Introducing Singapore

A Vibrant Island State

Some refer to her as the “little red dot”. The republic is, in fact, one main island surrounded by 63 islets, with a total land area of 710 square kilometres. Singapore lies 1° 22' North of the equator, between latitudes 103° and 104° East. The island is bordered by the Johor Strait to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Strait of Malacca to the southwest and the Indian Ocean to the west.

But Singapore’s presence in the world today is larger than that moniker. In fact, Singapore is a bustling cosmopolitan city that offers a world-class living environment, with her landscape populated by high-rise buildings and gardens, side-by-side with gazetted historical buildings. One interesting facet you will discover about Singapore is a ubiquitous collage of cultures, where people of different ethnicities and beliefs coexist. Besides a vibrant multicultural experience, there’s more you can discover about Singapore.

A Multicultural Kaleidoscope

One remarkable aspect of Singapore is the truly cosmopolitan nature of her population, a natural result of the country's geographical position and commercial success. Established by Thomas Stamford Raffles as a trading post on 29 January 1819, the small sea town of Singapore soon attracted migrants and merchants from China, the Indian sub-continent, Indonesia, the Malay Peninsula and the Middle East. At present, Singapore’s population stands at about 5.4 million people, with English as the main language of instruction, and a mother tongue for each major ethnicity. Coming together as a society and living in harmony, there are four major races – namely the Chinese (majority), Malay, Indian and Eurasian. Each community offers a different perspective of life in Singapore in terms of culture, religion, food and language.
While the earliest known historical records of Singapore are shrouded in the mists of time, a third century Chinese account describes it as "Pu-luo-chung", or the "island at the end of a peninsula". Later, the city was known as Temasek ("Sea Town"), when the first settlements were established from AD 1298-1299. By the 14th century, Singapore had become incorporated into the Sri Vijayan empire.

According to a legend, the 14th century Malay prince Sang Nila Utama beheld the island across the sea from Riau. After landing on that island, Utama spotted a beast that he mistook for a lion. Subsequently, he renamed the island “Singapura”, meaning “Lion City”.

Migration and colonisation have shaped Singapore’s history. Waves of Chinese and Indian immigrants over the centuries arrived to seek their fortune here. The British made Singapore a trading station in 1819. British ships docked for food and other supplies as well as for repairs.

Singapore became a Crown Colony, attaining self-government in 1959. After two years as part of the Malaysian federation, Singapore declared independence on 9 August 1965.

In one generation, the republic has established itself as a prosperous first world country with strong international trade links: its sea and air ports are some of the world’s busiest in terms of tonnage handled. Singapore also attracts travellers from the world over. Last year alone, travellers to Singapore numbered 14.5 million people.

Being a multi-racial society, Singapore is as diverse as it is cohesive. With so much to see and do, this is perhaps best experienced through your encounters with the locals. And if you’re feeling nostalgic and looking to discover old world charm, you can explore and experience the island’s key historical landmarks or memorials. You can also embark on a heritage trail and enjoy the sights and sounds at various cultural precincts, notably Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam.

If you prefer the bright city lights and being amidst the hustle and bustle, then you’ll be delighted to know that there are numerous shopping malls, museums, and dining and entertainment hotspots to choose from.

Beyond the history, culture, people, shopping and food, there are many more facets to Singapore’s thriving cityscape for you to discover. And these can only be experienced as you immerse yourself in the exploration of this once fishing village turned cosmopolitan city.

The island is warm and humid throughout the year. The temperature rarely varies from the maximum of 32 degrees Celsius and the minimum of 23 degrees Celsius. There is constant rain, with more rain coming during the monsoon season from November to January. Showers tend to be sudden and heavy.
Glorious Food

It might interest guests to know that eating out is a national pastime. In fact, a Michelin guide to local dining is in the works. Local and foreign cuisines are widely available in hawker centres and fine dining restaurants. The cuisines reflect the island’s multicultural heritage, including traditional Chinese, Malay and Indian food as well as fusion dishes. Do try Singaporean dishes such as chilli crab, Hainanese chicken rice, Mee Siam (which means "Siamese noodle"), a dish of thin rice noodles in spicy, sweet and sour light gravy, rojak (salad with prawn paste and peanuts), prata ("Singapore’s answer to the croissant" according to one restaurant) and char kway teow (fried wheat and rice noodles cooked in fish sauce and black sweet sauce). Halal and vegetarian food are also available everywhere.

Do not forget to top off your meal with a refreshingly cool dessert, like the multi-coloured ice kachang (shaved ice and red beans with a large serving of attap chee (palm seed), sweet corn, grass jelly and cubes of agar agar).

If you are gastronomically adventurous, why not also try some durian, that thorny, pungent king of fruits?

Shopping

There’s practically a shopping sale of sorts all year round in Singapore, with the most notable one being the Great Singapore Sale. In addition to that, there are stretches of world-class shopping malls that offer you a wide array of shopping choices. You only need to take a walk down Singapore’s iconic shopping districts to find out what’s in store for you. One thing’s for sure, you won’t be leaving empty-handed, but with bag loads of great bargains and gifts. Get ready to shop till you drop!

Arts, Music and History

For art aficionados, there are museums and galleries to visit. The history buffs will be keen to explore history museums and heritage centres. Local and world-class performances are organised in Singapore all throughout the year. The Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay, located at Marina Bay, features world-class concerts, theatre, dance and visual art performances.
Roaring Tourist Spots @ Marina Bay

Marina Bay Area
The Gardens by the Bay is the latest attraction in the Marina Bay area. The Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, completed in 2002, boast a world-class concert hall and performance theatre. The Merlion Park, with two scale versions of the Merlion statue, is opposite the Esplanade. Shopping malls like Suntec City and Marina Square can also be found in Marina Bay. Marina Bay Sands is an integrated resort at Bayfront Avenue in Marina South. You can also walk the Helix Bridge, a pedestrian bridge linking Marina Centre with Marina South. The floating platform where National Day parades were held, is also in this vicinity.

Gardens by the Bay
Attractions include the Flower Dome, Cloud Forest, the Supertree Grove, Heritage Gardens, World of Plants, Dragonfly & Kingfisher Lakes, Bay East Garden, and a Children's Garden

MARINE LIFE PARK™
The Marine Life Park features a 620m long Adventure River, water slides, S.E.A. Aquarium, which is the world's largest. The completion of this project marks the end of the final phase of the integrated development in Sentosa.

ArtScience Museum
Designed as a symbolic gesture of welcome to guests from across the globe, the lotus-inspired ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands is the premier museum destination in Singapore for major international traveling exhibitions from the most renowned collections in the world. Embracing a spectrum of influences from art & science, to media & technology, to design & architecture, ArtScience Museum features over 50,000 square feet of galleries to inspire visitors of all ages, walks of life and from shores near and far.
The Science Centre Singapore is a scientific institution in Jurong East, specialising in the promotion of scientific and technological education for the general public. With over a thousand exhibits spread over fourteen galleries, it sees over a million visitors a year.

Opened in March 2008, the Singapore Flyer is the world’s largest giant observation wheel. Located in Marina Bay, it offers passengers a breathtaking and picturesque 360-degree view of Singapore and, on a good day, parts of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Standing at a height of 165 metres, the Singapore Flyer allows visitors splendid views of the Singapore skyline: the wide open spaces of Marina Bay, towering skyscrapers, tropical greenery and bright city lights. During a 37-minute ride, visitors will feel on top of the world.

Universal Studios continues to offer an ideal holiday destination for families and thrill seekers. The park has plans to bring the total number of rides to 24, out of which 18 are unique to Singapore. Resorts World Sentosa, where Universal Studios Singapore is located, saw close to a record 19m visitors in 2011 and targets that the theme park will ultimately pull in 4.5 to 5m visitors annually, with the expansion plans designed to help meet this target.

More Roaring Tourist Spots

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Giant Panda Forest: You will meet the famous giant pandas, Kai Kai & Jia Jia, in their beautiful forest sanctuary.

Wild Amazonia Squirrel Monkey Forest: you will get to enter the lush rainforests of the Amazon where you'll come up close to delightfully adorable squirrel monkeys as they roam freely within their forest home.

This premier night zoo houses over 900 animals of 135 exotic species in eight zones re-created to simulate geographic zones like the Southeast Asian rainforest, African savanna, Nepalese river valley, South American pampas and Burmese jungle. Visitors can stroll along a walking trail or relax in a tram tour.
Feel free to browse the sites below to find out more about Singapore, her people, her history, and the numerous places of attraction that dot the island.

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<td>Painting of life by the river in early Singapore</td>
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<td>Undated B&amp;W photo of bumboats along the Singapore river and the nearby commercial buildings</td>
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<td>Sir Raffles in his timeless pose (photo of a statue)</td>
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