This summer I was lucky enough to be able to make a trip to Hong Kong and Macau. I have always been interested in the cultures of the Far East and dreamt of experiencing their extraordinary history first hand. Although I could not wait to visit all famous landmarks and see Victoria Harbor, my trip had another purpose as well. I am a law student and planning to specialize in Hong Kong law. Therefore for me it was important to develop my understanding of the local way of life, business and prospects of future education.

After the almost 20 hours long flight I arrived in Hong Kong in the early evening, found my way to the hostel I was staying in, and being very tired decided I will try to have some sleep and start my sightseeing in the morning.

The famous Hong Kong skyline

It was a big dream of mine to see the beautiful Hong Kong skyline. So on the next day I took the Star Ferry across the harbor heading towards Victoria Peak – the highest peak in Hong Kong Island and one of its landmarks. To reach the peak is an adventure by itself actually. You can take the peak tram which goes up quite a steep way. But once you have reached the top it is the best place to have a bird’s eye view of Victoria Harbor and the whole island. I also returned several times after the sun had set to see a breath-taking view of the city from the peak.
nights later to observe the Symphony of Lights, the infamous light show, which was a stunning and unforgettable view.

The tram to Victoria Peak

One of my next stops was the Court of Final Appeal, the highest appellate court in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong judiciary has had a long reputation for its fairness and is considered to be the best judicial system in Asia. Having that in mind I was very curious to find out more about it. Unfortunately, I was only allowed to have a quick look because visit arrangements need to be done with the Public Relations Office and only students who have made applications for the use of the library can access it. But I was happy to even only see the building housing the Court of Final Appeal, The Former French Mission Building, which has a long and interesting history.

Luckily, I was more fortunate in my next visit – to the Legislative Council Complex. Also known as LegCo, this is Hong Kong’s unicameral legislature. There are two or three guided tours every day, however booking in advance is highly recommended. We were able to see Conference Rooms 2 and 3; the Public Gallery of the Chamber, built at the upper level of the room for the public and the press to observe the proceedings of Council meetings; the Education Activities Room which can be used by students and youth organizations for role-play games of the law-making process. We also learned a lot about the history of the Legislature and the current legal system.

Another highlight of my journey was the visit to the University of Hong Kong. A Chinese friend of mine from London put me in contact with a friend of hers who is studying there. She was kind enough to take me on a tour around the main campus, told me about her experience as a student in Hong Kong and gave me some valuable tips. We managed to meet two more times before I left, for dinner and walk around SoHo and some of the markets and famous shops. She introduced me to some of her friends as well, several of which are studying in the other two universities. I was
very happy because my biggest hope before going on this trip was that I would meet new friends and establish contacts. I still keep in touch with the people I met in Hong Kong and am confident that when I need to make a choice regarding my future not only in Hong Kong but in Asia in general I will have my local friends to advise me.

I also made a one day trip to Macau. Worldwide famous for its casinos Macau is also a former Portuguese colony and unlike in Hong Kong where most of the old British colonial buildings have been torn down, loads of Portuguese buildings have been preserved here. I loved walking around and at times almost felt like I am in Europe. I went to see Leal Senado Square, paved with coloured mosaics; and Guia Fort – more than 400 years old fortress containing a chapel and a lighthouse. Both were built by Portuguese experts. Of course I could not miss Macau’s most famous sight, the ruins of St. Paul’s Cathedral (Ruinas de Sao Paulo) by which I was deeply impressed. An interesting sight were all the varieties of dried foods stretched out on pavements all over the town. Although Hong Kong is a magnificent place, Macau felt very special. It’s a city with two faces – the Las Vegas of the East and the meeting point of the Mediterranean and China.

Ruínas de São Paulo

Some of the other places I visited during the rest of my time in Hong Kong included the Herbal Medicine Street, as the name suggests the shops along this street were full of roots, seeds, grasses, insects (all used in the traditional medicine); Nathan Road in Kowloon, known as “the golden mile of shopping”; Tian Tan Buddha (The Big Buddha) on Lantau Island; and also Man Mo Temple – the Island’s most well-known and oldest temple. It is dedicated to the god of literature (Man) and the god of war (Mo). There were many more interesting places of course. Hong Kong is a diverse and exciting city, full of surprises and unusual sights, especially for someone coming from as far away as me. But to describe them all in a brief report would be impossible!
I am simply glad that I had the chance to go on this trip, the chance to learn and see so much. I will cherish these memories for the rest of my life. I succeeded in improving my knowledge about Hong Kong’s legislative and educational systems, befriended local students and gained an insight into Chinese culture and language. I also feel a lot more confident that I can always find my way around and communicate with people even though I do not understand a word of what they are saying. I firmly believe this experience will prove to be invaluable in future and would like to sincerely thank the members of the Expeditions Fund committee for their great support!