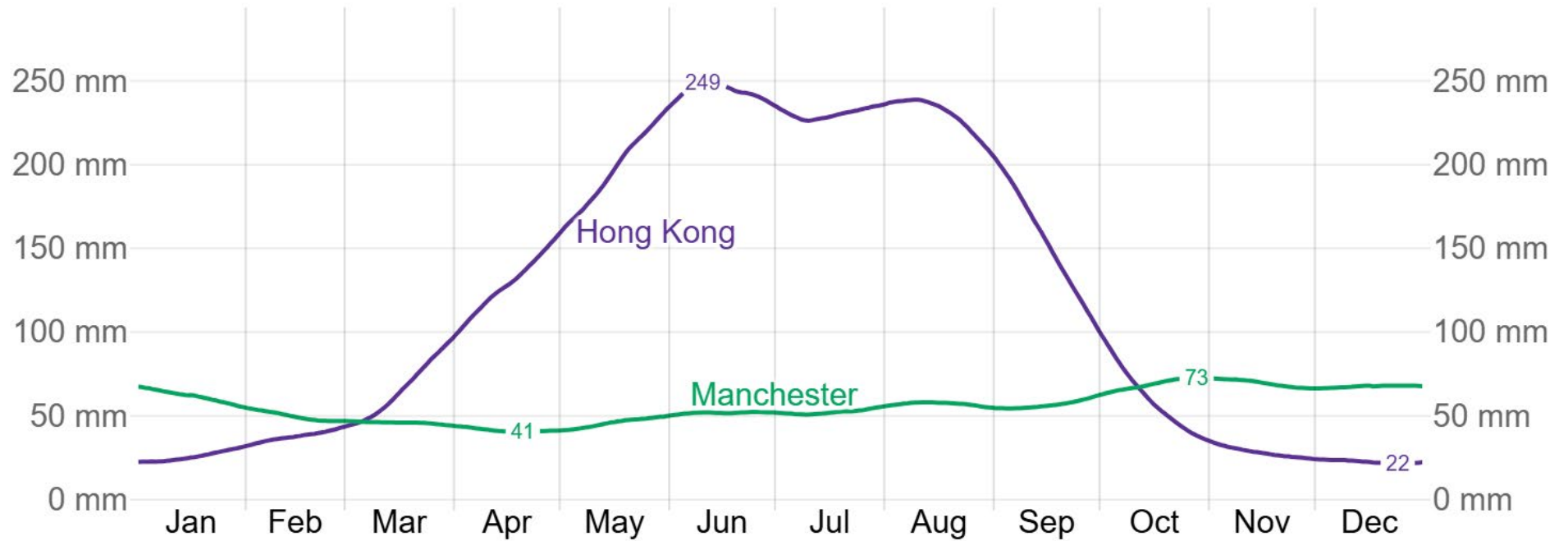
## Average High and Low Temperature



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# How is the weather of HK?

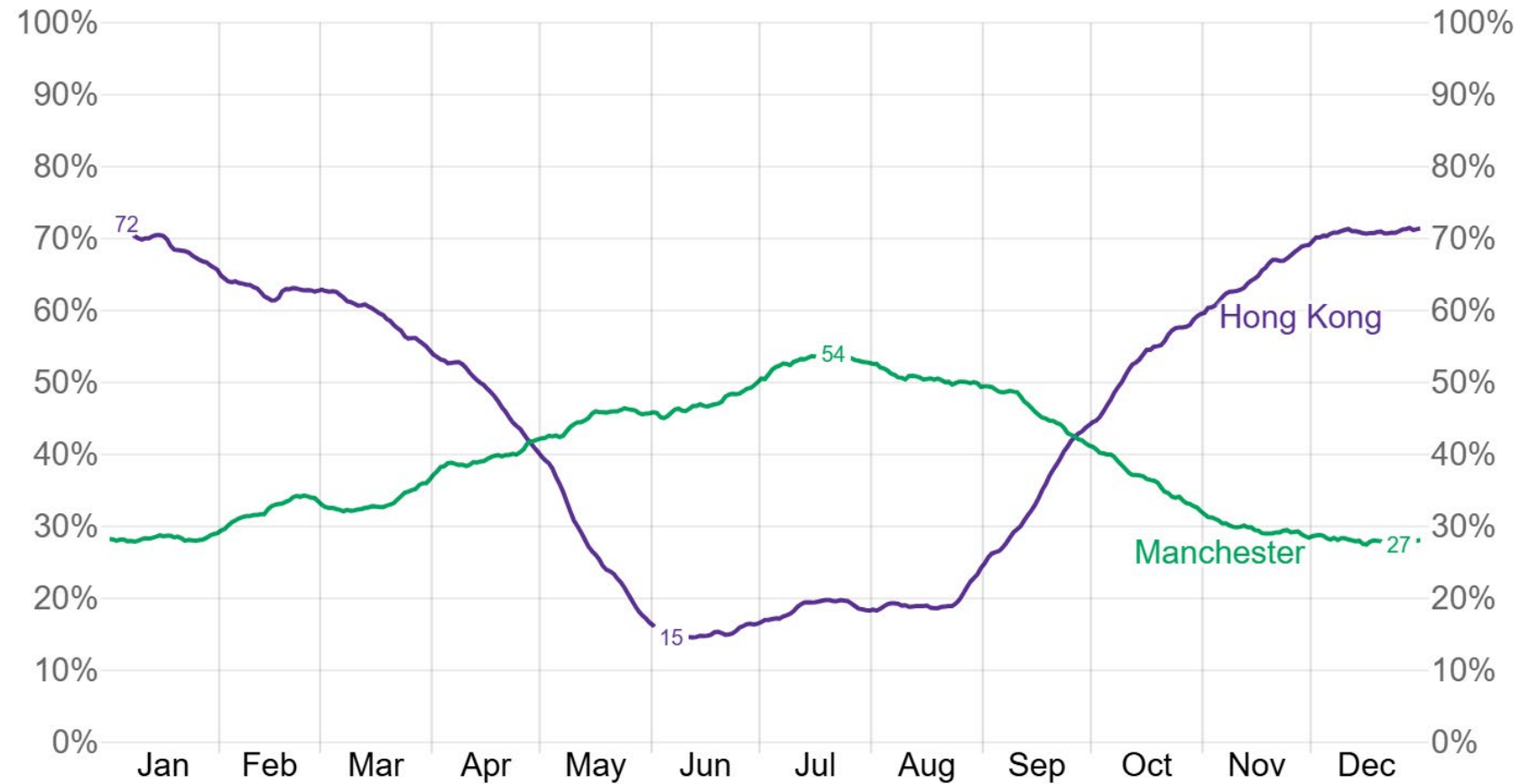
## Average Monthly Rainfall



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# How is the weather of HK?

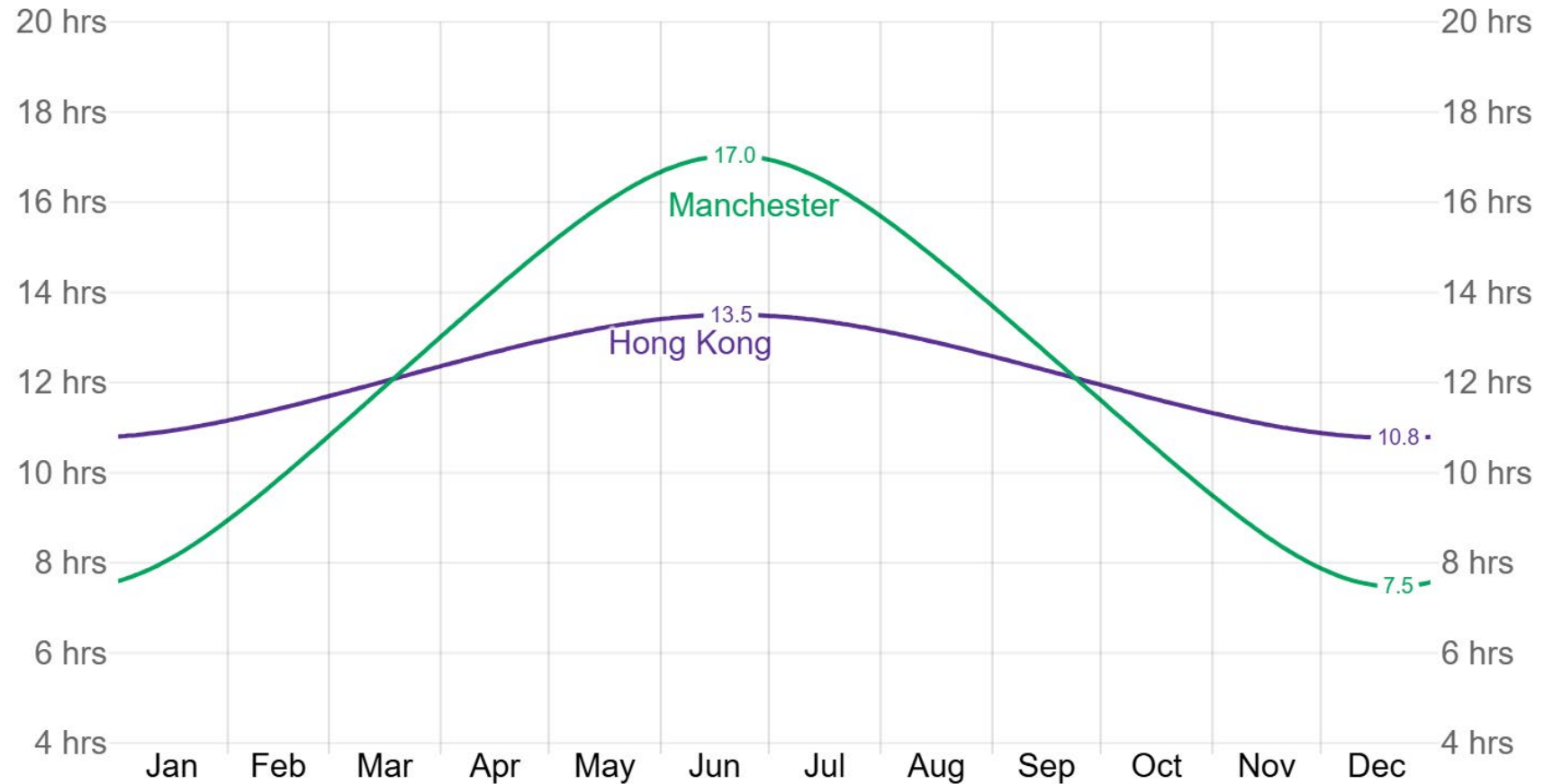
Chance of  
Clearer  
Skies



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# How is the weather of HK?

## Hours of Daylight



Hong Kong is very hot and humid in summer, with heavy rainfall. Temperature can be as high as 35 Degrees Celsius. It can still be over 20 Degrees Celsius in winter, but it is already cooler and dryer.

Features of Spring and Autumn are not obvious in Hong Kong.

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# Who are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?

## Hong Kongers

- According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, **'Hongkonger' means a native or inhabitant of Hong Kong.**
- The UK government has used **'Hong Konger' in its standard list of nationalities** since 2020.

## BN(O): British national (overseas)

- 'British nationals (overseas) status was created by Article 4(1) of the Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order 1986. The order came into effect on 1 July 1987 before Hong Kong was no longer a dependent territory of the UK and returned to Chinese rule on 1 July 1997. **British nationals (overseas) are Commonwealth citizens.** [*British national (overseas) document version 43.0* published for Home Office staff on 16 Jan 2024]

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# Who are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?

## Rights of BN(O) citizens

- 'British national (overseas) citizens can **hold a British passport** and get consular help and protection from UK diplomatic posts.'
- 'Unless the BN(O) is a dual British citizen, they are **subject to immigration controls** and **do not have** the automatic **right to live or work in the UK.**' [*British national (overseas) document version 43.0* published for Home Office staff on 16 Jan 2024]

## BN(O) Visa opened on 31 January 2021

- 'The new Hong Kong BN(O) Visa is a **significant change to the UK immigration system** and will allow BN(O) citizens to apply for two periods of 30 months' leave or 5 years' leave.'
- This new immigration route will **afford BN(O) citizens the right to live and work or study in the UK** and gives them a path to full British citizenship.' [*Home Secretary announces details of the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa* on 22 July 2020]

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# Who are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?

## Who can apply BN(O) Visa?

- 'If you're from Hong Kong and are a British national (overseas) **you and your family members can apply for a British National (Overseas) visa.**'
- 'If you're **the child of a British national (overseas) aged 18 or older and born on or after 1 July 1997**, you can apply separately from your parent. Your family members can also apply with you.' [*British National (Overseas) visa, GOV.UK*]

## BN(O) Hong Kongers

- **The people of Hong Kong who use the BNO Visa route to settle in the UK** are called 'BNO Hong Kongers'.
- 'By the end of September 2024, **over 190,000 Hong Kong immigrants had settled across the UK** through the bespoke British National (Overseas) Visa scheme.' [*Accredited official statistics, GOV.UK* published on 28 Nov 2024]

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# Where are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?

## In the Northwest of the UK

- A survey of 2,089 BNO Hong Kongers conducted from June to July 2023 (Rolfe and Benson, 2023) showed that:
  - 20% live in the Northwest;
  - **12.4% live in Greater Manchester**, the second largest after London.

## In Westhoughton

- BNO Hong Kongers started settling in Westhoughton in the first quarter of 2021. The number of arrivals has been declining since last year.
- It is estimated that there are **over 100 households** of BNO Hong Kongers.

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# Where are the 'BNO Hong Kongers'?

## In Westhoughton

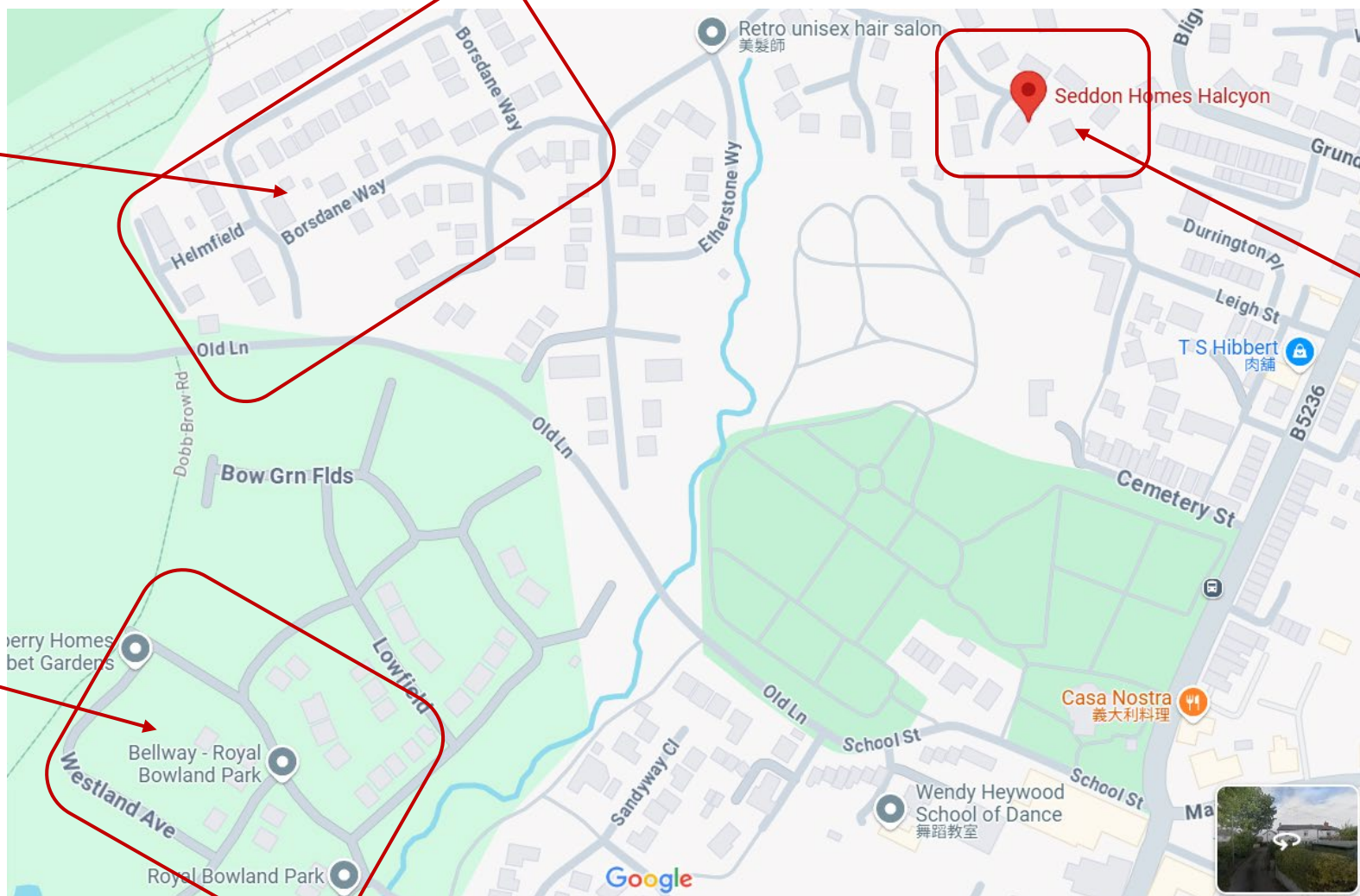
- We mainly live in new builds in Westhoughton, such as Silkash, Royal Bowland Park, Vista, Seddon Homes Halcyon and some smaller ones nearby.
- Others settle in older houses across Westhoughton.



Vista

Royal  
Bowland Park

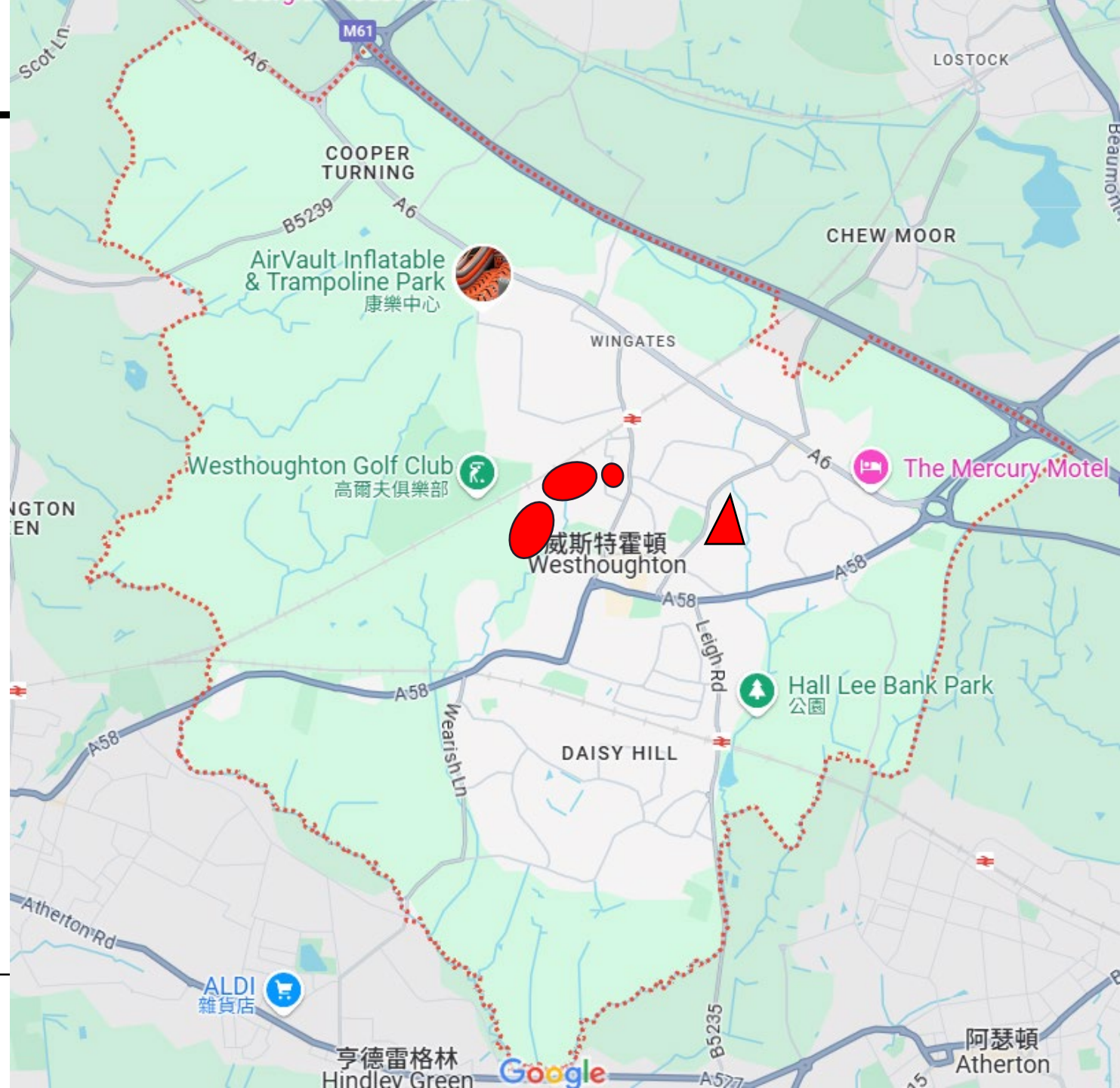
Seddon  
Homes  
Halcyon



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# Where are the 'BNO Hong Kongers' in Westhoughton?

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# What were our lives in Hong Kong?





# What were our lives in Hong Kong?

## Introduction

- Hong Kong is **one of the most densely populated places on earth**. There are around 42,000 people per square mile on Hong Kong Island alone.
- It is a **global financial hub**. Offices, apartment blocks, transport systems, and 7 million people are all crammed into one place. The only way to make it all fit is by building up, which makes Hong Kong **one of the world's most vertical cities**.





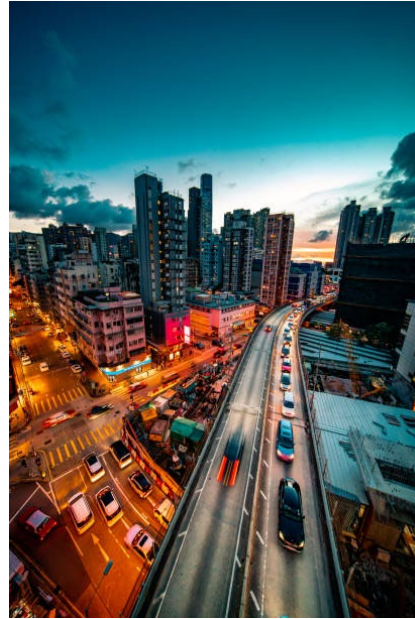
## Busy and crowded

True Hong Kongers join the crowds to work in **rush hour**.





## Busy and crowded





## A city where money matters

- It's one of the highest **concentrations of banking institutions** in the world.
- **HSBC** is one of the famous ones, and it is closely related to Hong Kong businesses **160 years ago**.
- The British first established **Hong Kong as a free port** where people of any nationality could trade. It was a bustling harbour, and **a bank was needed** there instead of going via head office in London, which took over 50 days for mail.



Head Office of HSBC in HK

## A city where money matters

- **HSBC's shareholders** come from worldwide, including **Europe, India, and China**.
- The bank enables all the people who come here to invest in and build the colony and its infrastructure.
- **Hong Kong's economy has boomed** over the decades as an economy set up around trade.

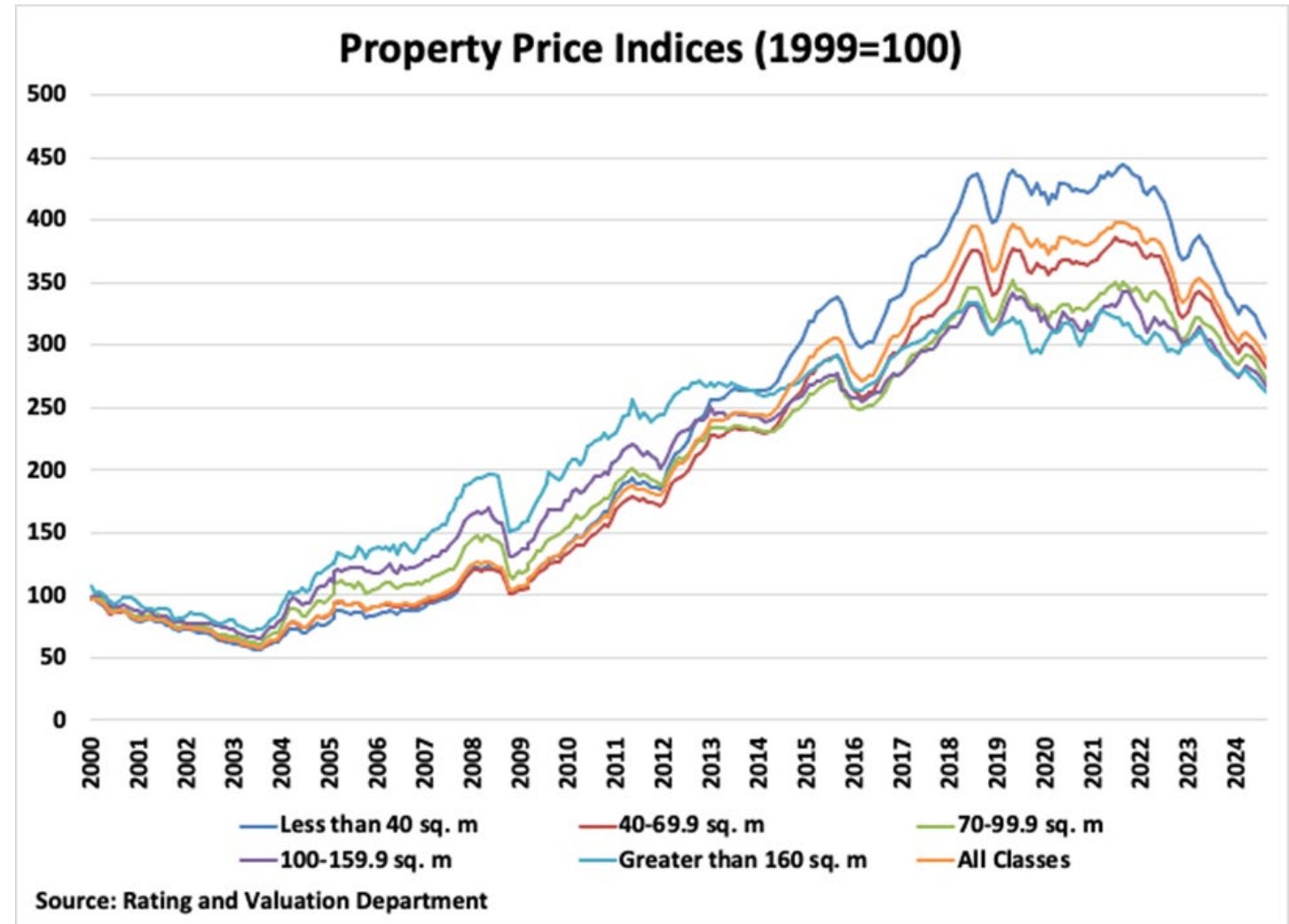
## Private properties

- Space is very limited in such a crowded city. **The property prices are jaw-dropping!** In 2017, the cost of an apartment of **1235 sq. ft.** was about **2.5 million pounds**.
- Homes cost 18 times more than an average family's income. Rents are more than twice the amount you'd pay in the UK. Thus, **most Hong Kongers live** on top of each other in **tiny flats**.



## Private properties

- Families work hard **to save money for the down payment** of a flat and **pay monthly instalments** after getting a mortgage from a bank.
- **Buying flats used to be a way of saving** in the past, **but not after 2021**. Housing prices have kept going down since the COVID-19 lockdown and the fleeing of Hong Kongers to the UK, Canada, and Australia via different ‘lifeboat’ schemes after the enforcement of the National Security Law in 2020.



Source: <https://www.globalpropertyguide.com/asia/hong-kong/price-history>

## Cage communities

- The poorer you are, the less space you have. There are 'cage communities' in some more deprived districts in Hong Kong.
- Private landlords illegally divided a flat into **bed spaces of about 6 feet of space lengthwise** (not larger than a cupboard), which **are called 'cages'**.
- You may be shocked to see such a living condition.





## From 'cages' to public housing

- **Over 200,000 people** are estimated to live in places like this.
- In the cages on the left, **11 people live in a corridor alone without a kitchen**. The tenants need to go out to have meals. They will continue living here until they get a council house.
- Council houses are called **public housing** in Hong Kong.

Photos and source:

BBC World's Busiest Cities Series: Hong Kong EP-1



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## Public Housing

- Public housing in Hong Kong is a set of mass housing programmes through which the Hong Kong Government provides **affordable housing for lower-income residents**.
- It is a major component of housing in Hong Kong, with **nearly half of the population now residing** in some form of public housing, including the Home Ownership Scheme.



# Why did we leave Hong Kong?

In **2019**, the Hong Kong government's **drastic response to protests** against an extradition bill quickly evolved into a **movement mobilising millions to safeguard Hong Kong's autonomy**, as the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* promised.



# Why did we leave Hong Kong?



Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48655634>

# Why did we leave Hong Kong?



Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48655634>



# Why did we leave Hong Kong?

- The **protests** were largely peaceful but were faced with **disproportionate police violence**.
- Clashes between police and protesters became a frequent occurrence.



# Why did we leave Hong Kong?



Protests returned to Hong Kong streets following the suspension of the extradition bill

# Timeline of 2019

12 June



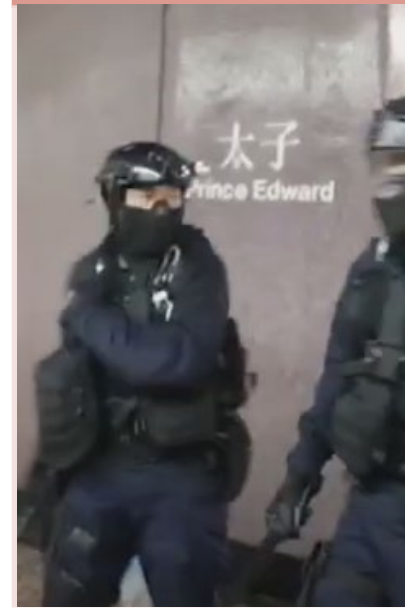
1 Jul



21 Jul



31 Aug



11-29 Nov



Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48607723>,  
<https://hongkongfp.com/2019/09/01/violence-erupts-across-hong-kong-police-fire-warning-shots-mtr-closes-5-lines-officers-storm-train-carriage/>, Hong Kong Video Archive, Vox.



# Why did we leave Hong Kong?

- By imposing the **National Security Law (NSL)** in 2020, the People's Republic of China (PRC) severely **undermines Hong Kong's democracy, freedom, and human rights** further.



Jimmy Lai, owner of pro-democracy *Apple Daily*, was accused of collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security



**Hong Kong 47** were charged with conspiracy to commit subversion under the NSL.





## Why did we leave Hong Kong?

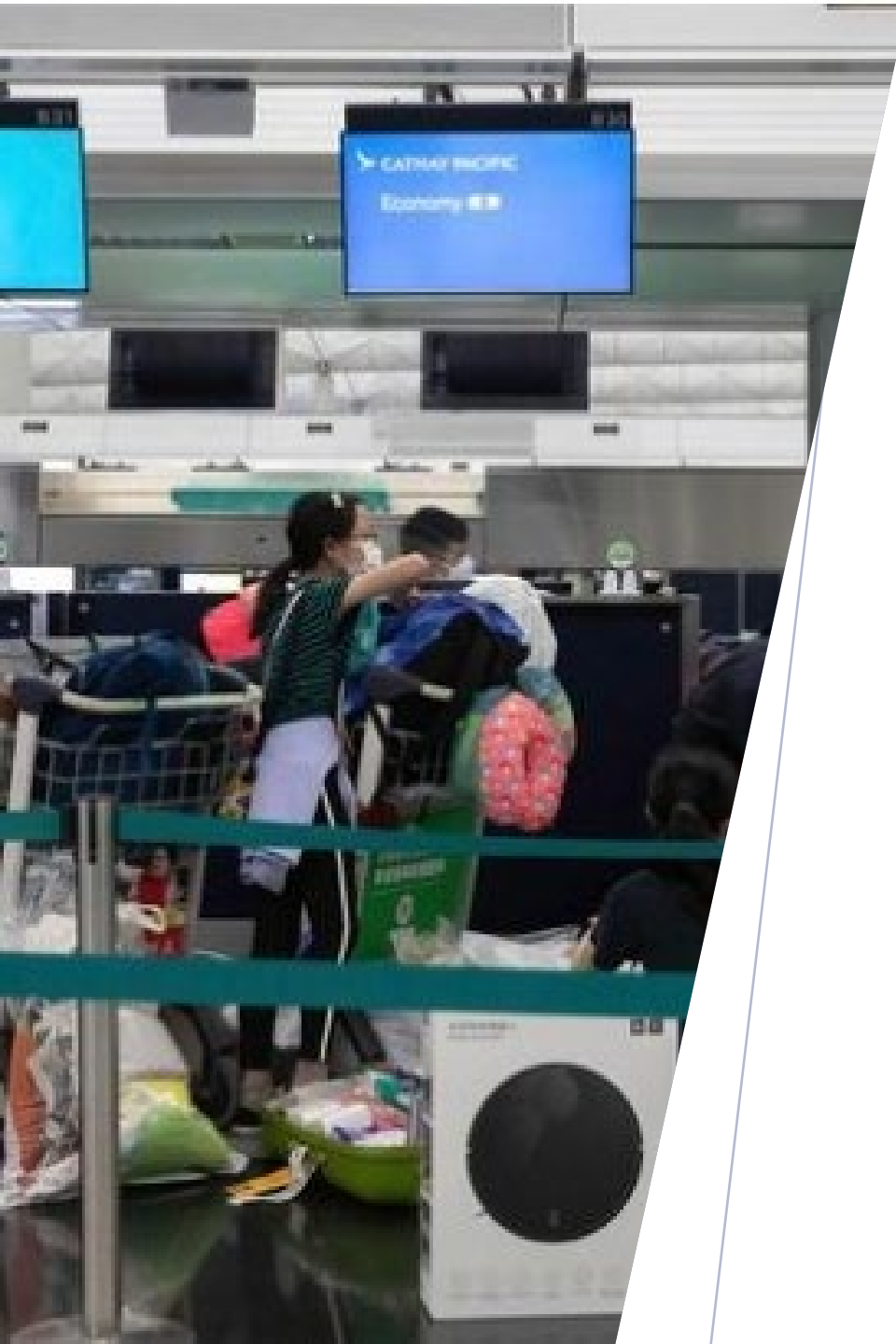
- The Foreign Secretary of the UK stated explicitly that the NSL: **‘violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority’** and **‘directly threaten the freedoms and rights protected by the Joint Declaration’**



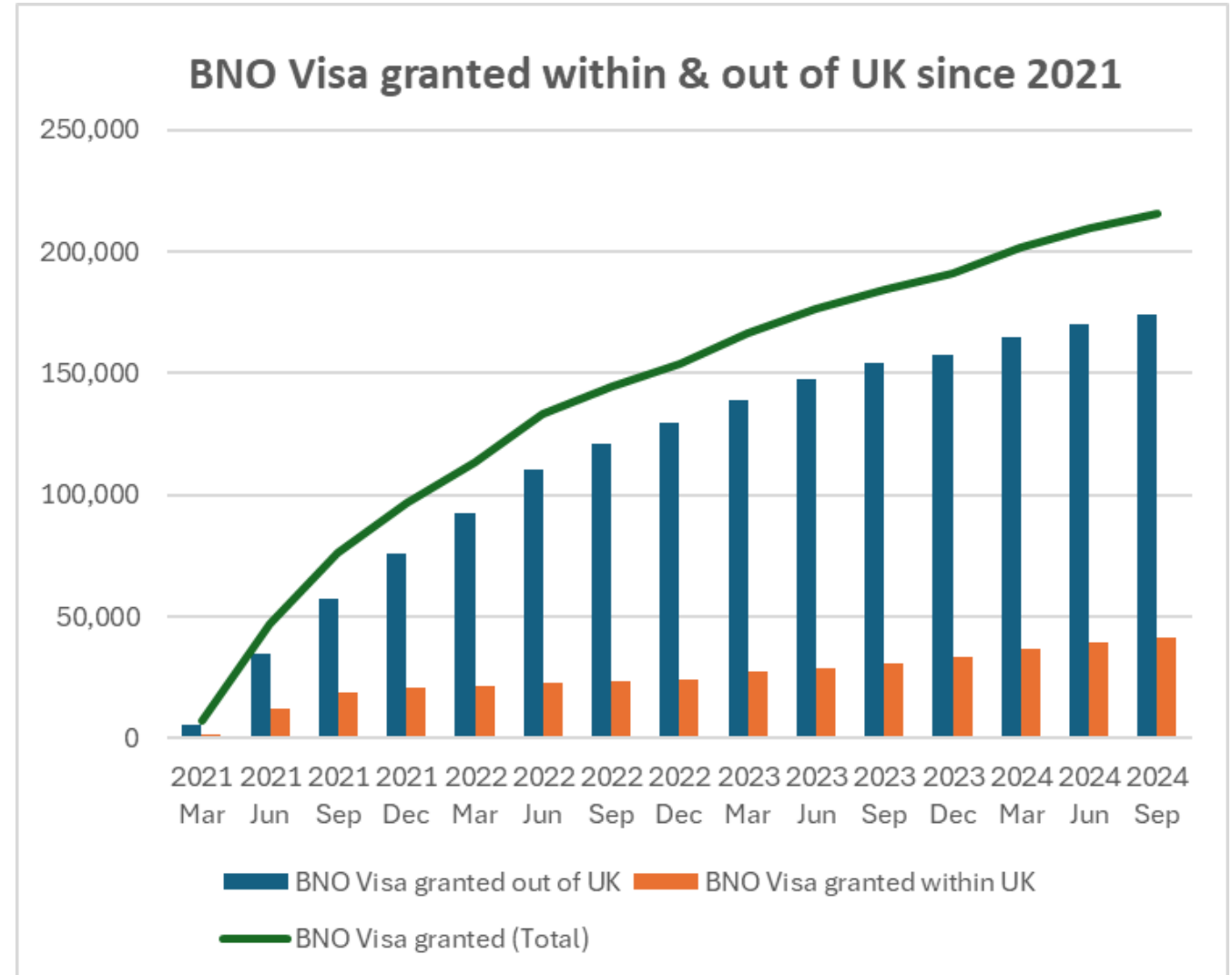
# Why did we leave Hong Kong?

- Correspondingly, a bespoke BNO Visa route was developed in January 2021 to fulfil the UK government's historic commitment and responsibilities to Hong Kongers.
- Many BNO Hong Kongers took the chance to leave Hong Kong for the UK to start a new life!



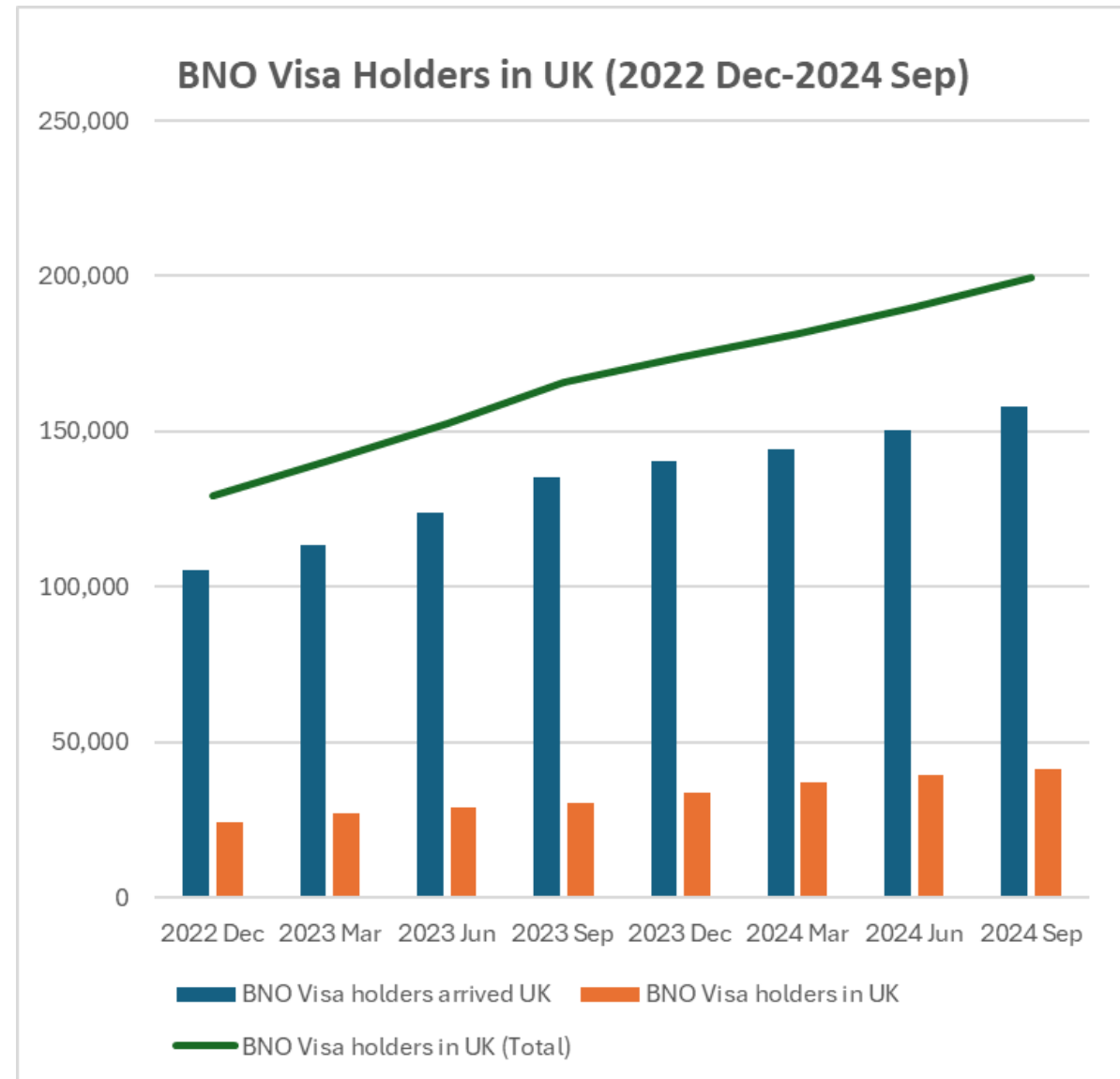


# When did we leave Hong Kong?





# When did we leave Hong Kong?





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## What life is like in Westhoughton?

- What jobs do we do now?
- Issues encountered when we arrived
- How are our children and youths getting on at school and/or university?
- What local clubs or societies have we joined?
- Any problems with assimilation?
- What can we contribute to the life and culture of Westhoughton?



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

## What did we do in Hong Kong?

- Some of us were **professionals**, such as teachers, social workers and administrators, while others ran **small businesses**, from logistics and freight to renovation projects.

## What job do we do now?

- Some of us are **retired or doing volunteer work**. Others get jobs in **logistics and warehouses** or work as teaching assistants in schools. Some **continue their previous profession** (e.g. I.T.) in the UK. A few keep **working** for Hong Kong employers **online**.





UK immigration

+ Add to myFT

# Hongkongers in UK struggle to make skills pay in jobs market

Barriers to employment for new migrants mean many are overqualified



© FT montage/Dreamstime



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

## Issues encountered when we arrived

- The Mass Transit Railway (MTR) and franchised bus network make travel within Hong Kong very convenient. There is no need for a car in Hong Kong. In Westhoughton, **a car is essential, especially for families.**
- We used to live in private properties or public housing estate apartments in very densely populated areas in Hong Kong. Now we live in much more **spacious houses** here. However, we **face many problems as we seldom do DIYs! Household affairs** are usually done by domestic servants or paid services in Hong Kong.



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

## Issues encountered when we arrived

- In Hong Kong, we **get used to being very efficient** in all aspects, including work and life.
- We must fine-tune for a **much slower pace in every aspect of daily life here**, such as:
  - applying for recycling bins, water supply, electricity and gas, and bank accounts;
  - finding a place in primary or secondary schools for the kids.
  - Not to mention the constant delay and sometimes on-strike train services between Westhoughton and Manchester Central Zone.





# What life is like in Westhoughton?

How are our children and youth getting on at school and/or university?

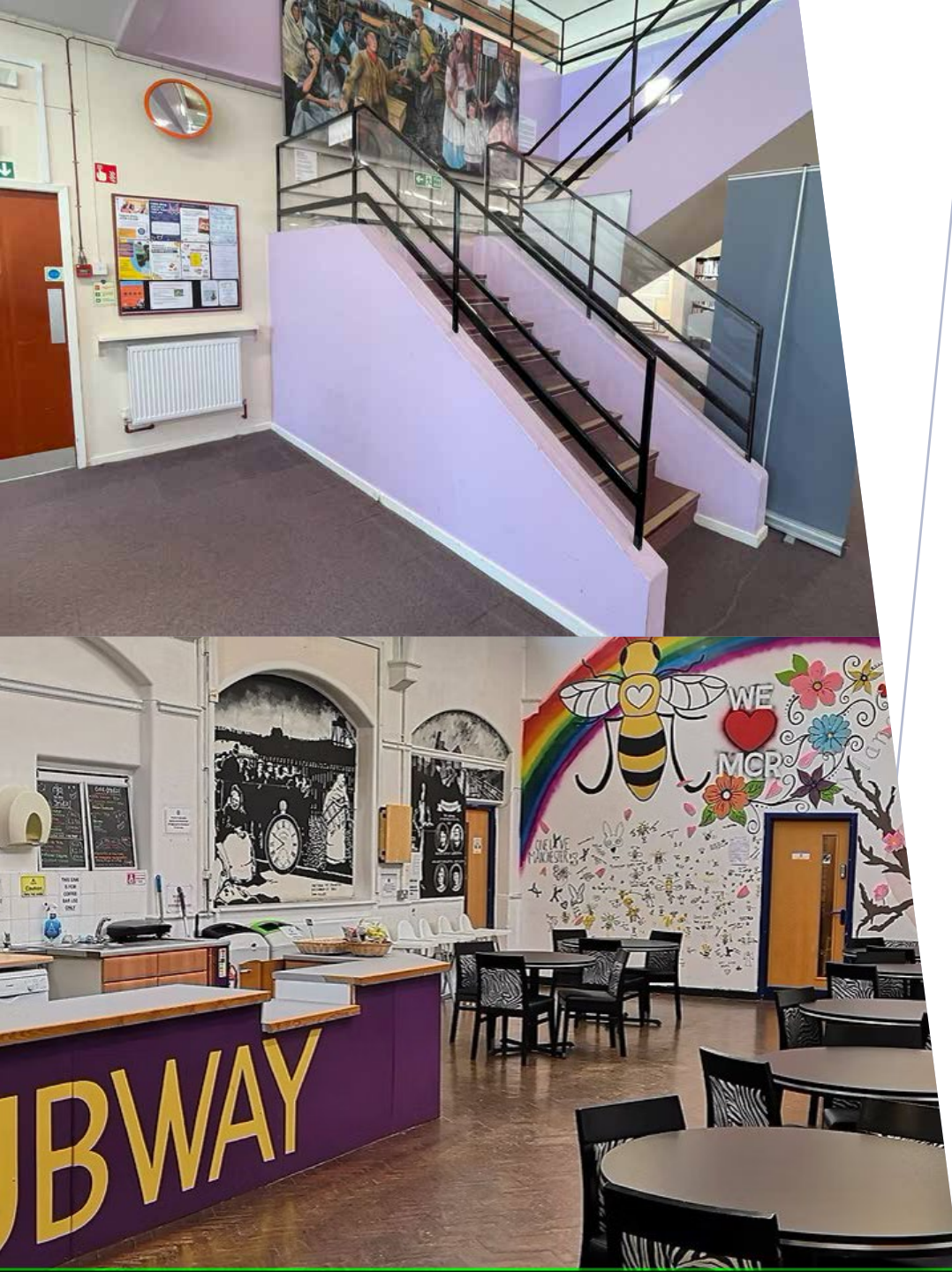
- Our children and youth mix well with their classmates in general. They **enjoy school life and quickly make friends with classmates**. My god-grandson and daughter attend their classmates' **birthday parties throughout the year!**
- Most young Hong Kongers are still **primary or secondary school students**. Not many have gone to university.



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

How are our children and youth getting on at school and/or university?

- Many young Hong Kongers with BNO status **cannot access university education** in the UK without student finance because they are **not eligible for home fee status**.
- They have to pay up to 50,000 pounds a year in university tuition fees. That not only **prices them out** but somehow **denies** them the **opportunity to pursue professional careers**.



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

## What local clubs or societies have we joined?

- Many Hong Kongers join the **Westhoughton Leisure Centre to exercise**, such as swimming, playing badminton, and going to the gym.
- Some go to **Westhoughton Library** to borrow books, use its facilities or join the story-telling sections for babies on Friday mornings.
- Others join **activities or interest classes** held in the **Community Hub** on the Central Drive.
- Joining the **Westhoughton Local History Group**, of course!



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

## What local clubs or societies have we joined?

- These are **good ways to** interact with residents and help us **integrate** into the local community.
- We seldom **go to the pubs** on Market Street. Last summer, I went to a pub to watch the UEFA European Football Championship Semi-Final (England vs the Netherlands) to **feel the vibes**. It was an excellent experience!

# What life is like in Westhoughton?

Any problems with assimilation?

## Language barriers

- Although most people here think that Hong Kongers' English is good and easy to communicate, many of us **lack the confidence to speak English.**
- This may be the **result of a stringent English standard applied** in most of the schools in Hong Kong. As a former secondary school teacher, I have seen that most teachers in Hong Kong usually demand a lot from students instead of giving appreciation.

# What life is like in Westhoughton?

Any problems with assimilation?

## Language barriers

- We find it challenging to get used to the accents of different areas in the UK. **Our listening is somehow poor, especially** when communicating **over the phone!**
- It is quite **a scary experience** for some Hong Kongers when they need to manage household and financial issues over the phone.

# What life is like in Westhoughton?

Any problems with assimilation?

## Cultural barriers

- In the British environment, **work culture** is different and can be difficult for Hong Kongers to assimilate.
- We learn to adopt a more **skills-based approach** to take proper action with results, whether the task is major or minor. We also need to have **more local knowledge** in all aspects.



# What life is like in Westhoughton?

What can we contribute to the life and culture of Westhoughton?

- **Hong Kong-style food and drinks, a fusion of East and West** (prepared for WLHG members to try after the talk)
- **Festive vibes** during the Lunar New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.,
- **Active participation** in community affairs and further integration.

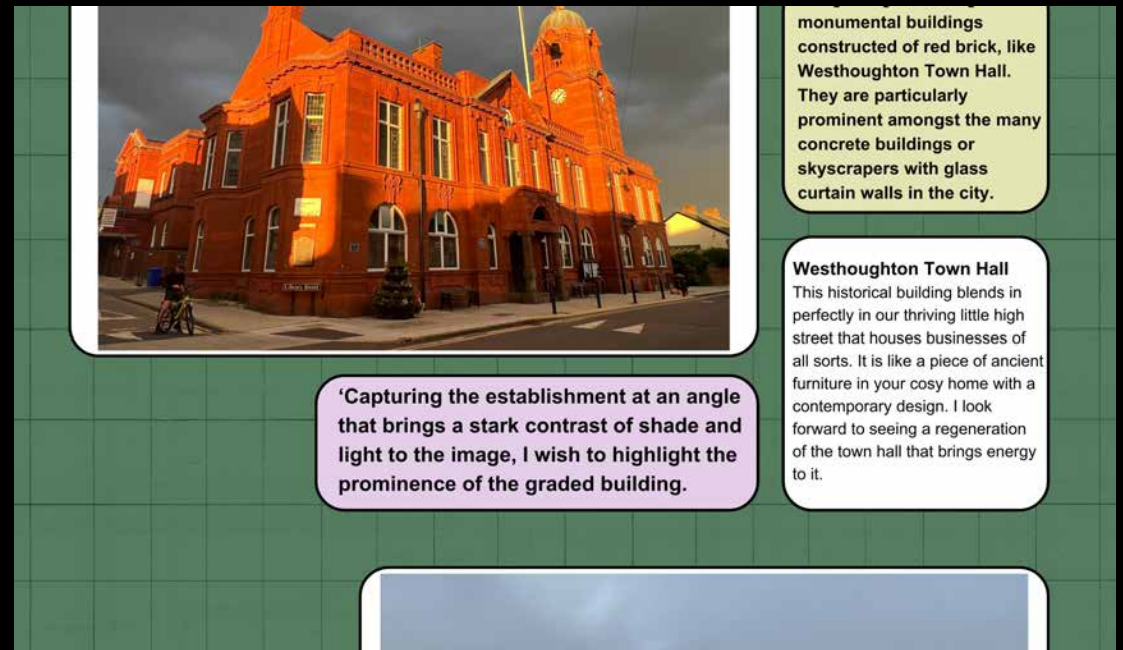
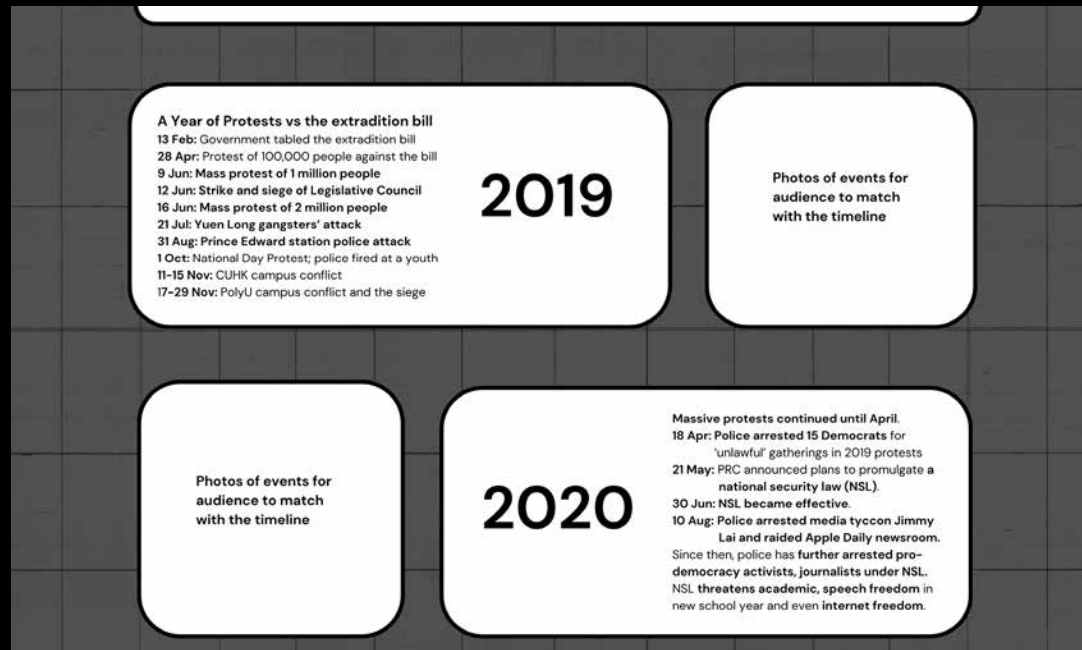


# What life is like in Westhoughton?

What can we contribute to the life and culture of Westhoughton?

- Most importantly, **upholding** the core British Values of **Democracy, Rule of Law, and Individual Liberty**.
- **These values were transplanted into the minds of Hong Kongers** during the colonial period before 1997, reinforced in the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the massive protests in the second half of 2019 against an extradition bill.





**What do we like about Westhoughton? What do we find interesting, and why?**

The photo exhibition from 13 to 31 May 2025 at the Westhoughton Library will illustrate what features of Westhoughton appeal to us and what we found so different.

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The End

Thank you!

