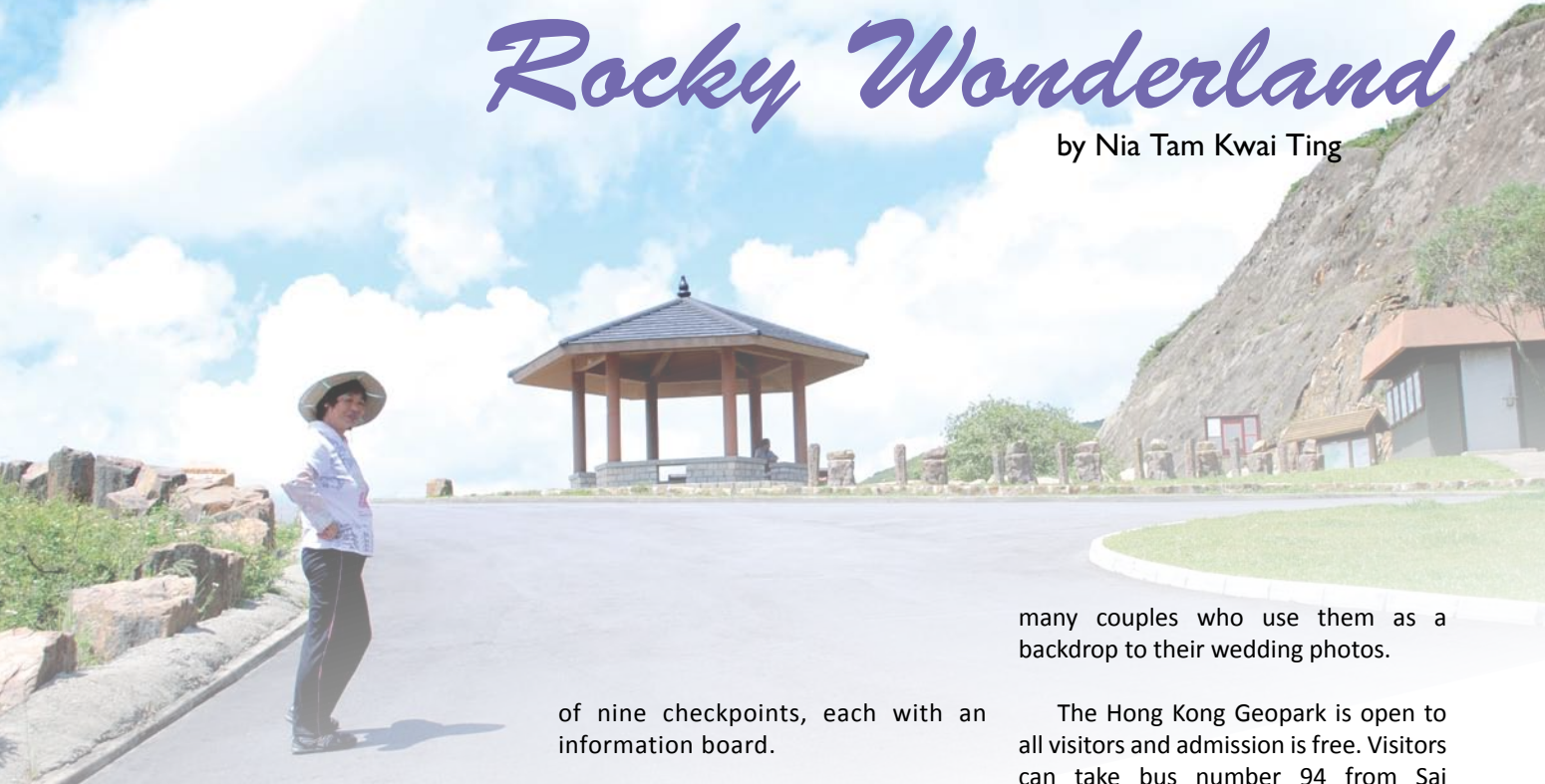


Walking in the Rocky Wonderland

by Nia Tam Kwai Ting



You are walking along the road on the top of a dam. The azure sky and ocean are seemingly connected. You enjoy the sea breeze and take in the refreshing air. Then, suddenly, something attracts your gaze. It is a 30-metre tall wall made up of countless hexagonal volcanic columns.



Nia Tam Kwai Ting

This extraordinary landform, near the High Island Reservoir East Dam in Sai Kung has been designated as one of the eight geosites of the Hong Kong Geopark since November 2009.

Geoparks aim to conserve unique landforms and landscapes by protecting the environment in which they are found, and to educate the public.

For beginners, *Varsity* recommends you challenge yourself with the High Island Geo Trail for your first Geopark excursion. There are a total

of nine checkpoints, each with an information board.

These boards are educational. For example, they indicate how the rocks buckle under pressure when they are cooling down and solidifying. You will also understand how the power of nature can cut a hill into two halves.

“People will learn the value of rocks,” says Avis Yim Tak-yin, project officer of the Sai Kung District Community Centre, “they observe closely so that they are reminded of preservation.”

Not only is it a natural wonder, the High Island Reservoir is also the biggest water-storage facility in Hong Kong. Here you can find dolosse units, the term for the more than 7,000 anchor-shaped concrete blocks which make up the breakwater. It is designed to protect the seafronts of both the East Dam and the West Dam. Each one is up to double an average man’s height.

With both natural and man-made attractions on one site, it is no wonder that the site has become a popular spot for photographers. The 140-million-year-old volcanic columns also attract

many couples who use them as a backdrop to their wedding photos.

The Hong Kong Geopark is open to all visitors and admission is free. Visitors can take bus number 94 from Sai Kung Market or number 96R from the Diamond Hill MTR station. Get off after Pak Tam Chung and walk along Tai Mong Tsai Road to the junction ahead. Turn right into Man Yee Road. This should take about half an hour. Then walk on for another 9 km to the High Island Reservoir East Dam, the starting point of High Island Geo Trail.

Hiking beginners are recommended to walk along the MacLehose Trail to the East Dam and take a HK\$60 taxi ride when heading back. Otherwise it could take you about five hours to complete the circuit on foot.

To help visitors explore the beautiful countryside of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has launched the “Great Outdoors Hong Kong” campaign to give comprehensive information on the MacLehose Trail.

For more information, please visit <http://www.geopark.gov.hk/> and also <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/promotions/greatoutdoors/eng/index.html>. 