



WHY DON'T YOU...

...just switch off your television set and go out and do something less boring instead?

Living on a cramped collection of rocks in the South China Sea can drive even the most saintly a bit stir crazy, but don't despair. We've put together a list of unusual recreation options – none of which involve shopping or eating (or drinking) – that might help to prolong your sanity.

Join the **mile-high** club

WHY PAY SOMEONE to fly you around Hong Kong's dramatic skyline when you can do it yourself? The **Hong Kong Aviation Club** offers flying courses for both planes and helicopters and is based in the New Territories at Shek Kong, although it maintains its clubhouse by the old Kai Tak runway, which has been home to a flying school since Crazy Harry Abbott set up there in 1924.

It takes just 40 hours of training to get a private pilot licence, which means you can be up and flying in less than a year with just one class a week, at a cost of about HK\$100,000 for a two-seater Cessna 152. The four-seater Cessna 172 and 182 cost about HK\$110,000, and the two-seater Robinson 22 helicopter course costs HK\$130,000.

The rates include aircraft rental, aviation fuel, instructor briefing and fuel surcharge, and the course includes 10 hours of solo flying and covers everything you need to know, from the basics of flight control to coping with stalls and spins, and instrument flying. The school even offers aerobatic courses.

You can still have a spin in an aircraft even if you don't fancy forking out a huge chunk of cash. The school offers trial introductory flights – airborne joyrides, basically – for as little as HK\$2,500 an hour. Unless you are particularly persuasive, you won't be able to takeoff or land, but you will be in charge of the plane for most of the rest of time. You can bring a friend along too, but only in the bigger Cessnas.

Contact the club on 2711 5555 for details about courses or email to: flight_ops@aviationclub.hk



Try **subtropical** skiing

THE LAST TIME it snowed in Hong Kong was December 14 1975, when the New Territories experienced a widespread covering of the white stuff. As snow reports go, it doesn't inspire much confidence for the chances of a slalom down Hong Kong's slopes this winter, but don't vacuum-pack your salopettes just yet.

Take the Hong Kong ski lift (err, tram) to the top of Fortress Hill (well, the first floor of a random building on Electric Road, actually) to experience skiing Hong Kong style at **Slope Infinity**, so named because the slope is a giant, carpeted travelator that allows you to ski for as long you can stay upright. There's even a training bar that the instructors can deploy to save beginners' bums from an afternoon of torment.

Private one-on-one lessons currently cost HK\$290 for 30 minutes on the solo carpet or HK\$340 on the large deck. Group lessons for up to three people cost HK\$680 and more experienced skiers can get some pre-ski trip practice for HK\$210/HK\$330.

Call for bookings on 2107 4567 or email to info@slope8.com



Jump for joy

ONCE YOU'VE MASTERED the art of flying a plane, the next logical step is to start jumping out of the things. Hong Kong's first recorded parachute jump was made by Captain Thomas Baldwin and his younger brother at Happy Valley in 1891, when they leapt out of a hot air balloon. Things are a bit different today.

The **Hong Kong Parachute Association** is an offshoot of the flying club and operates from the same site. They can take you up for your first tandem jump or accommodate your sky-diving team's training sessions – indoor sky-diving is yet to reach Hong Kong, although it's only a matter of time.

You can also paraglide in Hong Kong, as you may know if you have walked the Dragon's Back trail on a good day. Other sites include the peaks above Cheung Sha beach on Lantau, Ma On Shan by Sai Kung and, further into the New Territories, Pat Sin, Pak Tam Au, Sai Wan and Long Ke Wan.

Anyone paragliding in Hong Kong has to be a member of the Hong Kong Paragliding Association, which can arrange courses for beginners. But be warned, paragliding is a risky pursuit. The club warns would-be gliders that "many pilots suffer from Aids (aviation-induced divorce syndrome)" and that "paragliding creeps up on an individual like a heroin habit".

For more information on sky-diving, call Gary, the chief instructor, on 9480 4866. For paragliding, contact Alec, the membership officer, on 9289 4157 or email him at chairman@hkpa.net





Join a **polar** expedition

THERE'S NOTHING A man likes more than a woman who knows her way around a pole, which is not the slogan of **Pole Divas**, Hong Kong's very own pole-dancing school. The ladies there prefer to emphasise "fun, fitness and femininity".

They go on to say: "Exercise to make you feel fabulous. Get fit, get toned and feel more confident, empowered, relaxed and sexy. Our classes are for all shapes, sizes & ages. We have classes and workshops for the beginner on a pole to the advanced."

Advanced classes include instruction on the refined arts of lap dancing and chair dancing, among many other things. In fact, there are dozens of classes to choose from, including a bum-busting workshop, a couples' pole workshop and, bizarrely, a pole jungle-gym party for boys and girls aged five to 10.

Classes are HK\$280 each and workshops are HK\$500. Packages are also available offering cheaper rates for those who want to progress to the advanced pole diva level.

Call the Pole Divas on 2541 5157 or email to info@poledivas-hk.com

Light up the **dancefloor**

IF YOU CAN'T set the dancefloor on fire with your dancing, you might have more luck spinning the old wheels of steel. The **DJ4Life Academy** offers lessons for beginners and more advanced turntable technicians, including the opportunity to perform live if you think your skills are up to it.

DJ4Life has a class in Hong Kong (with six across the US) and is a professional operation that teaches everything you need to know to cut it as a jobbing deejay, from the basic technical skills to the tips and tricks that only come through experience – like making sure the photographer is in the room if you're deejaying a wedding and are about to announce the cake cutting.

"You'll be surprised how many beginners forget little things like that, and these little things make a big difference," said Mark Rankin, a professor of deejay at the firm's Chicago school, in an interview with Time magazine in June.

Courses are taught by DJ K Ling and run for three 90-minute lessons, costing a total of HK\$3,088. The school is in Mid-Levels.

Call 9517 1565 for enquiries or email to hk@dj4life.org



Ride a stallion



WHEN HONG KONG hosted the 2008 Olympics locals were introduced to the wonders of dressage and other exciting horse-based events, which has led to a mini boom for the city's riding schools.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club runs four riding schools in Chai Wan and Pokfulam on the island, and Tuen Mun and Sheung Shui in the New Territories. They are the

only riding venues in Hong Kong that are recognised by the British Horse Society and teach horse riding and racing, including group training sessions, horse hiring, taking a horse at livery, visits and competitions.

The Beas River school in Sheung Shui is open only to Jockey Club members, but the other three all have an extensive programme open to the public. There is a long waiting list for beginners and the best way to get to the top is to join a summer course or take private lessons during non-peak hours. Once you can ride off the lead rein, it is easier to slot into a regular class.

Pony lessons for kids that weigh less than about 50kg are HK\$290 and for horse riders less than 85kg it costs HK\$360 an hour.

Contact the public school in Tuen Mun on 2461 3338 or riding.tm@hkjc.org.hk; in Pokfulam on 2550 1359 or riding.pok@hkjc.org.hk; or in Lei Yue Mun on 2568 9776 or riding.lym@hkjc.org.hk