

Sunday morning with Mark Footer

Fresh eggs

Access (nearly) all areas Many of us cannot imagine what it must be like to travel in a wheelchair, or with someone who is confined to one. And it would be no surprise to learn that Hong Kong, with its crowds, deep MTR stations and impatient taxi drivers, is a tough city to get around for such people.

But that is not the case, says author Sarah Fuller, who has given the city a thumbs up in her newly released book, *Wheel Away Disabled Travel – Hong Kong City Guide*. Described on the website (www.wheelawaydisabledtravel.com) as “the first accessible city guide of its kind in Asia for people with disability”, the book is aimed also at travel agents, parents travelling with pushchairs or prams, health care professionals and the elderly.

“I’ve written this book due to my father’s experience, which I wanted to share with others. [My] knowledge [has been] gained over many years of organising travel in Asia to ensure access and ease,” says Fuller, who has lived in Hong Kong for 17 years and whose father became wheelchair-bound after suffering a stroke.

“Life does not stop because of a stroke or serious illness,” says Fuller, who works in the legal industry.

Surprisingly, a ride up to The Peak presented relatively few challenges.

“I called the Peak Tram and e-mailed in advance to check if it was possible to get a wheelchair on board and to my amazement we did,” says Fuller. “Staff do need to help you to lift a manual wheelchair to board and alight the tram, because there are high steps. My father’s manual wheelchair is about 55cm wide and it was a tight squeeze. However, we managed it, with help from the friendly staff.”

“Another place that surprised me was Disneyland. It’s a very wheelchair-friendly theme park with such helpful staff.”

Among the trips Fuller advises against taking is the ferry ride to Lamma Island’s Sok Kwu Wan. Neither the ferry nor the Lamma side berth can be negotiated with any ease.

“There are many amazing areas in Hong Kong to explore but not every area is accessible for everybody. As in any city, Hong Kong has room to improve in terms of educating the general public about people with disabilities, enforcing building regulations that require all public spaces to be made accessible and improving access options for public transport,” says Fuller.

The guide contains detailed information on transport, more than 100 hotels, 370 restaurants and attractions suitable for disabled visitors.

“There is plenty to see and do [for the disabled traveller] in Hong Kong, you just need to have a good plan and daily itinerary in place and have mapped out in advance transport options that suit your situation,” says Fuller.

The *Wheel Away Disabled Travel – Hong Kong City Guide* costs HK\$200 and can be purchased through the website or at Bookazine, Hong Kong Book Centre, Kelly & Walsh, Swindon and select Dymocks stores. *Mark Footer*



Picture: Chris Lusher