

## Out and about

With temples, a museum and a fish market, Shau Kei Wan is an aromatic slice of Hong Kong history, writes **Jason Wordie**.

A wander around Hong Kong Island's eastern end offers an interesting blend of social and military history and dramatic coastal scenery. Shau Kei Wan (Rice Basket Bay) was evocatively known in the mid-19th century as Ngor Yan Wan (Hungry People's Bay) – an indication of this then-remote stretch of coastline's poverty.

Established on Basel Road since the 19th century, the Swiss-German Basel Mission still maintains an active church. The mission was most active among Hakka migrant stonecutters living around Shau Kei Wan and the eastern Kowloon Bay coastline. Most Hakka migrants came to Hong Kong from the East River districts as enhanced economic opportunities beckoned in the 1850s. Through the Basel Mission, hundreds of Hakka Christian converts emigrated to British North Borneo (now Sabah, part of East Malaysia) from the late 1880s onwards. Most Sabah Chinese today are Hakka, Christian and are able to trace their ancestry to or through Hong Kong. Overgrown, abandoned quarry workings can still be seen around the hillsides at A Kung Ngam (Grandfather's Cave), just below the former Lyemun Barracks complex.

The Museum of Coastal Defence is situated within the old Lyemun Fort. Built in 1887, the complex includes gun batteries along the water's edge and

caverns cut from the rock to house early wire-guided prototype torpedoes. Generally excellent, like Hong Kong's other museums, contemporary concerns about political-correctness have nevertheless impacted on the museum's storyboards. Hong Kong's coastal defence history is portrayed within a 600-year continuum, from the Ming dynasty though to PLA times, despite the city's military and strategic significance being almost entirely from the British era. Just up the hill, the Lyemun Barracks complex was turned over to the Hong Kong government in 1987 and is now a park, which can be booked by school and other groups. In 2003, the buildings were used to intern potential Sars cases from Amoy Gardens in Kowloon Bay.

Sampans are easily chartered from the typhoon anchorage, in front of the Tam Kung Temple. Expect to pay about HK\$100 for the return journey across to Lei Yue Mun, on the Kowloon side, where dozens of seafood restaurants offer delicious menus. Just in case the foul-smelling typhoon anchorage waters put you off, remember almost all the fresh seafood on offer is imported – often from as far away as East Africa, the Maldives and Fiji. Next to the museum, Shau Kei Wan's wholesale fish market – like its counterpart at Aberdeen – is worth a visit. Noisy, atmospheric and slightly reminiscent of Tokyo's famous Tsukiji fish market, a wander here is always good fun – if you can get up early enough. The market is already past its best by dawn.

Pictures: David Wong; Edward Wong; SCMP

Clockwise from below: an undated picture of Lyemun Barracks; military vehicles on display at the Museum of Coastal Defence; a gun battery at the museum; and bunkers at A Kung Ngam.

