



Chapter 14: Consumer Rights

Hong Kong is a great place to shop. But like anywhere else, you have to use common sense to make sure you get the best deal.

First, try to compare prices with different store (see tip below). Since there is no price control in Hong Kong, consumer may bargain prices as they like. It would be very difficult for you to get your money back when you find that the same items is cheaper in a nearby store and you realize you've been overcharged.

Tip: Shop around and compare prices before you purchase. But watch out if the price is too low - it could be a trick!

Buying parallel goods

Hong Kong is a free port so importers can import goods from any source they wish. This means you may find the most up-to-date models imported directly from the factory and their country of origin.

However, some products get into Hong Kong without going through the authorized agents. These “parallel import” or “grey market” goods are often cheaper than the same goods brought in by the authorized agent. This is not illegal in Hong Kong, but you may not get an international warranty. So if you buy something you intend to send home as a gift or take back with you to your own country, you should look for goods that are covered by international warranty.

Tip: If you don't want to buy parallel import goods, always tell the sales person you wish to buy a product that is guaranteed by the Hong Kong authorized agent. Get the guarantee in writing before you pay.

Returning goods

Return policy varies with stores and trades. In most cases, only defective goods can be returned for exchange. So don't expect to exchange or return a product simply because you change your mind after the purchase.

Warning:

Watch out for dishonest shopkeepers! Bait-and-switch (promising one product at a lower price than saying only a higher priced one is available) happens in Hong Kong. Always check product information first.

Smart shopping tips

- Ask your friends in Hong Kong where the best shops are so you can get the best value.
- Visit a Consumer Council Advice Centre or the authorized agent for such product information as features, test reports, performance, and after sales service, before you decide which product to buy. Once you've decided on a model, don't let a sales person talk you into buying a different (higher-priced) model.
- A very low price could be a trap for bait-and-switch (see above).
- Before you pay, ask the shopkeeper to write down on the receipt what was promised during the transaction.
- Don't give your credit card to anybody before a transaction is concluded. Only sign a credit card slip that has been properly filled out. Remember to get a copy of the voucher after signing it.
- Once a credit card voucher is signed, the transaction is final. The chance of cancellation is very slim.
- Check all details of the purchase and make sure that they are written on the receipt. If they are not correct, don't pay.
- Inspect the merchandise and make sure it is the same as you agreed to buy.
- In case of a dispute, don't stay in the shop and argue. Get the receipt and approach either the Police or the Consumer Council as soon as possible.

The Consumer Council

The Consumer Council is an independent public organisation that protects your rights and interests as a consumer. It can also help solve any problems you might experience while shopping in Hong Kong. Its Complaint and Enquiry Hotline is **2929-2222**. Consumer Council Advice Centres are located at the following addresses -

HONG KONG ISLAND

Address	Fax
North Point Consumer Council Advice Centre Room 1410, 14/F, Kodak House II 39 Healthy Street East, North Point, Hong Kong	2590-6271

KOWLOON

Wong Tai Sin Consumer Advice Centre Unit 201, 2/F, Lung Cheung Office Block 138 Lung Cheung Road, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon	2323-9496
Sham Shui Po Consumer Advice Centre G/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon	2708-2713
Tsim Sha Tsui Consumer Council Services Centre G/F, 3 Ashley Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon	2721-1580

NEW TERRITORIES

Tsuen Wan Consumer Advice Centre Room 105, 1/F, Princess Alexandra Community Centre 60 Tai Ho Road, Tsuen Wan, NT	2413-7042
Yuen Long Consumer Advice Centre G/F, Yuen Long District Office Building 269 Castle Peak Road, Yuen Long, NT	2474-7971
Sha Tin Consumer Advice Centre Room 442, 4/F, Sha Tin Government Offices 1 Sheung Wo Che Road, Sha Tin, NT	2695-1964

Consumer Advice Centre office hours:

Monday to Friday (except public holidays): 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
2:00 pm - 6:00 pm