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The New York Times Monday, December 6, 2010

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**In Transit**  
A Guide to Intelligent Travel

October 19, 2010, 9:00 AM  
**Where to Find an Autumn Seafood Special in Hong Kong**  
By ALEX FERGUS MULLAN



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Hairy crabs, the size of a marble in Suzhou, China, are an autumn delicacy.

It's autumn in Hong Kong, and that means peak season for a quintessentially Chinese delicacy: the hairy crab. As fall arrives, the crabs plump up, and restaurants stock them in huge numbers. Those cooking at home can buy live crabs, the little bundles bound up with bamboo strips, from specialty stores and even street vendors.

The best crabs come from Yangcheng Lake in Suzhou, in the Jiangsu Province near Shanghai. The season starts in September, when female crabs are best, and continues through the end of the year, with male crabs offering the most succulent roe from mid-October on.

This year, an exceptionally cold spring followed by a very hot summer in Jiangsu, topped by flooding in southern China, has hampered growth of the crabs and driven up prices. In Hong Kong, wholesale prices for the crabs have reached 550 Hong Kong dollars (about \$43) per catty, a Chinese unit that's the equivalent of one-and-a-third pounds.

But that doesn't stop diners from seeking them out.

Hairy crabs are dark-green crustaceans with wiry brown "hair" on their claws. They are prized for their roe and oil, which turns a brilliant orange hue when cooked and is exceptionally rich. Traditionally, the crabs are steamed until pink and then served with a sweet side dish of ginger, vinegar and soy sauce. Many restaurants will cut up the crabs and give diners tiny forks for plucking out every last morsel of the sweet white flesh.

Fergus Fung, who puts out the [Word of Mouth](#) guide to Hong Kong restaurants, rates the Shanghaiese restaurant **Liu Yuan Pavilion** (3/F The Broadway, 54-62 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai; 852-2804-2000) as his top choice for hairy crab, followed by **Hong Kong Old Restaurant** (B/F Newton Hotel, 218 Electric Road, North Point; 852-2508-1081 or 4/F Miramar Shopping Center, 132 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon; 852-2722-1812).

This being China, counterfeit crabs are becoming an issue. Suppliers may "boon" their crabs in Yangcheng Lake for a short period before sale, or even disguise other species as hairy crabs, going so far as to bleach their bellies and etch them with lasers.

Samanta Pong, Mr. Fung's partner at the food guide, credits **Wah Kee Wing Cheong Ho** (G/F 460 Lockhart Road, Causeway Bay; 852-2836-6411; [www.wahkeefoods.com](#)) as the first store to start selling Yangcheng Lake crabs and adds that they are a good place to buy crabs for home cooking. They sell crabs at around 130 Hong Kong dollars (about \$17) per piece.

She also recommends **Lao San Yang** (G/F, 27B Lee Garden Road, Causeway Bay; 852-2890-2534), a long-standing Shanghai-style grocery store, as a good source of bona fide hairy crabs.

December 02  
An Airport Program That Makes Travelling (Gasp!) Easier  
Global Entry, the latest "trusted traveler" program from the Customs and Border Protection, is that rare beast: a government initiative that is making international travel more convenient. The verdict: if you travel abroad more than once a year, or frequent a particularly congested airport, enrollment in Global Entry is well worth your time, money and fingerprints.

**About In Transit**  
In Transit is a blog on travel news, deals and tips, written by the editors and reporters of the Travel section. It's also the home for Globespotters, a travel blog that covers news and events from 50 cities around the world.

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