

Hong Kong for wine lovers

Home to a wide array of restaurants and shops with seriously impressive wine lists, it's easy to see why Hong Kong is a favourite destination for fine wine enthusiasts in Asia

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When wine duty was eliminated in Hong Kong in 2008, the wine scene changed dramatically. All the major wine auction houses swooped into the city within months of the announcement, thousands of new wine importers and retailers opened shop, and the city became a magnet for international chefs and sommeliers. By 2010, Hong Kong's wine auction sales eclipsed those of New York and London, making it the highest revenue generator for most of the major wine auction houses and a mecca for fine wine lovers in Asia.

Then, just as dramatically, the summer of 2019 abruptly halted this growth: Hong Kong was wracked with protests that affected nearly all businesses in tourism, hospitality, and food and

beverage. Just as the protests started to settle down in early 2020, the global pandemic further dampened the market.

Despite these challenging times, if you ask an Asia-based wine lover which city comes to mind for enjoying and buying fine wines, the most likely answer will be Hong Kong. Although tourism has halted since the pandemic, China continues to flex its muscles via online wine auctions and website orders, and there's growing demand for Burgundy wines. The sheer range and availability of fine wines from around the world in Hong Kong is staggering – at wine shops, supermarkets and on restaurant wine lists.

So here are my top 10 places for fine wine lovers to visit in Hong Kong. ►

Hong Kong's world-famous city skyline, featuring Victoria Harbour and its Star Ferry





1. L'ATELIER DE JOEL ROBUCHON

Largest wine list in Hong Kong

With more than 3,400 labels, L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon has the largest and most impressive wine list in Hong Kong. Whether you are looking for a simple, well-priced bottle of Domaine de l'A or a vertical of Château Margaux or Latour going back to the 1920s, this restaurant wine list has the deepest selection of mature vintages of top French wines. In addition to the main list, diners also have access to the 16,800 wines from its sister property, Lisboa cellars in Macau – just order the wines a week or two in advance. robuchon.hk
Shop 401, Landmark Atrium, 15 Queen's Road Central, Central

2. RESTAURANT PETRUS AT ISLAND SHANGRI-LA

Extensive list of French classics

Since 1991, Petrus has set the standards for fine French cuisine in Hong Kong island, just as Gaddi's has done across the harbour in Tsim Sha Tsui. What sets Petrus apart from other French fine-dining restaurants is its impressive food and wine pairing events held throughout the year. The 1,800-wine list, which features 27 different Petrus vintages, has been augmented by the current wine director Yohann Jouselin MS. shangri-la.com
Level 56, Pacific Place, Supreme Court Road, Central

3. L'ENVOI

Excellent newcomer with a well-curated wine list

In two years, L'Envol has achieved two Michelin stars and a long list of followers, not just for its

cuisine but for its thoughtful wine list. Chef Olivier Elzer creates lighter, healthier versions of French classics and the wine list is equally innovative. The contemporary, stylish setting echoes the cuisine and wine list. marriott.com

The St Regis Hong Kong, 1 Harbour Drive, Wan Chai

4. AMBER & SOMM

Innovative and trendy fine-dining and wine bar

Amber showcases the creativity of its talented chef Richard Ekkebus, who refined the menu in 2019 to offer a healthier contemporary fine-dining experience. Minimising ingredients such as butter and sugar, Ekkebus uses plant-based oils, agave and seaweed as alternatives. The extensive wine list has something for everyone, with wines from Austria, Lebanon, Portugal and Slovenia. For a more casual experience, head next door to Somm. This wine bar and bistro lists 101 wines, many of them available in 75ml, 125ml, 375ml and 500ml measures. mandarinoriental.com

The Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, 15 Queen's Road Central, Central

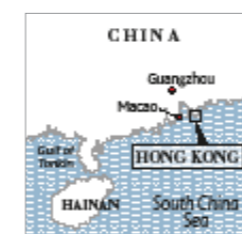
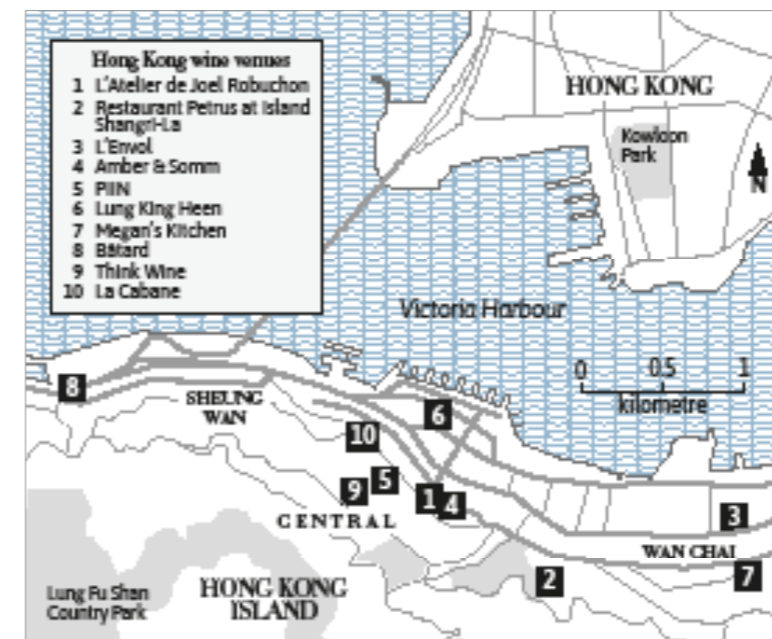
5. PIIN

Wine-focused Cantonese restaurant and bar

PIIN stands out for its large 2,000-label list that rivals those of hotels and fine-dining venues,

Above from left: pastry chef Mandy Siu Yuen-sang at L'Envol; L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon; baked whole abalone puff with diced chicken at Lung King Heen

‘L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon has the largest and most impressive wine list in Hong Kong’



offering deep verticals of large-format wines, complemented by excellent modern Cantonese cuisine by chef Ming Wong. The wine list's strength is Burgundy (the venue was opened by the owners of Château de Meursault and Château de Marsannay), with multiple vintages of many top Burgundy estates. Its Bordeaux selection is also extensive. piin-hk.com

The Steps, H Code, 45 Pottinger St, Central

6. LUNG KING HEEN

Cantonese haute-cuisine with great wines

Most of the two- and three-star Michelin

Cantonese restaurants in Hong Kong – including Forum, Tin Lung Heen and Tang Court – have very good wine lists. But for a well-curated, select list, Lung King Heen stands out. To pair with the Cantonese dishes, there is a wonderful selection of wines from Alsace and an extensive list of Burgundies that range from the rare Domaine Ramonet, Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet 2012 to more casual wines such as Domaine Rapet's Pernand-Vergelesses 1er Cru Sous Frétille 2014. What really attracts people to Lung King Heen is the food, which is impeccable and detailed, as you'd expect from the world's first Chinese restaurant to receive three Michelin stars. fourseasons.com

Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, 8 Finance Street, Central

7. MEGAN'S KITCHEN

Local favourite for hot pot and wine

For a truly local Hong Kong dining experience, head to Megan's Kitchen for a hot pot and wine meal. Its 12-page food menu has everything from fresh seafood, noodles, duck and poultry dishes to a huge range of barbecue items. But it is famous for its hot pot, where you choose from 15 different soup bases and more than 100 fresh ingredients to dip into it. The wine list is extensive, with very low mark-ups – occasionally you can even find wines at below retail prices. A place to go with a group of close friends to enjoy simple Cantonese comfort food and a wonderful, value-for-money wine list. meganskitchen.com

Lucky Centre, 165-171 Wan Chai Road, Wan Chai ▶

‘The sheer range and availability of fine wines from around the world in Hong Kong is staggering’

8. BATARD

Great restaurant within a wine shop

Bâtard opened in 2020, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it has quickly become a favourite among wine lovers in Hong Kong. The reason is simple: the casual restaurant is housed within the popular Fine Wine Experience wine shop. Thousands of different wines – available at retail prices – can be enjoyed at Bâtard without corkage. Despite opening during a difficult year, the restaurant is fully booked months in advance. batardhk.com

The Fine Wine Experience, Shop E, 165-166 Connaught Road West, Sai Ying Pun

9. THINK WINE

French wine restaurant and bar for serious wine lovers

This new wine bar that opened its doors in 2019 is often praised and frequented by many wine professionals in town. The well-curated 500-label wine list is not the only attraction – the eclectic, casual-chic restaurant is sub-divided into cosier areas such as the private room, wine cellar and balcony, and the food, while simple, is very well executed. The wines are selected by Romain Lorient, the owner and experienced sommelier who worked for numerous restaurants such as the Comptoir Group (Hong Kong), Rech (Paris) and The Dorchester (London). Unlike most restaurant wine lists in Hong Kong, this list is dominated by lesser-known, good-value wines. thinkwinehk.com

LL Tower, 2 Shelley Street, Central

10. LA CABANE

Pioneering natural wine bar and bistro

Hong Kong is blessed with numerous wine bars dotted throughout the city, but La Cabane, which opened in 2012, is one of the pioneers, starting out in 2010 as a wine shop that specialised in importing natural wines into Hong Kong. Its continuing popularity is not just due to its well thought-out selection of natural wines, but also the casual, rustic decor and laid-back atmosphere. The wine list is predominantly French, but it also includes a good selection of natural wines from Australia, Austria, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa and even the Czech Republic and the UK. lacabane.hk

62 Hollywood Road, Central



Bâtard's chef de cuisine Aven Lau at The Fine Wine Experience shop

Cho Lee's top Hong Kong wine retail spots

A unique aspect of Hong Kong's wine scene is its strong BYOB culture, with many restaurants and hotels offering a one-for-one: buy one wine from the list and bring one bottle with no corkage. It would therefore be remiss not to mention the best retail shops where you can buy a great bottle of wine to bring to your favourite restaurant. **Watson's Wine** (watsonswine.com) is the largest retailer, with 28 stores throughout the city – its Central and Pacific Place shops have the greatest Bordeaux selection with 450 lines each, and nearly as many Burgundy options. **Enoteca** (enoteca.com.hk), originally from Japan, has eight stores in Hong Kong and its largest selection can be found in the Tsim Sha Tsui store.

Ponti Wine Cellars (pontiwinecellars.com.hk) is another reliable retailer and has been around since 1988; its Central and Tsim Sha Tsui stores both carry hundreds of fine wines from around the world, including a strong Italian selection. **Rare & Fine Wines**

(rarenfinewines.com.hk) and **Burgundy etc** (etcwineshops.com) are part of the Altaya Group (altayagroup.com) and have six stores between them. All carry a large selection of wines, with their core offering being Bordeaux, Burgundy and Napa wines. A relative newcomer to the scene is **The Fine Wine Experience** (finewineexperience.com), with two wine shops and an impressive list of fine wines that is heavily skewed towards Burgundy and Bordeaux.

Another distinctive part of Hong Kong's wine-and-dine scene is the importance of private members' clubs. Nearly all private clubs have exceptional wine lists with much lower mark-ups than in restaurants; so if you are visiting and have a local friend, get them to bring you to one of the following clubs with extensive wine lists: **Hong Kong Country Club** (countryclub.hk), **The Hong Kong Jockey Club** (hkjc.com), **The Aberdeen Marina Club** (aberdeenmarinaclub.com), or **The Hong Kong Club** (thehongkongclub.hk). 