



## CHEUNG CHAU BUN FESTIVAL

*The Bun Festival is local to the island of Cheung Chau only. Pak Tai, the Taoist God of the Sea is worshipped and evil spirits are scare away by loud gongs and drums during the procession.*

*The celebration includes Taoist praying, opera performances and ends with processions performed by children dressed in colorful costumes.*

■ By Mingolo

**C**heung Chau (meaning “long island” in Cantonese) is one of the most popular of all the outlying islands. Shaped like a dumbbell, it is about a 40-60-minute ferry ride from Hong Kong’s Central District.

Cheung Chau is a picturesque island with a waterfront that bustles with activity. There are butcher shops and vendors selling fresh fish, shellfish, fruit and vegetables. The small local restaurants and food stalls do a brisk trade on weekends.

During the week, Cheung Chau is a quiet residential island but at weekends, it’s a different story. When ferries, packed with sightseers and holiday-makers arrive at the island, the population doubles. Cheung Chau is most famous for its week-long Bun Festival, held during the fourth moon in the lunar calendar (April/May). The celebration culminates in a unique and colourful street procession.

### Scenic Attractions

The yearly Cheung Chau Bun Festival - is a festival which includes a parade of floats, most famously including young children dressed as famous characters doing impossible balancing acts. It last

seven days and attracts tens of thousands of visitors to the island.

Cheung Chau was the birthplace of Ms. Lee Lai Shan (born 1970), a windsurfer who won the first Olympic gold for Hong Kong in 1996.

Bun towers are built with bamboo structures 60 foot high, piled with sweet buns, outside the Pak Tai temple. Since these buns are blessed, in the old days, people climbed up the bun towers and compete for buns at midnight on the first day of the festival. It was supposed to appease the spirits of the people who died in a 19th century plague on the island. Unfortunately, accident happened in 1978. The bun towers collapsed under the weight of too many climbers and more than 100 people were injured. Since then, there is no more competition. Buns are distributed to the believers after the ceremony. You can also buy these buns from local bakers.”

Enormous bamboo towers studded with white chinese bun and effigies of three gods dominate the grounds near the Pak Tai Temple, where the main festivities take place. The festival that lasts for about a week climaxes with a large, colourful street procession, which features costumed children on stilts in a car-



Steamed buns for the “Bun Mountain”.

nival atmosphere that winds its way through the streets.

One of the reputed origins of this popular festival, which attracts tourists by the tens of thousands each year, involves a plague on the island hundreds of years ago. Villagers disguised themselves as different deities and walked around the island to drive away the evil spirits responsible for the plague. Another story says the festival is part of an annual exorcism and fast.

**Sights**

- Pak Tai Temple - one of the oldest temples in Hong Kong. The temple was built in 1783 and completely repainted in

1989. In front of the temple, there are 4 pairs of guarding lions. Before the altar are statues of two generals, Thousand Miles Eye and Favourable Wind Ear, who together are traditionally said to be able to hear and see anything

- Four temples dedicated to Tin Hau, including the Pak She Tin Hau Temple
- Kwan Kung Chung Yi Ting, a traditional temple built in 1973, dedicated to the god of justice Kwan Tai
- Alleged hiding place of Cheung Po Tsai (張保仔), a famous 19th century pirate [ATM](#)

Source: www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/





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