

Stev-info

Sapphire Princess

Especially Prepared for the:
Grand Asia Group

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Shanghai, China

Overview

Introduction



View of modern Pudong district skyline

The name Shanghai still conjures images of romance, mystery and adventure, but for decades it was an austere backwater. After the success of Mao Zedong's communist revolution in 1949, the authorities clamped down hard on Shanghai, castigating China's second city for its prewar status as a playground of gangsters and colonial adventurers.

And so it was. In its heyday, the 1920s and '30s, cosmopolitan Shanghai was a dynamic melting pot for people, ideas and money from all over the planet. Business boomed, fortunes were made, and everything seemed possible. It was a time of breakneck industrial progress, swaggering confidence and smoky jazz venues.

Thanks to economic reforms implemented in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping, Shanghai's commercial potential has reemerged and is

flourishing again. Stand today on the historic Bund and look across the Huangpu River. The soaring 1,614-ft/492-m Shanghai World Financial Center tower looms over the ambitious skyline of the Pudong financial district. Alongside it are other key landmarks: the glittering, 88-story Jinmao Building; the rocket-shaped Oriental Pearl TV Tower; and the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The 128-story Shanghai Tower is the tallest building in China (and, after the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the second-tallest in the world).

Glass-and-steel skyscrapers reach for the clouds, Mercedes sedans cruise the neon-lit streets, luxury-brand boutiques stock all the stylish trappings available in New York, and the restaurant, bar and clubbing scene pulsates with an energy all its own. Perhaps more than any other city in Asia, Shanghai has the confidence and sheer determination to forge a glittering future as one of the

world's most important commercial centers.

Highlights

Sights—The Bund and the Fairmont Peace Hotel; Yu Garden for a visit to the Huxinting teahouse; Jade Buddha Temple and its namesake statue; People's Square for people-watching; the 100th-floor viewing deck of the Shanghai World Financial Center for a bird's-eye view of Shanghai.

Museums—The Shanghai Museum on People's Square for both its architecture and collections; the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre for an eye-opening look at one of the world's fastest-changing cities; the Propaganda Poster Art Center for insights into China's turbulent postrevolutionary years; Shanghai Science and Technology Museum.

Memorable Meals—Nanxiang Dumpling House in Yu Garden for the city's special *xiaolongbao* pork or crab-soup dumplings; fine dining at the Bund, especially at Jean Georges for its retro-meets-modern-Shanghai decor and French-Asian fusion menu; Mr & Mrs Bund, for its glamour, cocktails and inventive European cuisine; home-cooked Shanghainese fare at stylish Lynn; the popular dim sum weekend brunch at Crystal Jade.

Late Night—A Kunju opera performance; elegant cocktails at Glamour Bar or Sir Elly's; drinks and dancing at Mao, Livehouse or Muse; blues at Cotton Club; barhopping in Tianzifeng, Xintiandi or along Yongkang Road; a night cruise on the Huangpu River.

Walks—Admiring the buildings in the old French concession or International Settlement; taking in the view of the

Huangpu River along the Bund; strolling through the quaint Old City; watching the crowds at pedestrianized Nanjing East Road.

Especially for Kids—Oriental Pearl Radio and TV Tower with its views from the top and Space City at the bottom; aquatic flora and fauna at Shanghai Ocean Aquarium; the Sketch Aquarium on the 94th floor of the World Financial Center; crossing the river on the Puxi-Pudong ferry.

Geography

Modern Shanghai is split into two distinct and vastly different districts by the Huangpu River. The west side is called Puxi (pronounced *pu-SHEE*), former home to the international settlements. Puxi still boasts the historic architecture for which Shanghai is famous. To the east of the river is Pudong—a modern economic-

development area that Deng Xiaoping designated as China's future commercial heart. Though Pudong boasts the city's stock exchange, financial district and main international airport, Puxi is still considered the city center and is home to the revamped and enlarged Hongqiao International Airport (though most international flights touch down at the larger airport in Pudong). The Bund (Waitan) is Puxi's waterfront boulevard—it lines the west side of the Huangpu River and is considered to be Shanghai's main tourist attraction.

In its 1930s heyday, Shanghai was delineated by its foreign concessions, and the former borders still serve a purpose. The old Chinese city lies within the Zhonghua Road-Renmin Road circle. The former International Settlement (the British and the U.S. concessions merged in 1862) stretches north of the Old City. It's bordered by the Huangpu River to the east, Huashan

Road to the west, Suzhou Creek to the north and Yanan Road to the south.

The busy and famous Nanjing Road and its pedestrian walkway lie in this part of town, just north of Yanan Road. The old French concession lies south of the Yanan Road overpass, north of Zhaojiabang Road, and stretches from Xujiahui in the west to the Bund in the east (with the exception of the northern half of the old Chinese city). Much of the city's sightseeing, dining and shopping lie in the former French concession, including Xintiandi, the popular pedestrian-friendly entertainment district that houses Western-style clubs, restaurants and shops in a visitor-friendly, if slightly touristic, ambience.

History

Shanghai's beginning was humble—little more than a small fishing village tucked beside a tributary of the Yangtze River,

where China's longest and most important river completes its 3,906-mi/6,300-km journey to the East China Sea. In the late 1830s, however, the Chinese emperor's efforts to stem the trade in opium (largely conducted by British merchants) within the country's borders resulted in the First Opium War of 1839-42, which China lost. The victorious British forced the Chinese to open up a series of treaty ports along the nation's seaboard, thus allowing increased trade between China and foreign powers. Shanghai was one such port.

The small fishing village was soon divided into extraterritorial "concessions" administered by France, Britain and the U.S., who each brought their own particular cultures, architectural styles and sensibilities to the Chinese city. By the 1930s, 90,000 foreigners called Shanghai home, including British, Americans, French, Germans and

Japanese, as well as Russians who had fled communism in their own country.

Although the burgeoning metropolis had its own walled Chinese city, many native residents also chose to live in the foreign settlements, where employment was more readily available and foreign police forces administered rule of law, affording a certain level of protection from warlords. In 1939, the city boasted a population of 4 million.

The eclectic mix of cultures and the city's increasing openness to Western influence had a profound effect on Shanghai, which quickly became internationally famous for its culture, arts, opulent buildings, chic hotels and ballrooms, and vibrant commerce. But the gap between the haves and the have-nots was wide—according to firsthand accounts, it was not uncommon for wealthy foreigners to

nonchalantly step over starving, dying Chinese in the street without a pause.

This paradox of wealth and degradation gave rise to an increasing sense of anger and injustice among many Chinese, and in 1921, 13 delegates—including Mao Zedong—held the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China at a site that is now open to the public in the Xintiandi area of the city. The Congress started a movement that would change all of China.

The Red Army triumphed following fierce fighting against occupying Japanese forces from the late 1930s to 1945, and a civil war against the ruling Kuomintang, establishing the new People's Republic of China in 1949. Most foreigners had either fled Shanghai before the war or had been shipped home after being released from internment by the Japanese. With the founding of the People's Republic, the

city was closed to the outside world behind what was known as "the bamboo curtain."

In the ensuing years, Shanghai was deliberately neglected by a Beijing-centric government scornful of the city's decadent past, and it was starved of investment and attention. A sign of its future renaissance, however, came during former U.S. President Richard Nixon's historic 1972 visit to China, when the Shanghai Communique, a series of formal agreements to re-establish Sino-U.S. diplomatic ties, was signed at the Jinjiang Hotel in Shanghai.

But the city's resurrection wasn't immediate. Shanghai was made to wait until after the launch, in the late 1980s, of Deng's economic reforms before it could hurriedly re-embrace the internationalism that defined its prerevolution identity. Today it's second only to Hong Kong as China's most

globalized city—socially, culturally and economically. As Deng famously said, "If China is a dragon, Shanghai is its head."

Now, little more than two decades after Shanghai was officially given the go-ahead to embrace economic development, the city has comprehensively overhauled and revitalized its infrastructure. Shanghai also boasts mainland China's first free trade zone (FTZ), an 11-mi/ 29-km square testing ground in Pudong for China's ongoing experiments with market reform. Its success has led to the program being expanded in other cities.

Potpourri

Shanghai got its name from its location. Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, where it empties into the East

China Sea, the city name is loosely translated as "above or next to the sea."

Shanghai's local dialect is only 50% comprehensible to Mandarin speakers.

Despite chilly winter temperatures, the river that bisects Shanghai, the Huangpu, never freezes.

In Chinese, *Xi* and *Dong* mean "west" and "east." So downtown Shanghai, which is west of the Huangpu river is known as Puxi. The land on the east side of the river is called Pudong.

The vibrant Pudong commercial area was built on a field of former rice paddies.

The term "to shanghai" was coined in the 19th century when overseas laborers were kidnapped into indentured servitude as crew members for various ships.

Almost 10 million individual journeys are taken on the Shanghai metro each day, even though the city's subway system has only operated since 1995. With lines being perpetually added and extended, Shanghai's metro network has grown into one of the world's largest and fastest-growing underground rail networks.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Start your exploration of the city with tea at Huxinting teahouse in Yu Garden. It is said to be the very teahouse on the willow pattern that graces crockery in homes across the world. Then explore the surrounding old Chinese city, with its quaint traditional homes and bustling antiques market and street-food stores, before strolling on the waterfront boulevard known as the Bund.

Stroll down Nanjing East Road, which has been transformed into a people-only thoroughfare with several retail malls, and soon you'll arrive at People's Square, an ideal spot for people-watching. There, you can see past and present Shanghai interacting: The "square" was originally an oval-shaped racetrack, and it's flanked by some of Shanghai's most modern skyscrapers and finest art-deco architectural treasures, such as the Park Hotel and former YMCA building on the north side. While you're there, don't miss China's ancient treasures on display at the Shanghai Museum, which is shaped like a ancient *ding* cooking vessel.

Also take an awe-inspiring look at Shanghai's future at the Urban Planning Exhibition Centre. The Jade Buddha Temple is a short cab ride away, as is Shanghai's vibrant contemporary-art district on Moganshan Road.

Be sure to spend some time in the former French concession, particularly around Huaihai, Fuxing, Sinan and Yongfu roads, for a view of old Shanghai and the city's chic stores and restaurants. You can tour the former residence of Sun Yat-sen, considered the father of modern China, and check out the Xintiandi area, which houses the site of the first Chinese Communist Party meeting as well as a host of upscale restaurants and bars.

One of the best ways to enjoy twilight is to make a trip to Pudong. Cross the Huangpu River on the ferry, view the Bund from the cafes and park flanking the Pudong riverside, and then catch a bird's-eye view of the city from the 100th-floor observation deck at the Shanghai World Financial Center, the top of the modern, art-deco Jinmao Tower or the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, the gaudy, spaceshiplike symbol of modern Shanghai.

Also in Pudong, some parts of the World Expo site will remain open to the public permanently—notably the site's tallest structure, the vibrant red China Pavilion, which was reborn post-Expo as the China Art Museum with an interesting selection of modern art, and the saucer-shaped Expo Pavilion, which became the Mercedes-Benz Arena and hosts world-class sporting events, concerts and theatrical shows.

If you still have some energy once night falls, take a Huangpu River night cruise or enjoy a leisurely cocktail-with-a-view on the grand terrace of one of the Bund's new generation of classy lounge bars.

Some spots outside Shanghai offer getaways from the city's urban chaos. If possible, take a day trip to the traditional gardens of Suzhou, the lakeside city of Hangzhou or to a quaint river town, such as Zhouzhuang or Xitang.

Historic Sites

Jade Buddha Temple (Yufo Si)

170 Anyuan Road (Changshou Road metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6266-3668

<http://yufotemple.com>

Completed in 1918, this temple is new by Chinese standards. It's known (and named) for its more than 6-ft-/2-m-tall seated Buddha made of white jade, originally brought to Shanghai from what is now Myanmar (Burma). The temple is built with symmetrical halls and courtyards, upturned eaves and bright yellow walls—the ancient style of the Song (or Sung) dynasty. It's crowded with worshippers during Chinese New Year (usually February).

Daily 8 am-5 pm (the monks chant in the main hall 3:30-4 pm). Temple admission 20 yuan. Jade Buddha Hall admission 10 yuan.

Jin Mao Tower

88 Century Ave. (Lujiazui metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 5047-5101 or 5047-6688

<http://www.jinmao88.com>

This awe-inspiring, 88-floor, pagoda-influenced, art-deco-style skyscraper is another of Pudong's incredible structures. At 1,381 ft/421 m (including antenna) it is currently the third-tallest building in mainland China and among the 10 tallest in the world. The city may be full of aesthetically questionable structures, but the Jin Mao is an attractive mix of traditional and modern influences, as well as Eastern and Western. It blends the classic 13-tier

Buddhist pagoda with postmodern steel and glass; the 555-room Grand Hyatt Shanghai occupies floors 53-87. On the 88th floor, an observation deck offers great views of Shanghai. Two high-speed elevators get you there in 45 seconds.

Observation deck is open daily 8:30 am-9:30 pm. 120 yuan.

Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower (Dongfang Mingzhu)

1 Century Ave. (Lujiazui metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5879-1888

<http://www.orientalpearltower.com>

The people of Shanghai consider this their Eiffel Tower, although it's not half as elegant: It's gaudy and UFO-like, 1,535 ft/468 m high, and made up of 11 steel spheres of different sizes that are

supposed to represent pearls (as in Shanghai, Pearl of the Orient). You can walk on transparent panels in the 360-degree observatory or ride the roller coaster inside the Tower's lower sphere. At the bottom is the Shanghai Municipal History Museum. Go on a clear day for the best views.

Daily 8 am-9:30 pm. 60 yuan-100 yuan.

People's Square

Shanghai's rather chaotic main square was built for the people (*renmin*) and has become one of their most important social and cultural centers. Constructed in the mid-19th century by the British as a racetrack for the city's elite, today it's home to the Shanghai Museum, the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai Grand Theatre and municipal offices. The northeastern part of the square has been extensively remodeled, and the

whole area is now a nexus of commuters and traffic, though the pleasant landscaping in front of the Shanghai Concert Hall attracts families and children to sit and chat as well as, on evenings and weekends, the city's skateboarding youth. It's bordered by Weihai, Xizang, Huangpi Bei and Fuzhou roads.

Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum

62 Changyang Road (Dalian Road metro station)

Shanghai, China

Tens of thousands of Jews, first fleeing the Russian Revolution and then escaping Hitler, arrived in Shanghai from Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia in the first part of the 20th century. In 1943, the victorious Japanese forced all stateless Jewish immigrants into the "Designated Area for

Stateless Refugees" in Hongkou District, where they lived until the end of the war. This synagogue was built in 1927. It no longer holds services, but its small museum documents the Ashkenazi Jewish community of old Shanghai.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. 50 yuan.

Shanghai World Financial Center

100 Century Ave. (Dong Chang Road or Lujiazui metro stations)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-3867-2008

<http://www.swfc-shanghai.com>

This is one of Pudong's planned triptych of fabulous towers, a cool slice of glass with three viewing levels, on floors 94, 97 and 100. The top one has, if you can stomach it, a semitransparent floor. The floor used to be completely transparent, but visitors were so afraid to walk on it

that the management had it painted, leaving glass squares you can stand on and see all the way to the ground. The Shanghai World Financial Center (SWFC) is 1,614 ft/492 m high, with 101 floors, and houses what is currently the world's second-highest hotel, the Park Hyatt.

Observation decks open daily 8 am-11 pm (last admission 10 pm). 120 yuan-180 yuan, depending on level of access.

Site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Zhonggong Yidahuizhi)

374 Huangpo South Road (Huangponanlu metro station)
Shanghai, China

The first National Congress was a secret meeting held in July 1921 at the Bo Wen Girls School, in the area that is now Xintiandi. Thirteen delegates,

including Mao Zedong, from communist, Marxist and socialist groups from around the nation, gathered in one small back room. The room stands today as it looked then, complete with a table set for 13 people at tea. There's a small museum with relics, documents and photos.

Daily 9 am-4 pm. Free entry.

Sun Yat-sen's Former Residence (Sun Zhongshan Jinianguan)

7 Xiangshan Road (South Shaanxi Road metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5306-3361

http://www.zs.gov.cn/english/topics_e/2-2-1.htm

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was the father of the Chinese republic, which was established in 1911. He and his wife, Soong Qingling, lived in this two-story house

1919-24. Admission price includes a tour of the grounds and entrance to the museum.

Daily 9 am-4 pm. 20 yuan.

The Bund (Waitan)

This waterfront boulevard is Shanghai's most-photographed landmark.

Europeans, Japanese and Americans built their banks, clubs, trading houses, hotels and consulates there, in styles ranging from neoclassical to Gothic to art deco. Many of the historical structures, such as Nos. 3, 5 and 6, have been heavily renovated and converted into luxury shopping, dining and nightlife centers, and luxury hotels have also moved in, including Peninsula and Waldorf-Astoria. Two architectural marvels to check out are the art-deco masterpiece that is the Fairmont Peace Hotel, and the former Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (No. 12, now the

Pudong Development Bank), the dome of which is decorated with an exquisite Italian-tile mosaic. The Bund is a bustling gathering place for both tourists and residents at all times of the day and night. It's interesting to note that although overseas visitors tend to point their cameras west to the old structures, Chinese lenses are firmly focused on the modern skyscrapers across the Huangpu River in Pudong. The Bund stretches along East Zhongshan Yi Lu, between Yan'an Lu and Suzhou Creek.

Museums

China Art Museum

161 Nan Lu (Shanghai Pudong New Area)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-400-921-9021

<http://www.artmuseumonline.org/eng/index.jhtml>

The former Shanghai Art Museum changed its name and moved into the China pavilion on the former Expo 2010 lands. The government-sponsored museum now focuses on modern art, mostly Chinese, but one floor has some foreign art.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. No admission after 4 pm. Open on national statutory holidays. Free.

Long Museum West Bund

3398 Longteng Ave. (near Fenglin Road,
Xuhui district, Longhua metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6422-7636

<http://www.thelongmuseum.org>

Owned by Chinese billionaire collector couple Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei, the Long Museum West Bund has quickly established itself as one of Shanghai's

premier (and at time of writing, the city's largest) private collections of art. The building's architecture, designed by Liu Yichun of Atelier Deshaus overlooking the bank of the Huangpu River, is almost as stunning as the collection itself. Budget at least a few hours to browse this beautiful museum, which includes separate areas devoted to Chinese traditional, ancient and contemporary art.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5:30 pm. 50 yuan.

Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai (MoCA)

231 Nanjing W. Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 86-21632-79900

<http://www.mocashanghai.org>

Originally the park's greenhouse, this contemporary art museum is the first nonprofit, independently operated contemporary art institution in Shanghai. It is located in the People's Park, and its neighboring buildings include the Municipal Government Headquarters, the Shanghai Grand Theatre and the Shanghai Museum.

Daily 10 am-6 pm. Prices vary depending on the exhibition, but usually range 50 yuan-100 yuan.

Power Station of Art

200 Huayuancang Road, Huangpu District (at Huayuancang Lu, Huangpu District; South Xizang Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-3110-8550

<http://www.powerstationofart.org>

This government-sponsored contemporary-art museum is designed to focus on art from the 1980s onward on display in 430,556 sq ft/40,000 sq m of exhibition rooms. It takes its name from the former power station building that was converted for Expo 2010.

Tuesday-Sunday 11 am-7 pm. Free, though special exhibitions may exact a charge.

Rockbund Art Museum

20 Huqiu Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-3310-9985

<http://rockbundartmuseum.org>

Located in the renovated former Royal Asiatic Society building, a few blocks back from the Bund, this excellent art museum is one of Shanghai's most atmospheric locations for showcasing

Chinese and international contemporary art.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 30 yuan.

Shanghai History Museum

1 Century Ave., Pudong

Shanghai, China

Also known as the Shanghai Municipal History Museum, this small museum recalls Shanghai's pre-1949 heyday. Relocated to the ground floor of the Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower, it's an interesting place displaying more than 1,300 photos and artifacts, including the boundary tablets of the former International Settlement and French concession. It's also home to the famous bronze lions that once guarded the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank on the Bund. Some information is presented in English.

Daily 8 am-9:30 pm. 35 yuan.

Shanghai Museum

201 Renmin Ave. (People's Square metro station)

Shanghai, China

This beauty of a museum, shaped like a bronze *ding* urn, is mainland China's foremost showcase of artifacts and relics. State-of-the-art galleries house paintings, sculpture, ceramics, calligraphy, jade, Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, and coins. The collection of bronzes is among the best in the world. Each gallery chronologically illustrates the development of the individual art forms over centuries. Information is well-presented in English, and the audio guide is highly informative. The excellent gift shop on the first floor has an extensive range of books and scrolls.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. Free.

Shanghai Science and Technology Museum

2000 Century Ave., Pudong

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6862-2000

<http://www.sstm.org.cn>

Housed in a vast glass-and-steel building that includes an IMAX theater, this state-of-the-art museum is one of the largest of its kind in Asia. Interactive science exhibits let children and adults discover the wonders of the Earth's crust, new technological designs and the scope of life on the planet.

Information is presented in English.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5:15 pm. 60 yuan.

Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

100 Renmin Ave. (People's Square metro station)

Shanghai, China

Don't let the mundane-sounding name fool you: The Urban Planning Exhibition Centre is the city's monument to itself, stunningly showcasing Shanghai's development, past and present. Follow the crowds upstairs to a 1:500 scale model representing what the city should look like in 2020. You can find every individual building in Shanghai, from tiny one-story alley houses to towering skyscrapers. Anxious residents crane their necks over the model to see if their pleasant French concession houses will be left standing. The museum also features scaled models of yesteryear Shanghai, plus side-by-side photo comparisons of how various

intersections looked decades ago and today—the change is mind-boggling.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. 30 yuan.

The Propaganda Poster Art Center

868 Huashan Road, Room B-OC

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6211-1845 or 1390-184-1246

<http://www.shanghaipropagandaart.com>

Lurking in the dark basement of a nondescript apartment block, this miniature museum charts three turbulent decades in modern Chinese history through colorful propaganda art. The posters provide fascinating insights into the political thinking that shaped a nation. The center is the brainchild of tour guide Yang Pei Ming, who has more than 5,000 propaganda posters and believes he has amassed the

world's largest collection of Chinese revolutionary art.

Daily 10 am-5 pm. 20 yuan.

Yuz Museum

35 Fenggu Road (near Longteng Avenue,
Longhua metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6210-5207

<http://www.yuzmshanghai.org>

Housed in a former aircraft hangar just blocks away from Long Museum West Bund, the Yuz Museum is the brainchild of Chinese-Indonesian billionaire collector Budi Tek. Inside, massive sculptures, installations and paintings, including a piece by Yoko Ono, wow visitors with their diversity and scale.

Tuesday-Sunday 10:30 am-5:30 pm.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Former French Concession

The former French Concession is the most charming part of the city. It's a historic district known for its tranquil atmosphere and beautiful old architecture, as well as shops, bars and cafes. The main thoroughfare is tree-lined Huaihai Lu, a relaxed, upscale shopping street that is still marked by old French buildings.

Nanjing Road

The Chinese used to consider Nanjing Road the busiest street in the world, with its multitude of people, cars and bicycles. But in the late 1990s, the government closed off much of the eastern section to cars, cutting down on some of the chaos. Between Henan and Xizang roads, it is now a pedestrian walkway, full of shops and restaurants, as well as people-watching opportunities. The western part of

Nanjing Road, between Shaanxi Lu and Jing'an Temple, is now the city's showpiece upscale shopping and business district, known collectively as Jing'an.

Pudong

This is Shanghai's financial center, and because much of it is still being built, it seems to grow a little more each day. It's hard to believe that until the early 1990s, rice paddies dominated the ground that now supports some of the world's tallest skyscrapers. Although most visitors forgo Pudong in order to see Puxi's historic centers, it's worth a visit for an eye-opening look at Shanghai's fast track to modernity.

The central financial zone of Lujiazui is the heart of the district. Most of Pudong's attractions are along Lujiazui Road and Century Avenue. To the north of the road, along the Huangpu River, is

the space-age Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower. Just south of the road is the Binjiang Avenue, the waterfront promenade. A little farther east stands the 88-story Jin Mao Tower and 101-story Shanghai World Financial Center (SWFC). Both towers host Hyatt hotels, the Park Hyatt in the SWFC and the Grand Hyatt in the JinMao Tower. Also in this district are the Ritz-Carlton Shanghai and The Shangri-La.

The Old City

This area within the Zhonghua Road-Renmin Road circle remained under Chinese law and administration after the country was defeated in the first Opium War. And it was in these winding back alleys that Shanghai gained notoriety as a haven for gangsters and opium dens. Today the drugs and the crime are gone, and the narrow wandering lanes are surrounded by a new generation of

high-rise towers. Still, many of the crowded yet quaint neighborhoods and tiny, pre-1949 houses remain. A stroll through the Old City, even in areas where it has been modernized and gentrified, offers a look at how most residents once lived. It's best visited during the day.

Xintiandi

This shopping, dining and entertainment area has become the second most visited spot in Shanghai for Chinese tourists (after the Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower). Developed by a Hong Kong company and designed by Bostonian Ben Wood, Xintiandi is a massive creation meant to fuse the old Shanghai with the future one.

Set along winding lanes, the development includes chic restaurants, bars and shops that are housed in rebuilt stone gate (*shikumen*) homes,

complete with redbrick, stone facades and terra-cotta roofs. A park and artificial lake border the area. The whole effect is a bit contrived and Singapore-clean, but young Chinese professionals and foreign expatriates like to go there to look fashionable and consume the latest in Western and Asian food, fashion and entertainment.

Xintiandi also houses the site of the first meeting of the Communist Party. The very place where Mao Zedong and his comrades conceived the People's Revolution is now part of a trendy shopping and entertainment district: This mixture of capitalism and communism makes Xintiandi a perfect symbol for today's Shanghai. Xintiandi is in the central part of the former French concession and is bordered by Taicang, Huangpi South, Madang and Xingye roads.

Xuhui

The westernmost portion of the former French concession that reaches to the southwestern banks of the Huangpu river, Xuhui is largely a residential district, but it is a nice area in which to stroll down pleasant tree-lined lanes. It is also home to some of the city's finest European-style houses and apartment blocks, and it showcases art-deco, French, neoclassical, Spanish revivalist and an assortment of other architectural styles from the early 20th century. A number of impressive art museums, including the Power Station of Art, the Long Museum West Bund and the Yuz Museum, are located there.

Parks & Gardens

Century Park

Huamu Road at Fang Dian Road (corner of Fangdian Road; take line 2 from People's

Square; Century Park metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-3876-0588

<http://www.centurypark.com.cn>

This is the city's largest park, near the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum in Pudong. A mixture of British, Japanese and Chinese gardening styles, the park includes a number of ponds, running trails and a concert stage. On sunny days, the area morphs into Shanghai's version of Central Park, awash with people running, flying kites, practicing tai chi and picnicking on its large swathes of green grass.

20 yuan.

People's Park

75 W. Nanjing Road (near North Huangpi Road; People's Square metro station)

Shanghai, China

On the north end of People's Square, this leafy park was built on the site of the former Shanghai race course. Its central city location makes it popular spot for tourists in need of a break from the wealth of nearby shopping and museums. This is also the home of the popular marriage market, a busy weekend market where concerned parents and grandparents browse personals on behalf of their offspring.

Riverside Promenade

Binjiang Avenue

Shanghai, China

This sterile park that runs 8,200 ft/2,500 m along the Huangpu River features more concrete than grass. But it does offer scenic views of the Bund and of the barges working on the river and provides access to the Pudong-Puxi ferry terminal. A growing number of

restaurants, coffee shops and bars have led this area to be referred to as "The New Bund of Pudong."

Daily 8 am-11 pm.

Yu Gardens

257 Yuyuan Road (Yuyuan metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6373-6950

<http://www.yugarden.com.cn>

This traditional Chinese meditative garden was built 1559-77 by the Pan family, who were officials in the Ming dynasty. It was destroyed during the First Opium War (1839-42) but later rebuilt. Besides its signature bridges, winding walkways, carp-filled ponds, dragon-lined walls and pavilions, the gardens encompass an old opera stage, a museum dedicated to the Society of Small Swords rebellion against French

colonialists in the mid-1800s, and the Chenghuang Miao (Temple of the City God). Some think the complex is too touristy (particularly on Saturday and Sunday when it gets very crowded), but it is one of Shanghai's few old attractions still left standing.

Surrounding the garden is a modern bazaar of stores that sell overpriced arts, crafts and souvenirs.

In the middle of the lake just outside the garden gate is the Huxinting Teahouse, which opened in 1856 and is said to be the very building depicted on the willow pattern on fine china. Although tea is cheaper on the first floor, the view is better from the top floor. A traditional tea ceremony is performed there on Monday afternoons, accompanied by live traditional Chinese music. To get to the garden, you must wind your way through the bazaar to the ticket booth, which is just north of the lake. The gardens are bordered by Fuyou,

Jiujiaochang, Fangbang and Anren roads.

Daily 8:30 am-5 pm (teahouse is open 8:30 am-9 pm).

Zoos & Wildlife

Shanghai Ocean Aquarium

1388 Lujiazui Ring Road, Pudong

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5877-9988

<http://www.sh-aquarium.com>

This impressive aquarium houses 300 species of fish and other marine life from China and around the world.

Species include Chinese alligators, Chinese sturgeon, king penguins and giant salamanders. Much of the collection can be viewed from a 500-ft/155-m transparent underwater tunnel. Visitors can also opt to scuba dive in the

shark tank. Information is presented in English.

Daily 9 am-6 pm. 160 yuan adults, 110 yuan children.

Shanghai Zoo

2381 Hongqiao Road (near Yingbinyi Road, Hongqiao district; Shanghai Zoo metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6268-7775

<http://www.shanghaizoo.cn>

With more than 6,000 animals, including pandas, monkeys, tigers, camels, kangaroos and gorillas, this is one of the best zoos in China. The grounds are also beautiful, with 100,000 trees and plant species covering 1 million sq ft/100,000 sq m of forest growth. There are also a number of restaurants on-site. Panda feedings and live animal

shows are a highlight, although some westerners are turned off by the poor treatment of animals by Chinese visitors. Head over on a weekday to avoid the crowds.

Daily 7:30 am-5 pm. 40 yuan.

Nightlife

Shanghai's nightlife is now truly world-class, ranging from pulsing clubs that attract the world's top DJs and classy Bund-front cocktail lounges to playing pool at an American bar or sipping beer on a garden patio in a converted French concession villa. Most of the popular clubs don't close their doors until 2 am or so.

Things are always changing, however, with old bars shutting down and new bars popping up out of the blue. The smartest upscale bars are on the Bund, and the best place to barhop is in the

former French concession, where you'll find Shanghai's most popular bar areas—Xintiandi, Fuxing and Yongfu roads. The area around Nanjing Road, near Tongren Road, has a few gritty sports bars popular with expats, most notably The Big Bamboo.

Shanghai is also known for karaoke. It's ubiquitous, as KTV (Karaoke TV) establishments abound, with private rooms complete with serving girls, fine cognac and fruit platters. Just beware of the prices.

Shopping

Thanks to Shanghai's obsession with commercialism and internationalism, the city has the widest variety of goods in the nation—except for Hong Kong. Shiny shopping malls now dominate the city's shopping streets. New downtown brand stores pop up nearly every month in an attempt to satisfy the locals'

seemingly insatiable appetite for *ming pai*, or famous labels, with such upscale locations as the Bund and Xintiandi specializing in uberchic brand boutiques.

Two streets, Nanjing Road and Huaihai Road, have been the city's shopping meccas since the concession era, and smaller venues such as the lanes of Tianzifang shops at 210 Taikang Road offer small, independent boutiques as well as clothing and home-accessory stores.

Trendy clothing boutiques intersperse with individuals hawking knockoff designer bags on Julu Road near Fumin Road and on Xinle Road near Shaanxi Road. Outdoor markets located in the city's nooks and crannies are also interesting and give insight into Shanghai's bustling street life.

Antiques, Chinese arts and crafts, silk and linen are available in established stores as well as on the street. Be careful when buying antiques, however. Fakes are frequently hidden among the real treasures, and only items dated after 1797 can be legally exported. Contact the Cultural Antique Export Verification Unit of the Beijing Cultural Antique Bureau if you aren't sure. Phone 6500-3311, ext. 255.

No matter what you buy—particularly at markets—be sure to bargain vigorously. Keep in mind that a purchase is not a deal unless both sides think they've done well. We usually start at one quarter of the asking price, and stay firm. Walking away often encourages the vendor see things your way.

Within 20 years, Shanghai's contemporary art scene went from nearly nonexistent to burgeoning, with pieces now selling for millions of yuan.

Luckily for art lovers, nearly all of it is housed in the abandoned factories and warehouses at 50 Moganshan Road. It all started when artists found the cheap, empty space and started moving their studios there, and the galleries soon followed. The complex is a great place to browse for the day and enjoy lunch at a funky cafe.

Shopping Hours: Generally, daily 10 am-10 pm.

Antique Stores

ARTifacts

3568 Jiasong Middle Road, Qingpu District
Shanghai, China

Phone: 6277-8927

<https://www.shanghai-antiques.com>

Shanghai was home to China's furniture industry in the 1930s. Thus it is no

surprise there is a lot of locally made art-deco furniture still about. It's not cheap, however: A small, glass-topped art-deco table, for example, will fetch 15,000 yuan.

Daily 9 am-7 pm.

Bookstores

Garden Books

325 Chang Le Road (near Shaanxi Road)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5404-8728

<http://www.gardenbooks.cn/php/company.php>

A reasonable selection of travel guides, history books about Shanghai, and assorted foreign titles and magazines in an excellent French concession location. There's also a small coffee shop at the back of the store. A second, much smaller outlet has opened on the

ground floor of the Shanghai Centre
(Rm. 116, 1376 W. Nanjing Road).

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Shanghai Foreign Language Bookstore

390 Fuzhou Road (near South Shangxi Road;
East Nanjing Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 2320-4888

<http://www.sbt.com.cn>

On a busy road parallel to East Nanjing Road, this multistory bookstore stocks Shanghai's largest collection of English-language books and magazines. A decent selection of paperbacks is on the ground floor, near the cash register. Climb the grand staircase to browse photography books and pricey imported magazines.

Daily 10 am-6:30 pm.

Department Stores

Parkson

918 Huaihai Middle Road (corner of Shaanxi Road)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 6415-8818

<http://www.parkson.com.cn>

Long-established department store chain with branches in most major cities nationwide. Prices can be a little high, although you can buy pretty much anything you need there, and the basement-level supermarket is a resident expatriate institution. Sister locations in Hongqiao and Xinzhuang.

Shanghai No. 1 Department Store

830 Nanjing E. Road

Shanghai, China

This has been Shanghai's largest and most important state-owned department store for decades. It used to reflect communist disarray, but today it looks much shinier. On weekends it attracts masses of Chinese shoppers.

Daily 9:30 am-10 pm.

Galleries

Art Labor Gallery

570 Yongjia Road, Building 4, 411 (near Yueyang Road; Hengshan Road metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 3460-5331

<http://www.artlaborgallery.com>

In Surpass Court in the former French Concession, this gallery is a surefire bet for edgy exhibitions by Chinese and foreign artists. Most works are for sale,

and the Canadian owner, Martin Kemble, is a fountain of knowledge regarding Shanghai's contemporary arts scene.

Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday by appointment.

Island 6

50 Moganshan Road, Building 6, Second Floor

Shanghai, China

Phone: 6227-7856

<http://www.island6.org/island6Shanghai.html>

One of the largest of the Moganshan Lu spaces, this place stocks an impressive posse of edgier-than-most Chinese and overseas artists' works. The gallery has become a Warhol-like art creation space that is open to the public, now with two spaces in M50 as well as one on The Bund.

Daily 10 am-7 pm.

ShanghART

50 Moganshan Road, Buildings 16 and 18
Shanghai, China

Phone: 6359-3923

<http://www.shanghartgallery.com>

The city's first Chinese contemporary-art gallery is also its most consistent and has evolved into a bustling hub of art activity. Look for work by some of China's best-known artists, including Ding Yi, Xue Song, Zhou Tiehai, Wu Yiming and Shen Fan. The staff are some of the most knowledgeable in the country on contemporary Chinese art. An adjoining H-Space also hosts smaller exhibitions.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Markets

Bird and Flower Market (Hua Niao Shichang)

Xizang Road (across from the Dongtai Road Antiques Market, near People's Square or Xintiandi)

Shanghai, China

This colorful market sells more than just birds and flowers. Hawkers also sell pets such as fish, cats, turtles and frogs, a whole range of plants, bonsai trees, orchids and clay pots. Knickknacks and yummy, greasy Chinese snacks, too.

Daily 8 am-dusk.

Dongtai Road Antiques Market (Liulichang)

Dongtai Road (at Liuhe Road, one block west of South Xizang Road, near People's Square or Xintiandi; Laoximen metro station)

Shanghai, China

This antiques market is one of Shanghai's best known. You'll find porcelain, Victrolas, jade, Mao paraphernalia, antique baskets and lots more. Dealers set up outdoor stalls lining the street, a few blocks west of the Old City. Prices have shot up in the past few years, and fakes abound, so be careful what you buy. It's always fun to browse, though.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Fuyou Road Antiques Market

457 Fangbang Middle Road, Old City
Shanghai, China

A bit of a misnomer, this market is not actually on Fuyou Road but on Fangbang Road. In any case, you'll find everything from old wicker baskets and Mao paraphernalia to real and fake antique porcelain in this warehouse of a market. As the years go by, more and

more fakes appear alongside the genuine items. On the weekends, hawkers set up outside the warehouse in the wee dawn hours, and the top level of the structure is open to even more temporary sellers from upcountry. Get there early for the best selection.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

South Bund Fabric Market

399 Lujiabang Road, near Nanchang Road
Shanghai, China

Local vendors gather in and outside of this venue to sell a wide range of silks and other fabric. If you have several days in Shanghai, this is the perfect place to have any Western clothes ordered (or copied) or Chinese clothes made by professional tailors.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Shopping Areas

IAPM Mall

L6-615, 999 Huaihai Middle Road (near
Shanxi South Road, Xuhui district)
Shanghai, China

Located on bustling Huaihai Lu, the IAPM mall has quickly established itself as a one-stop shopping and dining destination. Fashion heavyweights such as Stella McCartney, Prada and Alexander McQueen occupy the first floors; sports brands such as Nike occupy the upper levels. In between, everything from Jesse, a Shanghainese staple, to Morton's The Steakhouse have also made the IAPM a regular stop for local diners.

Daily 10 am-11 pm.

Plaza 66

1266 Nanjing W. Road

Shanghai, China

Phone: 2225-1800

<http://www.plaza66.com>

Even for those who don't much care for luxury brands, Plaza 66 has become a tourist attraction all its own. Four floors of top designer stores—think Hermes, D&G, Zegna and Bulgari—in an airy and spacious modern mall. It boasts a dine-to-be-seen atrium cafe, high-end dining on the upper levels and a luxe cafe and bar underneath the Dunhill store, and, on weekends, a classical sextet playing in the lobby, which make this the city's premier shopping address.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Shanghai IFC Mall

8 Century Ave., LuJiaZui District, Pudong

Shanghai, China

This latest-generation mall features more than 180 top retail outlets, from luxury multilevel flagships to international favorites, plus six deluxe cinemas, an Apple store, an excellent basement supermarket and dozens of restaurants. The mall connects directly to subway line 2, as well as the Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, Pudong.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Shanghai Times Square

99 Huaihai Middle Road
Shanghai, China

Regularly revamped, one of Shanghai's longest-established retail plazas is also one of its best, with a classy portfolio of brand boutiques that includes Zara, D&G, Gucci, Coach and Versace, an excellent basement supermarket and several cafes and restaurants, plus

monthly exhibitions of art and culture around the first and second floors.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Specialty Stores

Casa Pagoda

136 Taikang Road (near Sinan Road; Dapu Bridge metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 6466-8198

<http://www.casapagoda.com>

With locations in Beijing, Bangkok and Moscow, this chic Tianzifang boutique specializes in historically inspired home decor. Along with sofas, club chairs, tables, bookshelves and furniture with East-meets-West flair, there's a fascinating selection of smaller items, including quirky throw pillows, serving trays, lamps and chrome dog statues.

Madame Mao's Dowry

207 Fumin Road (near Julu Road, Xuhui district; Changshu Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 5403-3551

<https://www.facebook.com/madamemaosdowryshanghai>

A treasure trove of retro furniture, custom jewelry, clothing and other knick-knacks, this shop specializes in art and objects from the Mao period. All of the artists and designers featured in the store creatively weave this portion of Chinese history into their modern fashions and designs; there's also a selection of authentic propaganda posters on-site.

Daily 10 am-7 pm.

Mu Gallery

3213 Hongmei Road, Flat C (Minhang district)
Shanghai, China

This shop specializes in Chinoiserie, the smart use of traditional Chinese design in modern living spaces. With three locations in Shanghai, this is the place to go for antique furniture, lanterns, Buddhist statues, ceramics, bamboo curtains, silk cushions, screens and other stylish decor unique to China.

Daily 10 am-6:30 pm.

Song Fang Maison de The

227 Yongjia Lu (close to Shaanxi Nan Lu)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 6433-8283

<http://www.songfangtea.com>

This cozy and stylish tea emporium offers a select range of fresh tea leaves from across China and Asia. It's located

in a renovated French concession shophouse. The retro turquoise packaging, tins and logos are a lovely touch, and there's also a quiet tearoom on the second and third floors that serves all of the store's infusions. There's a second location near The Bund (19 Fuzhou Road; phone 6329-9656).

Daily 10 am-7 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

Shanghai's tradition of culinary creativity has been revived after a half-century of communism, and since China's opening to the West and economic reform, it has become a city of international tastes.

Although Shanghainese is sometimes

called a regional cuisine, akin to Cantonese or Sichuanese, it's really a fusion of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui cuisines. Most Chinese restaurants in Shanghai serve dishes from different regions, and many still serve true, authentic fare. Typical dishes include *jiachang doufu* (home-style tofu), *pao fan* (a thick rice soup) and *su ban dou* (cold bean mash with vegetables). Dishes are usually built on foundations of oil, sugar and dark sauces. Fish is extremely popular, with river fish preferred over ocean varieties. Shanghai hairy crab is the region's pricey fall specialty, served in October and November. The city also has its version of Cantonese dim sum, such as the ever-popular *xiaolong bao* (pork or crab soup dumplings) and *shengjian mantou* (pan-fried pork dumplings). You can often find steamed buns and dumplings, *you tiao* (fried breadsticks), Shanghai-style fried noodles, and baked

and fried breads being sold by street vendors.

If you're not hungry for Chinese food, delicious foreign foods—from Japanese and Korean to Cajun and oven-fired pizza—are readily available. And new restaurants arrive on the scene monthly.

Many Chinese restaurants have English-language menus. Sometimes you have to ask for one, and you may find it difficult to order at eateries that don't have them. In those cases, if you can't find an English-speaking server, pantomime and drawings can suffice, but there is a good chance that mistakes will be made and adventurous surprises may be in store.

You could have every meal of your visit in Shanghai's ever-popular entertainment district Xintiandi.

Fashionable—and usually expensive—eateries are housed in its old *shikumen* (stone gate) houses. If you find yourself doing business or staying at a hotel in the Hongqiao district, where the domestic airport is located, there are also some great restaurants. And the Bund is home to a few excellent, if expensive, dining rooms. The main shopping thoroughfares of Nanjing Road and Huaihai Road are packed with hundreds of eateries of every hue and stripe.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines for a two-course dinner for one, excluding tip or drinks: \$ = less than 100 yuan; \$\$ = 100 yuan-180 yuan; \$\$\$ = 181 yuan-350 yuan; \$\$\$\$ = more than 350 yuan.

Local & Regional

1221

1221 Yanan W. Road (near Fanyu Road)

Shanghai, China

This unpretentious eatery's tasty Shanghainese food has made it a long-established expatriate favorite. The simple but postmodern interior and great service offer an escape from the chaotic dining rooms of most Chinese restaurants. Creative dishes include *you tiao* (fried breadsticks) with shredded beef; crispy duck; garlic-fried shrimp; and shredded pork served with scallions and pancakes. The house-made chicken soup with wontons is the real deal, and on top of all that, prices are reasonable.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Crystal Jade

2F, No. 6-7 South Block, Xintiandi, Xingye
Road, Lane 123
Shanghai, China

This brightly lit and well-decorated eatery is a favorite for lovers of Cantonese and Shanghainese dim sum in Shanghai. The Xintiandi location is a huge drawing card, true, but it's the food that just keeps everyone coming back, especially young professionals and large family groups. Must-orders are the wontons in hot oil and the Cantonese double-boiled chicken soup. There is a second location on West Nanjing Road (phone 5228-1133).

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$.

Fu 1088

375 Zhenning Road (near Yuyuan Road)
Shanghai, China

Dine in private rooms that accommodate two to 16 people at this gracious heritage villa. Cheongsam-clad butlers serve classic Shanghainese fare.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Minimum charge 300 yuan per person, not including drinks.

Guyi

87 Fumin Road

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6249-5628

<http://www.guyi2001.com>

This Shanghai gem (often overlooked by visitors) is packed every evening with local diners seeking the fiery "hot pot" cuisine of Hunan province. Many chefs from the city's plusher joints vouch for the authenticity of the food, especially the green beans with minced pork.

Additional locations on West Nanjing Road and at IAPM mall

Reservations absolutely necessary. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Jesse's (Lao Ji Shi)

41 Tianping Road (Jiaotong University metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 6282-9260

<http://www.xinjishi.com>

This simple two-story restaurant has only 12 tables. It's a local favorite with a community feel, and it is the perfect place to sample home-style Shanghainese food, including river shrimp and *jiachang* tofu. The atmosphere is friendly and unpretentious. There is a second, more upscale location with more seating in Xintiandi at House No. 9 (phone 6336-

4746), with additional outlets—known as Xinjishi, or "new Jesse"—dotting the city.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Lost Heaven

No. 38 Gaoyou Road

Shanghai, China

Phone: 6433-5126

<http://www.lostheaven.com.cn>

While most Shanghailanders—expats who live in Shanghai—have become familiar with the popular cuisines of China, even the most serious foodies find Yunnan cuisine difficult to classify. Many ethnicities make up this southwest province, and each has something compellingly delicious to offer. Be sure to order the cold eggplant starter and one each of the mushroom and fish

dishes, and enjoy one of Shanghai's most convivial dining atmospheres. There is an additional location at 17 Yan'an Dong Lu (phone 6330-0967).

Daily 11:30 am-2 pm and 5:30-9:30 pm.
\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Lynn

99-1 Xikang Road (by the junction with Nanjing West Road; Jing'an Temple metro station)

Shanghai, China

This smart but not ostentatious restaurant in the heart of the trendy Nanjing West Road district serves traditional and updated Shanghainese classic dishes to a discerning clientele. Check out the shrimp dumplings and the marinated drunken duck.

Daily for lunch and dinner. The popular weekend dim sum brunch is definitively by reservation only. \$\$-\$\$\$.

Nanxiang Mantou (Dumpling House)

85 Yuyuan Road (in Yuyuan Bazaar, adjacent to the lake and the Bridge of Nine Turnings),
Old City
Shanghai, China

Established in the early 1900s, Nanxiang is one of Shanghai's premier places to savor the city's signature dumplings. Located in Yuyuan Bazaar, the restaurant's ground floor is constantly crowded with long lines of locals waiting to get their dumplings to go. Go upstairs for a more refined dining experience. You'll be served delicious *xiaolong bao*, little steamer dumplings filled with pork and crab meat. (Here's the secret to enjoying *xiaolong bao*: Dip the dumpling in vinegar, bite a small

hole off the top, and suck out the soup within before you eat the filling.) This is the real Shanghai deal.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and early dinner. \$.

Sichuan Citizen

Wukang Lu 378, Second Floor, XuHui District
Shanghai, China

Phone: 5404-1235

<http://www.citizenshanghai.com>

Sichuanese food is known for its use of hot red chilis, and this stylish restaurant, designed as an updated traditional teahouse, keeps the flavors sizzling. The scarlet interior is packed every evening with a young crowd dining on garlicky cucumber salad, tangy crispy chicken and a pungent *mapo doufu*. The menu is huge, and the chefs can modify some of the dishes for vegetarians.

Service is excellent, and the cocktails list is another plus—try the sweetly refreshing basil-drop martini to becalm those fearsome chilis

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Ye Shanghai

338 Huang Pi Nan Road, Xintiandi (Huangpi Nan Lu Station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6311-2323

<http://www.elite-concepts.com/page.aspx?corpname=elite&i=425>

Popular both with business travelers and leisure tourists, this restaurant serves regional cuisines in an elegant retro Shanghainese setting. The food is a refined mixture of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghainese cuisine. It's naturally

lit during the day, but at night the red lanterns and heavy, dark wood floors and wall paneling echo ritzy 1920s Shanghai. The highly rated seafood comes baked, poached, steamed, braised, sun-dried and drunken. Dim sum is excellent, and vegetarians also have options—unusual for upscale Xintiandi.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

American

Beef & Liberty

1376 West Nanjing Road (near Xikang Road, inside the Shanghai Centre; Jing'an Temple metro station)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 289-5733

<http://www.beef-liberty.com>

Located on the ground floor of the Shanghai Center, this upscale burger joint has established a local following among Shanghai's expats. The menu is simple, but premium imported Australian beef makes just about everything on the menu a star. The place is absolutely packed on Monday, when owners offer a buy one, get one free burger happy hour deal all evening. During summer months, the restaurant doubles in size as patrons enjoys burgers and spiked milkshakes on the spacious patio.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

Boxing Cat Brewery

82 Fuxing W. Road (near Yongfu Road;
Shanghai Library metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6431-2091

<http://www.boxingcatbrewery.com>

Serves the city's best house-brewed beer with an extensive selection of Southern U.S. dishes. Located in a three-floored French concession villa, it's central and easy to find, and the welcome is always warm-hearted. The hearty menu ranges from sandwiches, salads and burgers to blackened Cajun snapper and a large weekend brunch. There is a second location in Sinan Mansions, near Fuxing Park (phone 6426-0360).

Monday-Wednesday 5 pm-midnight, Thursday 5 pm-2 am, Friday 3 pm-2 am, Saturday 10 am-2 am, Sunday 10 am-midnight. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Asian

Itoya

24 Ruijin No. 2 Road

Shanghai, China

A well-established Japanese restaurant with several locations around town, Itoya serves some of the most succulent, melt-in-your-mouth raw fish in Shanghai. The fish arrives fresh daily and makes for huge pieces of delicious sushi and sashimi. The salmon is especially good, but also be sure to try the broiled cod, tempura and *udon* noodles. The set lunches are good values.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Simply Thai

5-C Dongping Lu

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-40088-07729

<http://www.simplythai-sh.com>

Located in an unpretentious two-story building on a small and unprepossessing street of interior-decor shops and tailors, this is one of the best, and most ubiquitous, Thai restaurants in town. Founded more than 10 years ago, Simply Thai is a local institution because of its dependable food and fine service, both of which can be hit-or-miss in Shanghai. Multiple locations.

Sunday-Thursday 11 am-11 pm, Friday and Saturday 11 am-midnight. \$\$\$.
Most major credit cards.

French

Mr & Mrs Bund

Bund 18, 6-F, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6323-9898

<http://www.mmbund.com>

Helmed by inventive French chef Paul Pairet, this large, superchic eatery on the Bund combines eclectic modern French cuisine with Pairet's trademark molecular gastronomy. The result is an extensive, delicious and surprisingly well-priced menu with more than 200 items that packs the place most nights. One of Shanghai's finest restaurants.

Sunday-Wednesday 5:30-10:30 pm,
Thursday-Saturday 5:30-11 pm;
Saturday and Sunday 11:30 am-2 pm.
Reservations required. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Fusion

Jean Georges

Three on the Bund, 3 Zhongshan No. 1 Road,
Fourth Floor (at Guangdong Road)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6321-7733

<http://jean-georges.com>

This place is unlike any other restaurant in Shanghai. Top-grade French cuisine with a Chinese accent is served in a thickly carpeted old-world interior, offering a stunning view of the Bund. The variety of foie gras on the menu makes it difficult for diners to escape without trying at least one dish. Desserts are highly recommended.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6-11 pm.
Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Mr Willis

195 Anfu Road, Third Floor (by Wulumuqi Road)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5404-0200

<http://www.mrwillis.com.cn>

Small loft-style restaurant created by Australian chef Craig Willis, who greets guests from the open kitchen as he whips up seasonal classics, such as grilled scallops and curried lentils with roast tomato chutney, rack of lamb with mashed peas and mint sauce, and an excellent *limon* gelato. The eclectic menu and hearty portions ensure a full house most evenings. Downstairs is occupied by Willis' own Sydney-style boutique pizza parlor, La Strada.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

T8

House 8, North Block, Lane 181, Taicang
Road, Xintiandi
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6355-8999

<http://www.t8-shanghai.com>

This restaurant has become a Xintiandi favorite with its slick, trendy identity, excellent wine list and regularly updated menu. A dining area fitted in glass and traditional Chinese furniture surrounds an open kitchen. People go there to be seen and to dine on such creative fusion dishes as cured salmon and goat cheese roulade; Sichuan seared king prawns with octopus; garlic cream and crab spring roll; and tuna with prosciutto and caviar.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Afternoon tea is served 2:30-5:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Italian

Bella Napoli

No. 4 Lane 946, Changle Road

Shanghai, China

This homey Italian restaurant serves a range of well-priced pasta dishes—with five different pasta types to choose for each sauce. The fresh *tagliolini* with shrimp and zucchini is excellent, and there are 14 varieties of wood-fired pizza, ranging from standard margherita to *quattro stagioni* to *ortolana*, with mozzarella, tomato, mushroom, eggplant and zucchini. Located in a renovated lane house, it features a pretty garden patio for alfresco dining.

Daily 11:30 am-11 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Mediterranean

M on the Bund

Five on the Bund, 5 Zhongshan East No. 1
Road
Shanghai, China

This restaurant represents everything that Shanghai's return to glamour is all about. It is situated on the seventh and top floor of the former Nisshin Kisen Kaisha Building, which was erected in 1925 for a Japanese shipping line. It features Mediterranean-influenced cuisine in a chic modern-meets-retro interior. The terrace overlooking the river is a perfect spot for brunch. Try the *crepes parmentier* with caviar, followed by the famous slowly baked, salt-encrusted leg of lamb. And leave room for the pavlova.

Monday-Friday 11:30 am-2:30 pm and
6-10:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday
11:30 am-3 pm and 6-10:30 pm.

Reservations required for dinner.

Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

Most major credit cards.

Spanish

El Willy

5F, 22 E. Zhongshan Road (near Xinyong'an Road)

Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5407-5757

<http://www.elwillygroup.com>

This eponymous modern Spanish restaurant by madcap Catalan chef Guillermo "Willy" Trullas Moreno is perennially popular for both lunch and dinner. Housed in a redeveloped concession-era building overlooking The Bund, el Willy's menu blends traditional tapas favorites such as sauteed shrimp with garlic and chili with contemporary creations such as scallop seviche with avocado and crispy shallots.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner; Saturday for brunch also. Reservations

required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it in closer contact with the rest of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—You will need to establish local business contacts before journeying to China. Begin by contacting the department of your government that deals with international business (the U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance, or the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai; <http://www.amcham-shanghai.org>). It can put you in touch with business and

government personnel in China. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is very important (for both business and social occasions). If you are late, it not only reflects badly on you, but it can be perceived as a slight that may put the whole business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshakes are the norm, accompanied by a slight nod of the head or a slight bow. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: "Mr.," "Ms." (unmarried female) and "Madam" (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the one that should be paired with

the title (thus, Hu Jintao is referred to as President Hu).

Your business cards should have English on one side and a Chinese translation on the other; in swapping them use both hands to give and take each card. Visibly read the business cards you receive and treat them with respect by leaving them on the table in front of you during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, place the cards in a dedicated business card wallet or holder, separate from that in which you carry cash and credit cards.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with a short interval of polite conversation of a general nature, usually over tea or drinks. Hard-driving, get-right-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do

not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands; unflustered patience is critical. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that, too, is a clue that the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and often exotic foods. Expect many toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink or are among the many foreigners who don't enjoy its taste, politely decline by toasting with your tea or other drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a very formal body posture. Refrain from touching, and keep gestures to an absolute minimum.

Gift Giving—On the whole, gift giving in business is not common, and caution should be exercised. Gifts given to an entire group or company usually get a better response than those given to an individual. Do not bestow the gifts until negotiations have been completed. If you receive a gift, do not unwrap it until you are out of the presence of the giver. The color of a gift and its wrapping paper have great significance. Two good choices are red (the color of luck) and yellow (the color of prosperity). Avoid items and wrappings that are white, because that color is associated with funerals. Clocks of any color can have the same connotation.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as

Taiwan, Tibet, the Communist Party, China-U.S. relations, human-rights issues or the 1989 uprising in Tiananmen Square. Regardless of your acquaintances' real feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable expressing themselves to you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are all good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone on their possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you comment on favorably may be offered to you—don't accept.

Personal Safety

Shanghai, like China in general, has very low crime rates. A woman can walk home in the middle of the night, through the center of town, and feel safe.

However, travelers should still use common sense. China's changing economy has brought a growing

disparity between rich and poor, as well as increased migration to the cities from poor rural areas. Also, street begging and crimes have increased. Most is petty crime. Keep your belongings close to you and watch out for pickpockets, especially around the train station, on the subway and in front of large hotels.

Do be wary of friendly, English-speaking locals who may invite you to tea. This is a common scam that unfortunately often leaves tourists stuck with a huge bill.

Like other large Chinese cities, Shanghai seems to be constantly under construction. Give construction areas and workers plenty of space, and cross the street rather than walk beneath scaffolding. Pedestrians have occasionally been struck by falling objects, and there is little recourse or compensation for such accidents.

Also be wary of Chinese drivers, many of whom consider traffic laws and stoplights to be suggestions rather than the rule. Busses and taxis are particularly loath to brake for pedestrians, even if they have the right of way. Pedestrian crosswalks are denoted by zebra crossings, though they are frequently ignored by drivers. Similarly, scooters often drive on sidewalks, beeping at any pedestrians who dare get in their way. Be especially careful in the evenings, as vehicles don't always use their headlights.

If you become the victim of crime, call the police hotline at 110.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Don't drink Shanghai's water: Opt instead for bottled or boiled water. Both

are readily available. As far as eating goes, visitors generally go through a period of adjustment to the food. Most of the food is safe to eat, even if the restaurant looks a bit unhygienic. But use common sense: If you're uncomfortable with the cleanliness of a restaurant, don't eat there.

In the past, most foreign visitors complained about public toilets, which were merely concrete slabs placed over large pits. However, Shanghai has modernized at a rapid rate, and these days most tourist spots, hotels, restaurants, office buildings and shopping centers have clean, modern facilities.

Shanghai's air pollution has become a serious problem. On especially polluted days, visitors aren't even able to see across the Huangpu River. The city experiences its worst air during winter months, when residents are forced to

don face masks and limit their time outdoors. Check <http://aqicn.org/city/shanghai>, a website based on real-time air quality measurements published by the American consulates in China, for uncensored air quality index (AQI) updates. You can also order face masks through the website.

In case of a medical emergency, you should go to a hospital or health-care center specifically geared to foreigners. For example, Huashan Hospital, one of the best in the city, has a special 24-hour clinic for foreigners (phone 6248-9999; ext. 2500; 8F, Building 1, 12 Wulumuqi Middle Road; <http://www.sh-hwmc.com.cn/html/b3a197e91f274091a44e88a26bf52ddc/en/enindex.html>). Another good option is Parkway Medical Center, a Singapore-run chain of clinics in Shanghai; the most central is in Shanghai Center (for the 24-hour medical hotline, phone 6445-5999;

203/4 West Retail Plaza, 1376 Nanjing West Road;
<http://www.parkwayhealth.cn>).

Most Western-style hotels have arrangements with health-care professionals who speak English. If not, the hotel will be able to direct you to an appropriate health facility. Be sure to take sufficient supplies of any prescription medicine you use (in a pinch, your best bet for medications is at one of the foreign health clinics). Though 120 is the official number to call for an ambulance, take a taxi—you'll get there faster.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Don't tip a taxi driver or servers in local restaurants. This is not part of Chinese culture and once was officially forbidden. In practice, any tip you add to your bill will be divided among the entire restaurant staff and will thus not even get to your server. The acceptance of tipping in luxury hotels and upscale restaurants is more prevalent, however.

Do try using a few Mandarin (or Shanghainese) expressions, such as *xiexie* (pronounced *sheay-sheay*) for *thank you*, or *duo shao qian* (*dough shaow chee-en*) for *how much?* For *hello* and *good-bye*, say *ni hao* (*knee how*) and *zaijian* (*zai jee-an*). A smile and even one phrase will get you a long way.

Do keep your temper under control, even in the most trying circumstances—ranting tantrums and the loss of self-control are considered undignified and vulgar. Causing someone to "lose face"

is a serious offense in China, and, by causing the other person to dig in their heels, will only exacerbate the situation further.

Don't be offended when you are asked how much money you make or other personal questions. Locals relish the opportunity to find out more about foreigners and are not trying to pry into your private life.

Do join in an early-morning tai chi or evening dancing group in the local parks. Most locals enjoy sharing their exercises.

Do beware of the fake luxury pen and watch sellers on Nanjing Road. Their prices may seem cheap, but you always get what you pay for, and despite the carefully counterfeited branding, the products themselves are typically inferior quality.

Do take off your shoes when entering a Chinese temple or someone's home.

Don't be surprised if locals approach you to practice their English or take a picture.

Don't write in red ink, the color of protests.

Don't point the soles of your feet directly at anyone, touch someone's head or point at a person with your index finger. Similarly, tossing objects, like a pen, towards someone is considered highly disrespectful and rude. Hand objects to another person with both hands. Similarly, if you'd like to beckon someone over, wave them over with your hand, palm down.

Do be wary of street meat, as rat, fox and mink meat have been presented as lamb.

Don't be afraid to call out to the waitress (*foo yoo en*) for your check (*mai dan*). While considered rude in the United States, it's normal to politely beckon the staff in casual Chinese restaurants.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports and prepaid visas. (China has no visa-on-arrival service.) Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 23,900,000.

Languages: Mandarin Chinese, known locally as *Putonghua*. The locals also speak the Shanghainese dialect, which is distinct from Mandarin. English is increasingly spoken across the city.

Predominant Religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 21, city code;

Money

Currency Exchange

The renminbi—literally, the "people's currency"—is the official monetary unit in the People's Republic of China. Individual units are referred to as yuan, a term also used to describe the currency in general (similar to the way "sterling" and "pound" are used interchangeably in Great Britain). The yuan is further divided into 10 mao.

Larger notes are printed in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and

100. There are also 1 yuan coins, which will eventually replace the printed 1 yuan notes. Maos are the smaller, dime-sized coins, and significantly smaller than the quarter-sized yuan coins. The gold-toned maos are 1/2 yuan; the silver maos are 1/10 yuan.

The renminbi can be used all over mainland China, but it's not valid in Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan. However, it is sometimes exchanged in the former two territories.

The days of streetside currency conversion are over. Change cash or traveler's checks at any international or domestic bank, or use the prevalent ATMs around the city that accept Plus, Star and Cirrus system bank cards. The exchange rates are reasonable, and they don't charge a fee.

For credit card advances, go to the Bank of China or ICBC (both have

multiple branches citywide). Most banks in Shanghai are open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-1 pm. Get there early to beat the crowds.

Taxes

A Value Added Tax (VAT) of 17% is included in the sale of many products and services, though some smaller vendors are often exempt. Regardless, the tax will have already been folded into the ticketed shelf price.

There is additional luxury goods sales tax of at least 10% (and sometimes higher) on upscale items in China, rendering goods such as luxury brands, computers, camera equipment and any imported items rather expensive.

There is usually a 10-15% accommodations tax added to your hotel bill, although this is typically included in the rack rate. A program to

allow duty-free shopping for foreign tourists in Shanghai is said to be in the works.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary and generally not expected. Many hotels and Western-style restaurants add a 15% service charge to your bill, but don't count on the staff seeing any of it. If you're staying at a Western hotel, you may want to tip the staff there, as they're more accustomed to tipping.

Don't feel obliged to tip taxi drivers unless they're extraordinary at using the shortest, fastest route—which is rare (and, even then, the tip will most likely be refused. If that's the case, do not insist). Tour guides do expect a small gratuity, around 10% of the service price.

Weather

A Shanghai resident once claimed that she had never lived in a city where the weather was so rarely perfect. That's a very apt description. In summer it's hot and humid, especially July and August, with temperatures reaching the 100s F/40s C. Spring and fall are the most temperate seasons, with sunny skies but some rain. In winter, especially December-February, temperatures become uncomfortably cold and damp, sometimes dropping to freezing. (It rarely snows, however.) For much of the year, gray skies can continue for weeks.

Communication

Internet Access

There are still internet cafes and bars throughout Shanghai, although they're usually dominated by teenagers playing computer games, and owners don't speak any English.

The Chinese government is increasingly wary of uncontrolled information on the internet, and if you visit an internet cafe in China, you will be asked to provide your name and passport number before being shown to a computer terminal. Be aware that the records gathered by software can be made available to police on request and that the fine for viewing material deemed subversive or politically harmful is steep.

Some global website services are blocked in China, including Facebook and YouTube, and slow internet access speeds often frustrate China-based Web users. Use Baidu (<http://www.baidu.com>) instead of Google, especially for domestic tourism-related searches, as it is much faster. As Google's well-documented disputes with the Chinese government have emphasized, content searches related to the Falun Gong spiritual movement, sovereignty for Taiwan, Tibetan

independence, the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising and pornography will yield no results.

An easy way around this is to purchase a Virtual Private Network (VPN), thus avoiding the censors by re-routing your computer or mobile device to an American or European server.

Unfortunately, recent crackdowns on VPNs have rendered many of them unusable in China, although many travelers report that some still work. The status of which ones work changes quickly as what has been dubbed “the great firewall” crackdown continues.

A better option is to stop by one of the myriad cafes, bars and restaurants that offer free Wi-Fi to customers, including Costa Coffee and a growing number of restaurants and bars. These include Big Bamboo, Citizen, all branches of Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Wagas and Element Fresh.

Transportation

Taxi

The most convenient way to get around Shanghai is by taxi. Cabs are plentiful, cheap and easy to spot. Most are yellow, blue and green, although you'll see a few in other colors. A cab is available for hire if there's a red "For Hire" sign in the window on the passenger side. You can also request one by phone. All are metered. Fares start at 14 yuan for the first 2 mi/3 km (18 yuan 11 pm-5 am). If your taxi doesn't have a top light or a meter, chances are good that it's illegal.

Most cab drivers don't speak English, so it's best to give them a piece of paper with your destination written in Chinese. Hotel doormen can also tell the driver where you're going. It's a good idea to study a map beforehand: Some drivers

may try to take you for a ride, literally. You'll usually get where you want to go, but it may cost you more time and more money.

End of Shanghai section

Nagasaki, Japan

Overview

Introduction



Peace Statue commemorating atomic bombing of city

The ancient port city of Nagasaki was destroyed by the second atomic bomb dropped by U.S. forces in World War II. Today, this city on the western coast of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's main islands and 594 mi/956 km southwest of Tokyo, is a thriving industrial port and a pleasant mixture of East and West, as well as a confluence of Japanese and Chinese cultures. Without the presence of the bomb memorials, a visitor would never know the city had been mostly destroyed.

No other port in Japan rivals the significance of Nagasaki. Not only was it the most convenient harbor for ships coming from China, it became the only port open for international trade when the shogunate closed the country to foreigners in 1633. Thanks to this steady trickle of foreign culture, Nagasaki retains an old international atmosphere not found in most of the country.

History

The bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941 brought the U.S. into World War II. Japanese and Allied forces battled fiercely for control of island after island across the Pacific. Then on 6 August 1945, 11 days after Japan's leaders ignored the Potsdam Declaration demanding their surrender, the world's first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Three days later, a second atomic bomb devastated Nagasaki, and six days later, the Japanese surrendered.

Port Information

Location

Cruise ships dock at Matsugae Pier, which offers no facilities for cruise ship passengers. However, most of the city's attractions, including the waterfront

promenade and the Glover Garden, are within a 20-minute walk from the pier. A tram stop is also within easy walking distance. Taxis are abundant at the port entrance and around the city.

Shore Excursions

A full-day shore excursion can cover nearly all of the major sights of Nagasaki. Tour operators will certainly include the Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Park, as well as Glover Garden's historic homes. Other possibilities include the Oura Church, famous as one of Japan's first after 200 years of fatal persecution of Christians, and Dejima, a now land-locked island that used to be the only place where Dutch traders were permitted to dock during Japan's long isolation.

Potpourri

Buildings are numbered according to when they were built, not their location on a street. To find a business or home, you may need to do as the locals do: Take the address to the neighborhood police box (or *koban*)—they're everywhere. You may find maps posted around, but they're of little help unless you read Japanese.

Should you have problems making your English understood by people who claim to speak the language (or have difficulty understanding someone speaking it), try writing out your messages. Many Japanese understand written English better than the spoken version.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Sightseeing in modern Nagasaki is divided into two main themes: the

history of early interaction with the West and the effects of the atomic bombing. Minami-yamate hill in the south end of the city is dotted with old Western-style houses gathered from across the city, which once belonged the first few foreigners to call Japan home in the 19th century. Foremost is the Glover house, where one of the most important foreign figures in Japanese history once lived. Dejima, the old port island, also attempts to recreate the mood of trade during the Edo period.

The north, where the atomic bomb devastated the city, has memorials and museums devoted to the destruction and its aftermath. It is important to take your time in visiting these places, not only because of their importance, but because they can be emotionally draining and few visitors are willing to rush off to the next sightseeing spot immediately afterward.

Historic Sites

Dejima

6-1 Dejima-machi

Nagasaki, Japan

Phone: 095-821-7200

<http://travel.at-nagasaki.jp/en/what-to-see/9>

Dejima, literally "exit island," was originally established as a trading post for the Portuguese in the 16th century so that the Japanese government could prevent the spread of their increasingly popular religion. When the Portuguese were expelled after an uprising of Japanese Christians, only the Dutch were permitted to trade there. Land reclamation filled in the harbor around Dejima, but efforts have been made to restore the old trading post. Fifteen restored buildings offer displays on the work of the Dutch and the Japanese who traded and studied with them.

Urakami Cathedral

1-79 Motomachi

Nagasaki, Japan

Phone: 095-825-5175

<http://www.at-nagasaki.jp/foreign/english/spot/004.html>

Built in 1895 after a ban on Christianity was lifted, Urakami Cathedral was the largest Catholic church in East Asia. It was completely leveled—and all the Mass attendees with it—on 9 August 1945 when the atomic bomb was dropped just 1,640 ft/500 m away. The church has since been rebuilt on the same spot, but the ruins of its decimated walls and surviving bell are on display in Peace Park.

Daily 8 am-8 pm.

Museums

Atomic Bomb Museum

7-8 Hiranomachi

Nagasaki, Japan

Phone: 095-844-1231

<http://travel.at-nagasaki.jp/en/what-to-see/34>

The Atomic Bomb Museum sits beside Peace Park, the epicenter of the atomic bomb detonation on 9 August 1945. Opened on the 50th anniversary of the bomb drop, the museum is meant to educate visitors on the horrors of that day, convey the effects and threats of nuclear weapons, and preserve the stories of fading survivors. Some of the exhibits, which show both human and architectural destruction, are graphic and might be disturbing to some visitors. Make some time for the Memorial Hall for the Atomic Victims, a quiet space adjacent to the museum, which memorializes the 70,000 who died.

Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum

2-1 Dejima-machi

Nagasaki, Japan

Phone: 095-833-2110

<http://www.nagasaki-museum.jp/english>

For a more modern side of the city, visit the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum with its sleek glass facade. Exhibits feature Spanish artworks, more than 3,000 pieces of post-Meiji period Nagasaki art and the impressive Suma collection. Be sure to check out the roof garden and explore the museum shop before you go.

Daily 10 am-8 pm. Closed every second and fourth Monday. ¥400 adults.

Parks & Gardens

Glover Garden

8-1 Minami-Yamatemachi

Nagasaki, Japan

Phone: 095-822-8223

<http://www.glover-garden.jp/foreign/english.html>

The Glover House, situated within the Glover Garden, was the setting of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and provides some of the best views of the area. It was built in 1863 for Scottish merchant Thomas Blake Glover, who helped modernize Japan. Take some time to explore the scenic grounds.

Daily 8 am-8 pm. ¥610.

Hollander Slope

Higashi-yamate-machi

Nagasaki, Japan

<http://www.at-nagasaki.jp>

In the 19th century, all non-Asians were called "Hollanders," and the location of

the first Protestant Church of England on this slope resulted in its name—Hollander Hill, or Slope. It's lined with beautiful flowers and offers some of the best views in the city. We recommend a morning stroll.

Daily 8 am-8 pm. Free.

Peace Park

9-44 Matsuyama-machi

Nagasaki, Japan

<http://travel.at-nagasaki.jp/en/what-to-see/33>

Built where the atomic bomb detonated in Nagasaki on 9 August 1945, Peace Park holds many monuments on its sloping hills, reminding casual strollers or more serious visitors of the nuclear weapon threat and prayer for peace. Stop by the Peace Statute, sculpted by Seibou Kitamura to symbolize the love of Buddha. Pay the Peace Fountain a visit as well, established to honor the

memory of a little girl who wandered around after the explosion, desperately searching for water.

Shopping

Although any of Nagasaki's department stores can sell the standard array of traditional crafts, the city is particularly famous for crafts from outside Japan.

Foremost is a traditional style of blown glass called *vidro* after the Portuguese word for glass. Portuguese traders taught this glass-blowing technique to Japanese craftsmen when the port of Nagasaki first opened in 1570. Although much of the glassware appears very Western, the Nagasaki *chirori* is an attractive indigo sake vessel.

It was the Indonesians who brought kites to Nagasaki in the early 17th century and flying them remains a traditional pastime for the city. The

colors tend to be simple and reminiscent of those flown by the Dutch ships, emphasizing red, white and blue. The most serious kite enthusiasts battle with glass-dusted strings, hoping to cut loose the kites of their opponents.

Koga Ningyo dolls remain the traditional offering from Nagasaki. These clay dolls are similar in technique to ones fired in kilns across the country, but in contrast, the characters range more widely, including images of Chinese and European visitors.

Security

Etiquette

Status and rank have played a very important role in Japanese society from the days of the shoguns, and they still do today. Even the Japanese language is stratified, and different forms are used

with people of different rank. Thus, much of the country's business and social etiquette revolves around determining the rank of an individual and behaving accordingly. Negotiating Japanese traditions and customs is both fascinating and challenging, but foreigners are not expected to understand all of these niceties and are usually forgiven for their trespasses.

Appointments—An intermediary can be a great asset when doing business in Japan, but it is important to use people of high rank. Establish meetings well in advance of your visit. Note that although the Japanese work long hours (48 hours a week is standard), the standard office hours are Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm. Punctuality is of extreme importance: Being 10 minutes early assures that you'll be considered "on time."

Personal Introductions—The traditional introduction is a bow. However, you may also be greeted with a handshake or a bow and a handshake. Follow the lead of your Japanese counterpart. If your acquaintance bows, bow to the same depth to indicate your equal rank. As you bow, keep your hands flat against your sides (if you're a man) or on the tops of your thighs (if you're a woman) and lower your eyes.

Use your host's last name and append the word *san*, meaning "Mr." or "Ms." Example: If you are meeting Mr. Fukawa, you should address him as "Fukawa-san." It is appropriate to ask about a person's family. Remain formal in your demeanor after the initial introductions. It may take a very long time before any personal relationship develops. Even if you develop a first-name relationship, you should continue

to address your associate by his last name in the presence of others.

Business cards are very important, and there is an entire set of etiquette rules built around their use. Have your card printed in English on one side, Japanese on the other. Present the card Japanese side up. The formal way to give and accept a card is with both hands. Spend time reading the card. Do not immediately put it away into your shirt or jacket, and never place it in a wallet that you then place in your pants pocket. It is suggested that you purchase a special card holder for the business cards of your Japanese associates. Never write on any of the cards you receive.

Negotiating—Do not be surprised if early in your negotiation you are asked many personal questions. This is the way that the Japanese size you up and determine your own rank. Do not display

any negative emotions or do anything to inadvertently embarrass your host. The concept of the group is important to Japanese business. Individual achievement and glory must be secondary to the success of the group. Thus, many people may be involved in your negotiations, and the higher-ranking members will look for a consensus, which may slow down the decision-making process considerably. Be patient.

The Japanese do not like to respond negatively to a guest. As a result, noncommittal answers—such as "perhaps"—often mean no. Avoid negatively phrased questions, which can lead to confusion. If you use attorneys, you should use Japanese counsel to supplement your own.

Business Entertaining—The Japanese entertain in the evening and often until

late at night. Typically, the host will treat. An invitation to lunch or dinner is important in Japan and is an indication of trust. It is customary for the host to order for the guest. When dining, do not fill or refill you own glass, only others' glasses. They will refill yours. Western business people are often surprised to find a much franker discussion of business over drinks than what had happened during the day's formal meetings, as the excuse of drunkenness (feigned or otherwise) allows real opinions to be expressed.

Body Language—Personal space is surprisingly wide. Gesturing is kept to an absolute minimum. There is very little, if any, conversational touching. Eye contact is often very weak. Smiling is a norm but is also used to cover displeasure. Familiarize yourself with differences between Japanese gestures and your own. For example, the typical American gesture for "come here" with

the palm up and curled fingers is considered offensive in Japan. Their gesture for "come here" is made with the palm down.

Gift Giving—Gift giving tends to be formalized and even ceremonial. Consumables such as good-quality spirits make excellent gifts. Have the gift wrapped, but avoid white paper as white is associated with funerals. Gifts will not always be immediately opened, and you should follow your host's lead. Present your gift with both hands. If the gift is for an individual, give the gift in private. If it's for a group, make sure the entire group is assembled. Indicate that your gift is a small one, regardless of what it is. This indicates that your relationship is more important than the gift. Some Japanese believe the numbers 4 and 9 mean bad luck, so avoid gifts that convey those numbers.

Conversation—All aspects of Japanese culture are good topics for conversation, if they are spoken of in a favorable context. Avoid talking about World War II and the current U.S. presence in Okinawa. Jokes do not translate well and may not be understood or, worse, misunderstood. This is particularly true of sarcasm, which is rarely used in Japanese.

Other Information—Keep in mind that where you stay will be interpreted as a reflection of your company's stature and success. Staying in a cheap hotel can have serious business consequences when dealing with the status-conscious Japanese, especially if your competitors are in upscale accommodations.

Personal Safety

Travel within Japan is generally safe, both in terms of crime and accidents.

Japanese people rarely get aggressive, and personal violence is very rare.

Most places are safe, even at night, although common sense should be used when visiting entertainment districts—avoid hostess bars, as they are often unscrupulous, gang-related clip joints. All firearms are banned in Japan (except for very few licensed hunters).

Situations involving prostitution and illegal drugs (penalties for possession are severe) are invariably connected with organized crime groups and best left well alone.

Women in particular should be wary of gropers on trains, although Japanese women are the main target and groping attempts involving foreigners are quite rare. Japan is very much a male-dominated society, and such incidents are still common, with very little support offered for victims of this crime. Avoid using trains in major cities during rush

hour to minimize the risk. Many train companies now provide female-only carriages. Look for the signs on the platform. They are usually marked in Japanese and English.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Medical practices differ somewhat from what you may be used to at home, but sanitary conditions are good. Proof of sufficient funds may be required before you are treated in Japanese hospitals or clinics. Water is safe to drink. Travelers with coronary problems should be aware that Japan is a mountainous country, and in order to see many of Japan's most impressive sights, you must climb stairs or hillsides and do a fair amount of walking, despite excellent public transportation. Be sure to take along a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Note: A surprising number of over-the-counter cold medicines (such as Vicks Inhalers and Sudafed) contain small amounts of amphetamines or amphetaminelike drugs, which makes them illegal in Japan. Expect them to be confiscated by customs if your bag is searched on arrival. Alternative medications are available at Japanese pharmacies.

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do remember that you will have to remove your shoes often—when visiting some restaurants, a home, a traditional inn (*ryokan*) and many of Japan's attractions. And don't, under *any*

circumstances, walk into a temple wearing shoes.

Do use *hashi* (chopsticks) for Japanese food. Use Western utensils—and *only* Western utensils—for Western food. Stabbing your french fries with chopsticks may be fun, but it'll just make you look silly.

Don't forget that the moist towelette you get in restaurants should be used to wipe off your hands *before* you eat.

Do buy a colorful handkerchief (they're sold everywhere). You use it to wipe your hands after washing in the restroom—towels are often not provided. (An increasing number of establishments have installed electric hand dryers.)

Do try to learn some basic phrases, including "thank you" (*arigato*), "good morning" (*ohayo gozaimasu*), "good

day" (*konnichi wa*), "good evening" (*konban wa*) and "goodbye" (*sayonara*).

Don't expect to find escalators in every subway or train station, although they are becoming more common. Be sure to stand on the left side of the escalator and walk on the right when in Tokyo. Down south in major cities such as Osaka and Kyoto, this is reversed. People stand on the right and walk on the left.

Do take along an inflatable pillow to support your back on the bullet train, especially if you're tall. The seats were designed for shorter people. Tall people also need to watch out for the height of doors: Some are very low, especially in older establishments. Train doors are especially unforgiving—if you're not careful, you may end up wishing you'd brought a helmet.

Do expect to be crowded or jostled unapologetically in public, especially on trains. The Japanese sense of personal space is different than that of Westerners, and crowding and jostling are considered perfectly acceptable behaviors.

Don't be surprised—or alarmed—if someone stops and asks if you need help. This is a frequent occurrence with visitors.

Don't expect shrines to be solemn and orderly. Prayer, chatting and photography occur simultaneously. And every shrine seems to have a busy gift shop.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports and proof of onward passage for stays of less than 90 days. Reconfirm travel

document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

Languages: Japanese. Numerous regional dialects can almost be considered foreign languages.

Predominant Religions: Shinto, Buddhist.

Time Zone: 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+9 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 110 volts. 50 cycles. Outlets require the type of plug used in the U.S. Appliances designed for use in North America usually can be used with no adapter; however, the difference in cycles means that they'll run about 15% slower. Many of the larger hotels have a choice of electrical outlets or can supply adapters.

Telephone Codes: 81, country code; 095, Nagasaki area code;

Money

Currency Exchange

The currency in Japan is the yen. It comes in denominations of ¥10,000, ¥5,000 and ¥1,000 notes, as well as ¥500, ¥100, ¥50, ¥10, ¥5 and ¥1 coins. In 2000, the government tried to stimulate the economy by introducing the ¥2,000 note; however, the notes are not common. They might be hard to come by but they are still in circulation and are legal tender, so don't be alarmed if you end up with one.

Most international airport terminals have a currency exchange, as do larger banks that are prevalent in Nagasaki. ATMs in Japan are becoming more useful, and many can be used to withdraw funds from overseas accounts (ATMs in post offices and 7-Eleven

stores accept withdrawals from foreign cards).

Major credit cards are accepted at the majority of large stores and restaurants, but if you plan on spending any time in rural areas, be sure to carry sufficient cash. Traveler's checks are rarely accepted. Keep in mind that Japan is still very much a cash society and some stores, hotels and restaurants—regardless of location—do not take credit cards.

Taxes

There is a standard 8% goods-and-service tax applied to all transactions. Some high-end restaurants may also add on a service charge of 10%-15%.

Tipping

There is no need to tip in Japan. In some cases, a service charge may have

already been added, making a tip redundant. If someone has been especially helpful, a small gift, rather than money, would be appreciated. Don't be discouraged if they refuse it, even twice; they're just being courteous. Offer it a third time.

Busan, South Korea

Overview

Introduction



Cityscape

Situated about 210 mi/340 km southeast of Seoul, Busan is South Korea's largest port and second-largest metropolis.

There's plenty in Busan for a full day of sightseeing: Take in the view from Busan Tower in Yongdusan Park, and visit the Yi Sun-shin statue, the Jagalchi fish market (best seen 6-7 am), the U.N. Cemetery (where fallen U.N. soldiers from the Korean War are buried), the Municipal Museum and the Busan Museum of Modern Art (which has the largest exhibition space in the country).

Taejongdae Park, a jagged spit of land in the city's south, has wonderful sea views and great seafood. Busan's beaches are far too crowded in good weather to be enjoyable, but its hot-spring spas (especially in Dongnae) are fun and relaxing.

Also in the area are Geumgang Park (a massive mountaintop fortress with beautiful cherry blossoms in the spring) and Beomeosa, a seventh-century temple. Busan is also a departure point for Jeju Island.

Busan is too large to explore by foot, but there are plenty of taxis. Many South Koreans speak English, especially those in the younger generations, but it is advisable to carry printouts of where you want to go.

Port Information

Location

Busan's port is focused on commercial ventures rather than tourism, but the city usually provides free shuttles from the port into downtown. The shuttle ride lasts about 30-minutes and drops passengers off by the Busan Tower, which is close to the Nampodong metro station.

Hong Kong

Overview

Introduction



Hong Kong Skyline

Hong Kong is a place of contrasts—geographically, socially and economically. Although many Asian cities claim to be where East meets

West, the former British Crown Colony is probably the closest the world comes to the genuine article.

Travel to Hong Kong and scratch the cosmopolitan, high-tech surface and you'll discover vestiges of ancient China in its culture. Residents invariably live in two worlds: Skyscrapers and enormous shopping malls adjoin narrow alleys crowded with traditional vendors' stalls. Businesspeople use cell phones to consult fortune-tellers before making important decisions. Even as they are deeply into technology, they preserve ancient customs—particularly in regards to the correct feng shui of buildings. Only a few miles/kilometers away, farmers and gardeners in less frequented villages in the New Territories tend their crops much as they have for generations.

Perched precariously on the edge of the People's Republic of China, Hong

Kong—with its strategic deepwater harbor and proximity to the rest of Asia's most populous nation—profited for decades as the capitalist gateway for the communist giant to the north. What was once a settlement of fishing villages became one of the world's busiest international ports and business centers.

Hong Kong is a city of levels. At the top is Victoria Peak, on Hong Kong Island, from which mansions of the super-rich look out over the high-rise apartments of the merely affluent. Farther down the mountain are alleys and tenements dotted with colorful balcony gardens. Living on the water itself are the remnants of Hong Kong's boat people—fishing families who traditionally spent most of their lives on their boats.

Across the harbor on the mainland are Kowloon and the suburban New Territories, which were once Hong Kong's vegetable garden and now also

host Hong Kong Disneyland. Although the popular image of Hong Kong is a place where every square inch/centimeter of land is crammed with high-rise apartments and office buildings, in reality 38% of all land in Hong Kong is designated as national parks and special areas. There are wonderful scenic areas and hiking routes ranging from gentle family walks to challenging long-distance trails.

This is also a time of transition for Hong Kong. Tourists and businesses from neighboring China increasingly fuel Hong Kong's economy. Hong Kong has become a popular shopping destination for Chinese visitors on holidays, weekend jaunts or en route to or from Southeast Asia.

Highlights

Sights—A trip via the 100-year-old tram to the top of Victoria Peak; a ride on the

picturesque Star Ferry; sightseeing from trams along the island.

Museums—Hong Kong Science Museum; Hong Kong Museum of History; Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware; Hong Kong Heritage Museum; Hong Kong Maritime Museum.

Memorable Meals—Dim sum at the six-decades-old Luk Yu Tea House & Restaurant on Stanley Street; afternoon tea in the lobby of the Peninsula Hotel; taking the world's longest escalator to Staunton Street for a drink or meal at one of the bars, cafes or restaurants in hip SoHo.

Late Night—Temple Street Night Market, with hawkers selling everything from snacks to watches to blue jeans; shoulder-to-shoulder bars and clubs in Lan Kwai Fong and along nearby Wyndham Street in Central for eating,

drinking and people-watching; views of Hong Kong from Aqua Spirit.

Walks—Walking around the top of Victoria Peak to take in the magnificent views of the city and the South China Sea; hiking the Dragon's Back above Shek O; experiencing the local passion for racing at Happy Valley Racecourse on a Wednesday evening (September-June); having your palm and/or face read by fortune-tellers on Temple Street; shopping for antiques along Hollywood Road.

Especially for Kids—Cable cars, aquarium, dolphin shows and rides at Ocean Park; the aviary in Hong Kong Park; sand castles and a barbecue lunch at Shek O Beach; Hong Kong Disneyland; Hong Kong Space Museum; a ride in the Ngong Ping 360 cable cars on Lantau Island.

Geography

Hong Kong lies on China's southern seaboard and is surrounded by the mainland Chinese province of Guangdong, the capital of which is Guangzhou (formerly called Canton).

Hong Kong is divided into three distinct regions: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories, which include the largely rural mainland area north of Kowloon and south of the border with China and the more than 260 Outlying Islands that speckle the South China Sea. The New Territories is also home to large, high-density new towns such as Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan, created in recent decades to handle population overspill from Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.

The whole territory covers 426 sq mi/1,104 sq km, accommodating a population of more than 7.1 million people, predominantly of Chinese descent.

Parts of Hong Kong, including Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, are among the most densely populated areas in the world. The two are separated by the historically important Victoria Harbor, a naturally sheltered deepwater port (Hong Kong, or *Heung Gong*, means "fragrant harbor" in the local Cantonese dialect); it is abuzz with luxury liners, cargo ships, ferries and pleasure junks.

At the southernmost tip of Kowloon is Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong's most prominent tourist district. Tsim Sha Tsui's main traffic artery is Nathan Road, a bustling, neon-lit strip of camera shops, tailors, souvenir vendors, upscale boutiques, hotels, restaurants and bars known as the Golden Mile. Nathan Road continues north through Jordan, Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, areas also notable for their retail outlets and nightlife.

On the north side of Hong Kong Island, directly across the harbor from Tsim Sha Tsui, Central district is the financial and commercial heart of the city. The densely packed, middle-class residential neighborhood above Central but below the heights of Victoria Peak is aptly called the Mid-Levels.

Directly east of Central is Wan Chai—once a bawdy entertainment district but increasingly becoming a less expensive eating and drinking option than Central's Lan Kwai Fong and Wyndham Street. (It's perhaps best known as the location for the 1961 film *The World of Suzie Wong*.) Next in line is the bustling shopping district of Causeway Bay. Directly inland behind Causeway Bay nestles Happy Valley, an exclusive residential district and site of the more dramatic of Hong Kong's two racecourses (the other is in Sha Tin in the New Territories) and Hong Kong

Stadium, which hosts major sporting events including the Rugby Sevens.

Prime real estate and sandy beaches characterize the southern part of Hong Kong Island. Several of the Outlying Islands, with a decidedly Mediterranean atmosphere, can be reached by ferry. The largest is Lantau, which can also be reached from Hong Kong Island and Kowloon by road and rail via a suspension bridge. Lantau is the site of Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok.

The picturesque islands of Lamma, Peng Chau and Cheung Chau are also popular weekend getaways. Another popular getaway area is the Sai Kung Peninsula in the New Territories, where there are weekend houses and a country atmosphere around quiet or even deserted villages.

History

There is evidence of fishing and farming settlements in the area dating back 6,000 years, but Hong Kong's history is generally documented from the 17th century, when the Manchus from the frigid northeastern regions ruled all of China. Hong Kong's location near the mouth of the strategically important Pearl River made it a favored port of call for trading vessels—and the haunt of pirates and adventurers from around the globe.

Although China regarded trade with foreigners as distasteful, it allowed the Portuguese to establish a colony in nearby Macau in the mid-1550s to trade in Chinese goods; Guangzhou (also called Canton) on the Pearl River was opened to foreign traders in 1685.

Uninterested in foreign goods, imperial China thrived on exports of its teas, silks and porcelain.

The situation changed in the late 18th century when British traders discovered the Chinese would buy opium, which they imported from India. When the emperor tried to end the lucrative practice, Britain seized upon the issue to expand economic trade in the region, prompting the Anglo-Chinese War of 1839-42 (also known as the Opium War). No match for Britain's warships, China reluctantly gave up Hong Kong Island to the British in 1841. Further concessions in land and trading opportunities were wrested from China in other skirmishes. It subsequently was forced to cede the Kowloon Peninsula and scores of surrounding islands—roughly 90% of Hong Kong—but in 1898 successfully negotiated the transfer so that it was done as a 99-year lease.

In 1997, when Hong Kong was transferred back to China as a Special Administrative Region (SAR), the Chinese government promised one

country, two systems. For the most part, it has kept its word, but the SAR has also had to contend with a more open China and its larger role in the global economy. Where Hong Kong was once the exclusive gateway to trade with China, there are now many ports of entry. Observers speculate that storied Shanghai may seize Hong Kong's leadership role as a place of business, eventually.

Following an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in early 2003, government campaigns to encourage cleanliness and greater investment in city services have led to a cleaner Hong Kong. Sanitary hand-cleanser dispensers can be found alongside most elevator banks, a reminder of ongoing awareness, and toilet rolls are almost universally in place.

A more serious problem is the pollution caused in part by more than 50,000 factories just across the border in Guangdong Province, mostly built with Hong Kong investment. Many local people suffer pollution-related health problems, and each year there are a greater number of days of very high pollution, despite that the government has banned high-polluting vehicles and offered subsidies to replace diesel-powered buses and trucks to combat the problem. Still, Hong Kong offers advantages unavailable in China's buoyant economy, such as a transparent financial system. It remains a vibrant example of British order and Chinese industriousness.

Port Information

Location

Cruise-ship visitors have in the past arrived at Ocean Terminal, on the western side of Tsim Sha Tsui (pronounced *chim-sa-choy*) in Kowloon. The Ocean Terminal is adjacent to Harbour City, a 700-plus unit shopping complex that includes restaurants, three hotels and two cinemas.
<http://www.oceanterminal.com.hk>.

This cruise terminal is within a short walk of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre with its art and space museums as well as access to the MTR subway system, taxis and Star Ferry terminal. A Hong Kong Tourism information center is open in Star Ferry Concourse daily 8 am-8 pm. There is also a taxi rank.

Hong Kong's Kai Tak Cruise Terminal opened in 2013. The terminal was built at the end of a runway at the old Kai Tak Airport, which closed in 1998. The second berth opened in late 2014. The terminal can accommodate Royal

Caribbean's Oasis and Allure of the Seas, the largest ships in the cruise industry.

<http://www.kaitakcruiseterminal.com.hk>.

Shore Excursions

Land visits from cruise ships are typically short and sweet, long on shopping and light on sights. Excursions might include harbor tours, living culture tours, visits to Victoria Peak for a grand view of the city, a journey to one of the New Territories villages, a visit to Hong Kong Disneyland or a chance to purchase souvenirs at the shops of either Tsim Sha Tsui or Stanley Market.

Potpourri

One of the few nods to the days of the British Empire, the Noonday Gun has been fired every day from Causeway Bay since the 1840s.

Chinese and British traditions still intertwine; barristers in formal wigs and gowns plead their cases in Cantonese.

The world's most expensive tree preservation project was the HK\$24 million (about US\$3 million) spent on the upkeep of a 120-year-old banyan tree in Pacific Place mall on Hong Kong Island.

Playwright and composer Noel Coward was a regular at the Peninsula Hotel and immortalized it in his song *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*. Other celebrity vignettes include the story that Clark Gable taught the Peninsula's barman how to make a screwdriver cocktail. And when Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton walked through the lobby, it is said that the chatter of afternoon tea (where every day 1,000 scones are consumed) was stilled.

Kowloon tailors compete for the fastest record from cloth to finished suit. Sam

the Tailor on Nathan Road holds the record at 1 hour, 52 minutes for Britain's Prince Charles; more normal times are approximately 12 hours to slightly more than three days, with two fittings preferred.

Hong Kong people are the world's leading consumers of oranges; they go through more than 200,000 tons per year. Much of the fruit is initially bought as altar offerings for ancestral spirits and gods.

The Peninsula Hotel owns the world's largest Rolls-Royce fleet, with a total of 50 Brewster Green Rolls-Royces on hand to whisk guests around town and provide the most stylish airport pickups.

Hong Kong is the most vertical city in the world, with more than 1,300 skyscrapers, and high-rise buildings numbering in excess of 6,500.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Expect a wonderful mixture of colonial buildings (though these are diminishing in number), ancient Buddhist and Taoist temples and statues, traditional villages and space-age skyscrapers. The stark contrast between Hong Kong's dense urban areas and peaceful green spaces takes many visitors by surprise. Be sure you don't limit your Hong Kong experience only to urban areas—take a ferry out to one of the islands for a breath of sea air and tranquility.

More traditional and historical sights, such as Kat Hing Wai (or the Kam Tin Walled Village), are located in the New Territories north of the Kowloon Peninsula. Causeway Bay is also a fascinating strolling-and-shopping site, although it can get extremely crowded

on Saturday and Sunday, during evenings and on public holidays. A walk around Victoria Peak delivers fantastic views of Hong Kong Island and beyond to Kowloon and the South China Sea. One major tourist attraction is the Po Lin Monastery's Big Buddha on Lantau Island, now accessible by cable car for those not in the mood to take the bus.

Another of Hong Kong's major attractions is the Star Ferry—refreshingly inexpensive at HK\$2.50 for the upper deck on weekdays—which runs between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. You may end up riding it every day of your visit, but with the city views and glimpses of harbor life it offers, there's something new to see each time. Ferry piers in Central and Wan Chai regularly make the short journey over to Tsim Sha Tsui and back.

Most sights are easy to reach via tram (on Hong Kong Island), bus, taxi or the

MTR, but many of Hong Kong's famous landmarks and neighborhoods can be discovered on foot without a guide. Be sure to pick up a map or pamphlets on walking tours from the Hong Kong Tourism Board's visitors centers or in the airport by the A and B exits.

Historic Sites

Government House

Upper Albert Road (opposite the Botanic Gardens), Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

<http://www.ceo.gov.hk/gh/eng/index.htm>

This Georgian-style building was the official residence of the governors of Hong Kong under British rule. It took four years to build, starting in 1851, and was still in use when Hong Kong was returned to Chinese control in 1997. A tower was added during the Japanese

occupation of Hong Kong in World War II. Presently, Government House is home to the Chief Executive of Hong Kong and is open to the public only one or two days each year. At other times, it is used for official functions and to entertain visiting dignitaries.

St. John's Cathedral

4-8 Garden Road, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2523-4157

<http://www.stjohnscathedral.org.hk>

Dating from 1849, St. John's Cathedral is the oldest Anglican church in East Asia. A handsome building in a style of 13th-century Early English and Decorated Gothic, it suffered damage in World War II but has since been restored.

Daily 7 am-6 pm. Admission is free, but there are collection boxes for donations to help with its upkeep.

Temple of 10,000 Buddhas

Sha Tin District (Above Sha Tin railway station
(go by MTR))

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

You will have to climb 431 steps, but the reward is 12,800 statues of Buddha.

The mummified body of the holy man who founded the temple's monastery, embalmed in gold leaf, is on display inside.

Daily dawn-dusk. Donations requested.

The Clock Tower

Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon (just east of the Star
Ferry Pier)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments_43.php

Standing near the Star Ferry Pier on the Kowloon side, the Clock Tower is the only remaining part of the old terminus for the Kowloon-Canton Railway line. Built in 1915, the tower made it into the 21st century thanks to the Heritage Society in Hong Kong, which put up a brave fight to save it as one of the few original landmarks of Tsim Sha Tsui. The promenade in front of the Clock Tower is one of the best places to watch the daily 8 pm light show on Hong Kong Island and snap a perfect postcard shot of the city's skyline. The promenade includes an Asian "Avenue of Stars," based on Hollywood's walk of fame, which also features a bronze statue of Hong Kong kung fu hero Bruce Lee.

Museums

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) offers a Weekly Museum Pass for

HK\$30 that grants visitors unlimited access to six major museums: Museum of History, Heritage Museum, Museum of Coastal Defence, Science Museum, Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum and the Space Museum. The pass is available at participating museums and at the HKTB visitors centers at the Star Ferry Concourse, Kowloon (open daily 8 am-8 pm), and the Peak Piazza (open daily 9 am-9 pm). A special bus links the museums.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum

7 Castle Road, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3580-6780 for group bookings

<http://hk.drsunyatsen.museum>

The exhibits document the life and times of the man widely considered the father of modern China. Hong Kong takes pride in his local-son status and the fact

that he was educated there. The museum includes audiovisual programs as well as artifacts from his life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays 10 am-7 pm. HK\$10 adults.

Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware

10 Cotton Tree Drive, Central (inside Hong Kong Park; entrance on Garden Road)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2869-0690

<http://www.hk.art.museum>

Dr. K.S. Lo donated the permanent collection of Chinese tea-drinking ware displayed in this magnificent 1846 mansion, originally home to commanders of the British armed forces and now Hong Kong's oldest surviving colonial building. Even if the tea ware is

not of particular interest to you, Flagstaff House is well worth a visit as a fine example of Hong Kong's 19th-century architecture.

Wednesday-Monday 10 am-6 pm. Free.

Hong Kong Arts Centre Pao Galleries

2 Harbour Road, Wan Chai

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2582-0200

<http://www.hkac.org.hk>

A showcase for contemporary art, with major international and local exhibitions of paintings, photography, crafts and design staged regularly.

Daily 10 am-8 pm. Free.

Hong Kong Heritage Museum

1 Man Lam Road, Sha Tin (take MTR to Sha Tin or Tai Wai; it's a 15-minute walk from the station)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2180-8188

<http://www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk>

An exploration of Hong Kong's arts and cultural offerings, with 12 galleries built around a traditional Chinese open courtyard. Displays range from Chinese art to the world of comics to Chinese opera. The Children's Discovery Gallery includes displays on archaeology and the environment.

Monday and Wednesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday and public holidays 10 am-7 pm. HK\$10 adults; HK\$5 for disabled visitors, seniors and students. Free admission Wednesday.

Hong Kong Maritime Museum

Central Ferry Pier No. 8

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2813-0723 or 3713-2500

<http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org>

The museum promotes Hong Kong's maritime heritage, spanning past, present and future. Both old and young sea salts will love it.

Open Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5:30 pm; Sunday and holidays 10 am-7 pm.

Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence

175 Tung Hei Road, Shau Kei Wan (take the MTR to Shau Kei Wan; it's a 15-minute walk from the B2 exit)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2569-1500

<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Coastal/index.php>

A unique overview of Hong Kong's coastal defense history from the Ming and Qing periods to the present. The museum occupies the site of the 100-year-old Lei Yue Mun Fort, where the casemates and tunnels have been converted into galleries and exhibition halls.

Friday-Wednesday 10 am-6 pm (March-September), 10 am-5 pm (October-February). HK\$10 adults, HK\$5 seniors and children.

Hong Kong Museum of History

100 Chatham Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 852-2724-9042

<http://hk.history.museum>

A historical overview of the city, focusing on pirates, wars, economic growth and hardships. It also has an excellent collection of local photographs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Monday and Wednesday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-7 pm. HK\$10 adults, HK\$5 seniors and children.

Hong Kong Science Museum

2 Science Museum Road, Tsim Sha Tsui
East, Kowloon
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2732-3232

<http://hk.science.museum>

With about 50 hands-on exhibits that will interest adults and children alike, the Science Museum houses several exhibition halls. One highlight is the 72-ft-/22-m-high Energy Machine, which

triggers displays of spectacular audiovisual effects that demonstrate different forms of energy.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday 10 am-7 pm; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays 10 am-9 pm. HK\$25 adults; HK\$12.50 children, students and disabled travelers. Free on Wednesday.

Hong Kong Space Museum

10 Salisbury Road, Kowloon (a short walk from the Star Ferry Pier)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2721-0226

http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Space/e_index.htm

This museum on Victoria Harbour is distinguished by its massive dome, where IMAX films of space and the natural world are projected within the

planetarium. (The films are mostly in Cantonese, so look for the headphones that provide English translations.) There are also interesting displays on solar science, ancient astronomy, rocketry and manned space flight.

Monday and Wednesday-Friday 1-9 pm; Saturday, Sunday and holidays 10 am-9 pm. Exhibition hall admission is HK\$10 adults, HK\$5 children and seniors. Free on Wednesday. Space Theatre admission is HK\$24-\$32 adults, HK\$12-\$16 seniors and children.

Lei Cheng Uk Han Tomb Museum

41 Tonkin St., Sham Shui Po, Kowloon (MTR to Cheung Sha Wan Station, 10-minute walk from Exit A3 or take Bus 2A directly to entrance)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2386-2863

http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/History/en/lc_uht.php

This museum centers on a Han Dynasty tomb dating back some 2,000 years; it's the oldest historical monument in Hong Kong. It also displays artifacts found in the tomb and presents exhibits on the life and culture of the Han Dynasty.

Monday-Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 am-6 pm; Sunday and public holidays 1-6 pm. Free.

Liang Yi Museum

181-199 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2806-8280

<http://www.liangyimuseum.com>

Located in the ever popular Hollywood Road, where older buildings with a sense of history are a norm, this private

museum has a point of difference—visitors are welcome to touch and even sit on the antique furniture to experience how people lived in older days and to get a real feel of the craftsmanship. The exhibits are changed every six months, and are just for show, not for sale or auction.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm;
appointments required. HK\$200 adults.

University Museum and Art Gallery

T. T. Tsui Building, University of Hong Kong,
94 Bonham Road, Pok Fu Lam
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2241-5500

<http://www.hkumag.hku.hk/main.html>

This impressive museum, one of the oldest in Hong Kong, houses the world's largest collection of bronzes from the Yuan Dynasty, as well as artifacts from

the Warring States Period and Indian Buddhist sculpture. Frequent special exhibits.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm,
Sunday 1-6 pm. Closed on public and
university holidays. Free.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Aberdeen

The busy harbor on the southwest coast of Hong Kong Island is a popular tourist attraction—it's packed with fishing boats and pleasure junks, and is home to Jumbo Kingdom, which includes the Jumbo Floating Restaurant. You can take a ride on a sampan—a wooden water taxi—around the harbor. Ringed by high-rises, the harbor is hardly bucolic; for a more picturesque fishing harbor, try the island of Cheung Chau.

Victoria Peak

Victoria Peak

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2522-0922 for tram information

<http://www.thepeak.com.hk>

A visit to Victoria Peak (generally referred to as "the Peak") is a must-do on any itinerary, as it offers unrivaled views of Hong Kong Island, Victoria Harbour and Kowloon. The Peak is Hong Kong's most fashionable address—and priciest real estate—where, during the colonial period, *taipans* (foreign businesspeople) had summer homes to escape the heat below.

The trip up begins with a ride in one of the world's steepest funicular railways, rising 1,224 ft/373 m. It seems, from below, to be a perilous—if not impossible—journey straight up the side of a mountain, but the tram has an accident-free record since it was built in

1888. Some say it's best to go in the daytime, although others say the night view is more spectacular. (Check the weather before you set out. If you can see the top of the mountain before you board the tram, you'll probably have a good view. If it's shrouded in mist, you may want to delay your trip until clearer weather.) The Peak Tower includes a roof-level viewing terrace (Sky Terrace 428) that offers stunning views of Hong Kong and out to sea. Inside, the Sky Gallery features photos of old Hong Kong. Down below are a host of restaurants and retail outlets plus Madame Tussauds Wax Museum and, of course, the Peak Tram station.

The walk around the Peak is one of Hong Kong's best. Walk up Mount Austin Road (opposite the exit of the Peak Tower Building) for about 10 minutes, passing a children's playground on the left and some apartment buildings on the right. The

view there is quite good, although pollution from across the border occasionally reduces visibility. If you're feeling energetic, keep going up Mount Austin Road to the top (about a half-hour walk uphill) to the site of the Government House. A gentler option starts at the Peak Tram Building: Turn right along Lugard Road for a stroll around the Peak, which offers different views at each stage. It takes about 40 minutes, and there is no climbing. Don't miss the beautiful view from the road just past the Peak Cafe. Looking west you'll see Cheung Chau and many of Hong Kong's other islands. This view is most stunning at sunset when the small lights twinkle from the islands and the sun sets beyond the horizon.

The Peak Tram starts from St. John's Building at 33 Garden Road. (You can take a free open-top bus from the Star Ferry Pier in Central to the Peak Tram terminal in the Mid-Levels on the Peak.)

HK\$68 one way and HK\$80 round-trip for adults, HK\$32 one way and HK\$39 round-trip for seniors and children, free for children younger than 3. The tram leaves daily every 10-15 minutes, 7 am-midnight. Take a seat on the right-hand side for the best views. The tram makes several stops along the way.

Parks & Gardens

Hong Kong Park

19 Cotton Tree Drive, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2521-5041

<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/hkp/en/index.php>

With space at a premium, busy Central district has little in the way of public parks. Hong Kong Park is a rare exception, offering a magnificent walk-through aviary with mynahs, hornbills and kingfishers, a children's playground,

ponds, waterfalls, a small amphitheater and an open-air restaurant.

Open 6 am-11 pm daily; conservatory and aviary 9 am-5 pm daily. Free admission.

Zoological and Botanical Gardens

Albany Road, Mid-Levels

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2530-0154

<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/hkzbg/en/index.php>

About a 10-minute walk west of Hong Kong Park up past the Peak Tram station, these gardens are a welcome change from the noise and crowding in Central. The gardens, with 1,000 plant species, are literally a breath of fresh air and a chance to see locals practicing tai chi throughout the day. Animal lovers

may not be impressed by the zoo, which opened in 1864 and is one of the world's oldest, as it confines orangutans, monkeys and gibbons in small cages. The zoo also participates in captive breeding programs for some endangered species.

Gardens open daily 6 am-10 pm, zoo open daily 6 am-7 pm, greenhouse open daily 9 am-4:30 pm. Free.

Amusement Parks

Ocean Park

Ocean Park Road (near Aberdeen; take Citybus 629 from Admiralty MTR station Exit B)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3923-2323

<http://www.oceanpark.com.hk>

Features rides, including a roller coaster and scenic cable car, and an Expedition Trial through the rainforest, where marmosets and toucans await. Don't miss the giant and red pandas and the Grand Aquarium, which contains more than 400 species of fish.

Daily 10 am-7 pm. Admission is HK\$280 adults, HK\$140 children, free for children younger than 3.

Shopping

Along with New York and London, Hong Kong has a deserved reputation as one of the world's greatest shopping cities, and sleek malls abound in every corner of the territory. Even though it now has serious competition from neighboring Singapore and Bangkok, the exhaustive variety of brands and goods means it's still arguably the best Asian city to shop till you drop, and the air-conditioned

mall provide a welcome solace from the frequently hot and humid weather.

Although there are bargains to be had, not every purchase will be a fantastic deal. Hong Kong is not the cheap shopping destination it once was, though it is extremely popular with visitors from mainland China, especially for luxury foreign goods that are heavily taxed on the mainland. Cash will usually get you a better price than credit cards. (Some shops charge extra for credit card purchases—about 4% on average.) All major credit cards are widely accepted. Bargaining can be done in most smaller stores but not in larger department stores.

To give you an idea of costs, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) publishes several free pamphlets with recommended retail prices for a wide variety of goods. Stores displaying the HKTb sticker are generally considered

to be more reliable than those that don't. To display the logo, the shops have to meet certain conditions and provide good standards of service. If you plan to have a store ship your goods for you, make sure it's an HKTb member to ensure safe delivery; otherwise the goods may never arrive. (The Consumer Council hotline is available Monday-Friday 9 am-5:30 pm. Phone 2929-2222.)

Shop for electronics in Mong Kok (north of Tsim Sha Tsui) on the peninsula. Sai Yeung Choi Street is the electronics center of Hong Kong, and scores of shops offer good discounts. The Yau Shing Commercial Centre also houses several shops. Be advised, however, that buying something in Hong Kong does not mean an automatic bargain. Although you will avoid sales or value-added taxes, prices may not differ much from what you'd find in your own

country; do your homework before leaving home.

Be aware that there are variations between North American, European and Asian versions of similar products; be sure you know the differences before you buy.

Bargaining is the norm: When buying electronics, know exactly what you want (make and model) and know what it costs at home when on sale. Once in Hong Kong, don't buy unless the item costs less, including import duty. Before handing over any money, check that everything works, all pieces are included, the manufacturer's warranty cards are included and serial numbers on the box match those on the product. Also, confirm where your warranty is valid; it will be inconvenient to send something back to Hong Kong to take advantage of a Hong Kong-only warranty.

Hong Kong merchants are not obligated by law to exchange items or give refunds. For the best prices, pay in cash. If you use a card, the merchant is entitled to charge you the service fee your card charges, usually about 4%.

Most of the electronic goods sold in Hong Kong have a universal switch enabling you to adjust the voltage to the requirements of the country where you use it. Customers from countries using 110 volts will want to confirm that their purchase will be usable back home. The Hong Kong Tourism Board's booklet, *Shopping Guide to Consumer Electronics*, lists recommended electronics dealers.

Shopping Hours: Shops are generally open daily 10 am-10 pm almost everywhere, and in the busy retail areas of Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island, Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok in

Kowloon, some stay open until close to midnight.

Antique Stores

Hollywood Road in Central is lined with shops selling antiques of all kinds—furniture, carpets, books, carvings and much more. Many also feature replicas, so do your homework before you go.

Arch Angel Antiques

53-55 Hollywood Road, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's largest selection of quality art, ceramics, sculpture and furniture. Every purchase comes with a detailed certificate of authenticity. Noted for its contemporary Vietnamese and Asian art, antique furniture, Buddhist sculptures and terra-cotta figures. Three

locations in all, each with different inventory worth checking out.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm,
Sunday 10:30 am-6 pm.

Oi Ling Antiques

58 Hollywood Road, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2815-9422

<http://www.oilingantiques.com>

This active gallery blends expertise and scientific authentication of goods. Oi Ling Chiang personally sources each antique piece for her galleries, which cater to museum curators and private collectors alike.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm,
Sunday 1- 6:30 pm.

Bookstores

Dymocks Book Sellers

International Finance Centre Mall, Shop 2007,
Level 2, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2489-8868

<http://www.dymocks.com.hk>

These franchises of an Australian chain specialize in English-language books, children's books, guidebooks, best-selling fiction, tourist maps and greeting cards. Twelve stores in Hong Kong.

Daily 10 am-9 pm. Most major credit cards.

Eslite

8/F-10/F, Hysan Place, 500 Hennessy Road,
Causeway Bay

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3419-6789

<http://www.leegardens.com.hk>

Slick, spacious Taiwanese chain with its own tea room. Also stocks electronics and design-related goods.

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-10 pm; Friday, Saturday and eve of public holidays 10 am-11 pm.

Hong Kong Book Centre

25 Des Voeux Road, On Lok Yuen Building
Basement, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2522-7065

<http://www.swindonbooks.com>

This excellent, centrally located downtown bookstore—run by the same owners as Tsim Sha Tsui's Swindon Book Co.—has a large selection of books, especially about Hong Kong, as well as titles covering all things Chinese and Asian.

Monday-Friday 9 am-6:30 pm, Saturday
9 am-5:30 pm.

Kelly & Walsh

Shop 236, Pacific Place Mall, 88 Queensway,
Admiralty

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2522-5744

<http://www.swindonbooks.com>

Chic book boutique with the latest best-sellers and art books from around the world. An expat favorite and a great place to hide out on rainy days.

Daily 10:30 am-8 pm.

Swindon Book Co.

13-15 Lock Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2366-8001

<http://www.swindonbooks.com>

For English-language books, this is perhaps the most comprehensive bookshop in Hong Kong.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 12:30-6:30 pm.

Department Stores

Harvey Nichols

The Landmark, 15 Queen's Road, Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3695-3388

<http://blog.harveynichols.com.hk>

On an island known for its cramped quarters, London's flagship of chic managed to secure an impressive 60,000 sq ft/5,575 sq m adjacent to the Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hotel, where style reigns supreme. This is not the place for basics, but more like a

museum of cutting-edge fashion, though those with sufficient funds will find plenty to take away. There is a second, larger location at Pacific Place (88 Queensway; phone 3968-2668).

Monday-Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 10 am-7 pm.

Lane Crawford

IFC mall, Podium Level 3, 8 Finance St.,
Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2118-2288

<http://www.lanecrawford.com>

For the very latest international fashions from the hottest designers, Lane Crawford has reinvented itself across 80,000 sq ft/7,432 sq m in the ifc mall adjacent to the Central Airport Terminal, so locals and visitors can pick up the highest heels from Italy and the latest

Dior handbag before jetting off or immediately upon arrival.

Daily 10 am-9 pm.

Sogo

555 Hennessy Road, Causeway Bay

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2833-8338

<http://www.sogo.com.hk>

Japanese department store that sells everything from electronics and furniture to clothing and cosmetics. In the basement, you'll find reasonably priced meals and snacks along with a Japanese supermarket, while on the upper floors there are often themed sales, such as sports goods or beachwear. There is another location in Tsim Sha Tsui (phone 3556-1212).

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-10 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-10:30 pm.

The Chinese Merchandise Emporium

Chiao Shang Building, 92-104 Queen's Road,
Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Traditional Chinese crafts, foods,
medicine and great souvenirs.

Daily 10 am-7:15 pm.

Yue Hwa Chinese Products Emporium

Yau Ma Tei, 301-309 Nathan Road, Kowloon
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3511-2222

<http://www.yuehwa.com>

Wide range of Chinese souvenirs, such
as silk clothing, embroidered cushion
covers, toys and ceramics. Offers much
better value for Chinese gifts and

clothes than the now very upmarket China Arts and Crafts shops.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Galleries

Following an explosion of interest in contemporary art in Hong Kong and mainland China, many internationally renowned galleries have opened outposts in Hong Kong, including London's White Cube, New York's Gagosian and Paris' Galerie Perrotin. In addition, there are many small art galleries in Central and Sheung Wan, and some antiques shops on Hollywood Road double as galleries. One Lan Kwai Fong houses several small galleries. It's a short trek uphill from Central MTR.

Gagosian Gallery

7/F Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2151-0555

<http://www.gagosian.com>

Expect to see top names from the world of contemporary and pop art on display at this U.S. gallery, which represents owner Larry Gagosian's first foray into Asia.

Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm.

Galerie Perrotin

17/F, 50 Connaught Road, Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3758-2180

<http://www.perrotin.com>

Designed by renowned local architect Andre Fu, this contemporary art gallery is renowned for championing Asian art and helped discover Takashi Murakami.

Like Gagosian, this is the gallery's first outpost in Asia.

Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-8 pm.

Grotto Fine Art Ltd.

2/F, 31C-D Wyndham St., Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2121-2270

<http://www.grottofineart.com>

Owner Henry Au-Yeung has cornered the market in local artists and created a serious following among Hong Kongers and expatriates alike.

Open Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm.

Para/Site Art Space

4 Po Yan St., Sheung Wan
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2517-4620

<http://www.para-site.org.hk>

This nonprofit art space promotes local talent but displays cutting-edge contemporary works, too.

Open Wednesday-Sunday noon-7 pm.
Closed public holidays.

Plum Blossoms Gallery

Chinachem Hollywood Centre, Shop G6, 1
Hollywood Road, Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2521-2189

<http://www.plumblossoms.com>

An innovator in the contemporary Chinese art scene, this Hollywood Road gallery curates what's hot off the mainland, and it has an outlet in New York City. Openings there are frequent, so check the website for upcoming events.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm.

White Cube

50 Connaught Road, Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2592-2000

<http://whitecube.com>

The London gallery that found fame curating Damien Hirst, Tracy Emin and Antony Gormley now has a space in Hong Kong, where it showcases up-and-coming contemporary art on two spacious floors.

Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm.

Markets

Flower Market

Flower Market Road, Mong Kok, Kowloon

(just around the corner from the bird market)

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

<http://www.flower-market.hk>

Hong Kong residents descend on this market not only for flowers, but also for its bounty of bamboo, which is said to bring good luck. There are fragrant stalls of exotic flowers and plants, with orchids a specialty. Also little shops selling very realistic silk and artificial flowers.

Daily 9:30 am-7:30 pm.

Jade Market

Junction of Kansu and Battery streets, Yau

Ma Tei, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Under a rather depressing overpass, this covered market mainly sells jade, and a little local know-how helps in making sure you get true jade, not glass. One stall (No. 129) sells reasonably priced earthenware teapots; another (No. 192) has small carvings made from Tagua nut (known as

"vegetable ivory"); and Grace Lam at stall No. 387 sells inexpensive strings of river pearls, knotted to required lengths as you wait.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Ladies' Market

Sai Yeung Choi Street, Fa Yuen Street, Tung Choi Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

<http://www.ladies-market.hk>

Electronic goods in Sai Yeung Choi Street, plus casual wear. Tung Choi Street is known as Ladies' Market for clothing, accessories, stationery and toys. Fa Yuen Street is more for locals' necessities of life, from food to gadgets.

Most market stalls open at noon and close around 11 pm.

Li Yuen Street East and West

Li Yuen Street East

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Bargain over women's and children's clothing, shoes, leather goods and Chinese-embroidered textiles, plus silk pajamas and ties. The two streets are located between Queen's Road and Des Voeux Road.

Daily 10 am-7 pm.

Spring Garden Lane

Spring Garden Lane, Wan Chai

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Wan Chai has several small street markets, but this is one of the best, with jewelry, clothes, furniture and other goods on offer.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Stanley Market

Stanley Market, Hong Kong Island

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

This covered market is large and colorful, although, disappointingly for those who love to bargain, most items are marked up, and vendors don't like to haggle. Nevertheless, it's a good place to shop for shoes and clothing, pottery, paintings and home accessories such as cushion covers and chopsticks. In the bargain bins, you can pick up a T-shirt or a pair of shorts for as little as HK\$10. Combine your visit with a stroll around Stanley, a seaside town with old temples and plenty of alfresco restaurants. Head left to the cluster of cafes on the seafront that are cheaper than those on the main drag. The ride to Stanley is terrifically dramatic: Double-decker buses deliver fabulous views of the mountains and beaches. Take Citybus 6, 6-A, 6-X, 66 or 260 from Exchange Square bus terminal (near the

Star Ferry Pier), or catch it in front of City Hall and Queensway. The bus takes 30 minutes to an hour, depending on traffic, and stops directly at the market.

Daily until 7 pm.

Temple Street Night Market

Temple and Shanghai streets, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

This is Hong Kong's most popular market, where tourists come to snap up clothes, sunglasses, suitcases, bags, watches, clocks, jewelry, phones and lots more, all at reasonable prices, even if not premium quality, together with food and street theater that includes fortune-tellers and, occasionally, opera.

Nightly 7-10:30.

Yuen Po Bird Market

Yuen Po Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Some find it fun to browse at this unusual market, filled with birds and bird-related paraphernalia of all types; yet it's a sad place for wild-bird lovers. Many Chinese are fond of birds as pets; they feed them grasshoppers with chopsticks and house them in ornate cages. Because they believe birds bring luck, some take them to the racetrack, too. The price of a bird is partly determined by the quality of the song it produces.

Generally open daily 7 am-8 pm.

Shopping Areas

Festival Walk

80 Tat Chee Ave., Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2844-2223

<http://www.festivalwalk.com.hk>

The 200 shops in this shopping complex sell everything from apparel to home furnishings, but it's not particularly convenient for the short-stay visitor. It also has restaurants, movie theaters and an ice rink to keep the children amused.

Open daily 11 am-10 pm.

Harbour City

Canton Road (west of the Star Ferry Pier),

Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2118-8668

<http://www.harbourcity.com.hk>

Has the widest variety of shops in Hong Kong—Marks & Spencer, Toys "R" Us and many more—plus a selection of

restaurants, snack bars and cafes with harbor views.

Most shops are open daily 10 am-9 pm.

Hysan Place

500 Hennessy Road, Causeway Bay

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2866-7222

<http://hp.leegardens.com.hk>

More than 100 boutiques spread across 17 floors, including hip Hong Kong clothing brands Chocoolate and Venilla Suite plus Japanese boutiques from Superdry and Mukai. There is also a food court and supermarket.

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-10 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-11 pm.

ifc mall

8 Finance St., Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2295-3308

<http://www.ifc.com.hk>

This mall includes ultra-high-end fashion brands and haute-cuisine dining options. Conveniently located adjacent to the Central Airport Terminal, ifc mall is the perfect place to spend those last Hong Kong dollars (especially if you have a lot of them) before hopping aboard the Airport Express. Expect a solid selection but no bargains.

Daily 10 am-8 pm (restaurants and bars until midnight).

Island Beverly

1 Great George St., Causeway Bay
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2-890-6823

<http://www.islandbeverley.com.hk>

Trend central for young hipsters, this Causeway Bay address is four floors crammed full of the latest fashions from local designers. Located just off the equally trendy Fashion Walk in Causeway Bay, the entrance to Island Beverly is a little hard to find but well worth the effort.

Most shops are open daily 10 am-10 pm.

Langham Place

555 Shanghai St., Mong Kok, Kowloon
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 3552-3388

<http://www.langhamplace.com.hk>

A mix of office tower and linked hotel, Langham Place has been something of a center for a renaissance of the surrounding neighborhood. Its 300

shops and restaurants, cinema and the city's longest unsupported indoor escalators—together with its digital sky ceiling—make a visit worthwhile.

Specialty Stores

Much is made of the fact that a custom suit can be turned out in 24 hours in Hong Kong. It can be, indeed, but it will look like it. If you want clothing custom-made, give the tailor as much time as you can—a week is ideal. Go back for several fittings, and allow time for alterations. Also, when comparing prices, be sure that you're considering comparable grades of fabric.

A&A Audio and Video Centre

Shop 123 Pacific Place 88 Queensway

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2845-3670

<http://www.aaavcenter.com>

A good midrange to high-end selection. Pricier than a Mong Kok dealer, but reliable.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-7:30 pm.

Elissa Cohen

209 Hankow Centre, 5-15 Hankow Road,
Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2312-0811

<http://www.elissacohen.com>

Diamonds are this Hong Kong designer's best friend. In-the-know locals go to this office tower address for engagement rings and all kinds of exquisite baubles. From earrings to toe rings, Elissa decks her clients out in only the best.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Goods Of Desire

Central Store, G/F and 1/F, 48 Hollywood Road

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2805-1876

<http://www.god.com.hk>

A Hong Kong original, G.O.D. has transformed from underground wonder to having outlets across Hong Kong. Irreverent T-shirts, chic homewares and unexpected souvenirs—all with a Chinese twist—cram into inviting emporiums. Additional locations include 118 Peak Road (phone 2778-3331).

Monday-Saturday 11 am-9 pm.

Linva Tailor

38 Cochrane St., Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Set free your inner Suzie Wong with a cheongsam made to measure. Take your own fabric or choose from Mr. Leung's colorful collection. Four days from initial fitting to follow-up, then another two to three weeks to complete the transformation. Shipping available worldwide.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm.

Mandarin Oriental Cake Shop

5 Connaught Road Central

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2825-4008

<http://www.mandarinoriental.com/hongkong/fine-dining/the-mandarin-cake-shop>

This shop, affiliated with one of Hong Kong's finest hotels, sells jars of delicious rose-petal jam made in the hotel's kitchen (small jars cost HK\$198,

larger ones HK\$248). The subtle, elegant flavor is indescribably delicious with crumpets or English muffins. Treat someone to an Oriental gift box, which contains oolong tea, mixed spiced nuts, XO sauce and cookies in addition to the jam.

Monday-Saturday 8 am-8 pm, Sunday 8 am-7 pm.

Mountain Folkcraft

12 Wo On Lane (off D'Aguilar Street), Central
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2523-2817

<http://mountainfolkcraft.com>

Sells unusual, ethnic souvenirs in a homey environment: handmade masks, embroidered shoes, jade and silver jewelry, porcelain bowls and Chinese figurines.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm.

Sam's Tailor

Burlington Arcade, Ground Floor, 94 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2367-9423

<http://www.samstailor.biz>

Tailor to everyone from former U.S. President Bill Clinton to NBA giant Yao Ming, Sam (whose real name is Manu Melwani) is famous for his impeccably tailored suits. In an emergency, he can whip one up in 24 hours (though a one-day turnaround is not recommended).

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7:30 pm,
Sunday 10 am-12:30 pm.

Shanghai Tang

Hong Kong International Airport, Terminal 1,

Departures East Hall, Level 7, Shop 7E91

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Phone: 2261-0606

<http://www.shanghaitang.com>

A kaleidoscope of Sino-inspired novelties—there is everything from tableware to cufflinks—and modern (although expensive) takes on classic Chinese garments, such as lime or hot-pink cheongsams (the traditional long dress with a high collar and slit skirt). There are stores on the Hong Kong and Kowloon side, including the Shanghai Tang Mansion flagship in Central (phone 2525-7333).

Daily 10:30 am-8 pm.

Sun Chau Book & Antique Co.

Fortune Industrial Building, 40 Lee Tung St.,
Chai Wan

Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Specializes in Chinese books. Walls are lined with Mao's *Little Red Book*, and

floor space is overtaken by piles of revolutionary posters calling on the masses to sacrifice for the Communist Party. Unlike most copies available in street markets in China, these scraps of history are authentic and in excellent condition.

Open daily 9:30 am-5 pm.

Security

Personal Safety

Hong Kong law requires that everyone must carry some proof of identity. Although police rarely approach tourists or visitors for spot checks (the purpose of which is usually to uncover illegal immigrants from the Chinese mainland or Southeast Asia), it's a good idea to carry something with a photograph, such as a passport or driver's license, especially if you are of Chinese descent.

Carrying a photocopy is usually acceptable and advised.

Day or night, Hong Kong is a very safe place to walk, but travelers should be aware of pickpocketing and purse snatching, especially in crowded areas such as Causeway Bay, around the Star Ferry Pier in Tsim Sha Tsui, in tourist-popular shopping malls and arcades, and along Nathan Road. Often teams of thieves work together: One causes a distraction while the other lifts your wallet. This type of crime is on the rise, though overall crime against tourists is extremely low.

Be sure to leave your valuables in a safe-deposit box at the hotel and use traveler's checks or credit cards rather than carrying a large amount of cash. Credit-card scams and bait-and-switch schemes are common, particularly in electronics shops in Tsim Sha Tsui that cater to tourists. Don't let salespeople

out of sight with your credit card, and always verify that the package you're given contains the product you paid for, not a cheaper model.

Police officers on the beat who speak English can be recognized by a red stripe under their police ID number, which is located on the upper sleeve of their uniform. Even without the stripe, most police should be able to help you with simple matters like directions. A police reporting station is at the Star Ferry Pier in Central.

The police crime hotline is 2527-7177. In an emergency, dial 999.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do dress for the occasion. Hong Kong is a relatively formal city and, despite its almost year-round heat, top restaurants and clubs ask customers to dress smart casual, meaning no sleeveless shirts, shorts or open-toed shoes for men, and no flip-flops or sandals for women.

Don't forget your umbrella. Except for the winter, when Hong Kong is generally dry, south China weather is highly changeable and can get very wet, very fast.

Do get outside of the city center. There is so much more to Hong Kong than concrete high-rises, although short-term visitors could be forgiven for thinking otherwise. Take a trip to the New Territories, go for a hike through any of Hong Kong's green areas or hop a ferry to one of the outlying islands. You will have a completely different view of Hong Kong if you do. An Octopus

stored-value card is a boon for using public transport.

Don't forget to bargain everywhere except at standard shops, department stores and restaurants. Sellers expect it, and their first price is never their best price. If they claim it is, walk away—you can do better elsewhere.

Do leave plenty of space in the luggage you take in with you; it will soon be filled with shopping buys. Otherwise, just buy more luggage.

Don't worry about carrying traveler's checks or wads of cash. ATMs are plentiful around the main business areas and even near most beaches and on the islands.

Do look both ways before you cross the street. Unlike neighboring China, Hong Kongers drive on the left, like their former colonial stewards, the British.

Make sure you look and then look again, just to be safe. And watch out for trams crossing Central.

Don't spit or drop litter; both carry fixed penalty fines of HK\$1,500, and there is a fine of HK\$5,000 for those caught spitting on the MTR.

Do take the Hong Kong Airport Express upon arrival into Hong Kong. Determine if your hotel is on the Kowloon side or Hong Kong Island, then hop off accordingly. All information is in English, the scenic ride costs less than one-third the price of a taxi, and the views are terrific.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements:

Passports are required of Canadian and U.S. travelers. Visas are required of Canadian and U.S. travelers staying beyond 90 days. Proof of onward

passage is required of all. Visas are required of all for visits to other parts of China. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departing. Further information is available at <http://www.immd.gov.hk>.

Population: 7,182,724.

Languages: Cantonese, the dialect spoken in Guangdong province, is the main official language; English is also an official language. Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) is not an official language, but it is widely used. In theory, English is spoken in all the main tourist areas, hotels and restaurants, although visitors may find that it or they are not always easily understood, particularly in the New Territories or remoter parts of Kowloon.

Predominant Religions: Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 and 60/50 cycles. Most hotels have outlets for three-prong, two-prong and standard shaver adapters.

Telephone Codes: 852, country code;

Money

Currency Exchange

The Hong Kong dollar is an internationally recognized currency, separate from China's renminbi (or yuan). Although the currency is pegged to the U.S. dollar, you may find some variation in the rates actually available. You'll need to present your passport when exchanging money. There is an exchange differential drop between Hong Kong and mainland currency;

expect a 30% drop when exchanging renminbi into Hong Kong dollars.

ATMs are plentiful in Hong Kong—you'll find them outside banks, in many shopping complexes and malls, and in MTR stations. ATMs accept many major foreign bank cards and credit cards. They dispense Hong Kong dollars at the going rate of exchange. However, don't rely on just one bank or credit card to obtain cash. Sometimes a card, inexplicably, won't work in an ATM.

Banks often give a better exchange rate than currency exchanges or hotels, but some banks will charge an administrative fee. Check around.

Money changers in side streets around Sheung Wan MTR station (one stop west of Central) offer competitive rates. Be aware that just because some money changers advertise that they charge no fee or commission, it doesn't

mean you're getting a good deal from them. They often change at lower rates than banks. If in doubt, walk away and change at a bank; the difference will not be significant unless you are changing large amounts.

Be aware that HK\$1,000 notes are not accepted in many places because of counterfeiting; banks distribute HK\$500 notes.

Taxes

A 10% service charge is added to hotel bills, along with a 5% government tax in more upscale hotels. There are no sales or value-added taxes or import duties; all of Hong Kong is a duty-free port.

Tipping

Most restaurants add a 10% service charge automatically, but this doesn't necessarily find its way into the pockets

of the waitstaff, who generally expect an additional tip.

Taxi drivers will always happily accept a tip, but most simply mark the fare up to the nearest Hong Kong dollar. Let the driver keep the change. Whatever he gives you back, accept it, that's what he is satisfied with, provided he didn't help himself to a fistful of Hong Kong dollars.

Bellhops, restroom attendants and others in hotels expect a small tip as well, usually HK\$5-\$10 per bag.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Overview

Introduction



City Hall in Ho Chi Minh City

The Vietnamese seem to use the names Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City, or simply "HCMC" interchangeably.

By any name, Ho Chi Minh City is the economic center of Vietnam, although geographically it's 700 mi/1,120 km south of Hanoi. With a rapidly growing population, new hotels, chic bars and trendy clubs, Ho Chi Minh City is enjoying a climate of prosperity and growth.

On Ho Chi Minh City's doorstep is the Mekong delta, with its burgeoning markets, luminous green rice fields, Khmer pagodas, and fruit and flower orchards. The best way to view this tropical wonderland is by boat—you can rent a tour boat in the delta towns of Ben Tre, Vinh Long and Can Tho.

Port Information

Location

Saigon Port was established during the French colonial rule and was then known as Saigon Commercial Port.

The port is located along the Saigon River. Its three terminals are Nha Rong, Khanh Hoi and Tan Thuan. The port also includes various mooring buoys on either side of the river. Larger ships have to dock at Phu My, which is two and a half hours away from the city.

Most cruise lines provide shuttles from the dock that drop people off at the Rex Hotel, which is in the center of the city. If you need to take a taxi, hire one outside the dock gates: They are much cheaper than the ones inside.

Potpourri

The city has undergone several name changes. Once a small fishing village called Prey Nokor, in the 1690s it was named Gia Dinh, and in the 1860s the

French changed it to Saigon. In 1975 it was renamed after the then current Vietnamese leader at the time, Ho Chi Minh.

The city experiences two distinct seasons: The rainy season from May through November, and the dry season from December through April.

Despite the fact that Vietnam is a Buddhist country and Christmas is not a national holiday, Ho Chi Minh City is known for its beautiful display of lights and decorations. Throughout December, buildings and trees in the downtown area are draped with colored lights.

There is a two-tiered price structure in Vietnam, with a tourist price and a lower Vietnamese price. You will be paying the tourist price. This is only fair, as the median wage in Vietnam is about US\$49 a month, while US\$90 a month is considered positively middle-class.

An estimated 6.5 million motorbikes are found on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City. The most frequently replaced part of a motorbike is the horn.

See & Do

Sightseeing

The old Saigon landmarks—the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Rex Hotel, the Hotel de Ville—are still there. But new office towers, built by multinational corporations now setting up shop in Vietnam, are radically changing the skyline.

There are nearly 200 temples and pagodas in the city. For lovers of recent history, the Xa Lao Pagoda is the site where a monk immolated himself to protest the Diem regime in 1963. In the reception hall of the Giac Lam Pagoda you can see the portraits of monks who

passed away years ago (below the portraits, note the monks' funeral tablets inscribed in ancient *nom*, the original Vietnamese script). The Emperor of Jade Pagoda is filled with gilded figures and papier-mache statues of Buddhist and Taoist divinities.

Ho Chi Minh City's millions of motorbikes emit a constant roar and palpable exhaust, and the city's two- and three-hour traffic jams are legendary. Give yourself plenty of travel time if you go exploring.

Historic Sites

Reunification Palace

135 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3822-3652

<http://ditich.dinhdoclap.gov.vn>

History buffs should stop by the Reunification Palace, where the South Vietnamese government officially turned over power to the North on 30 April 1975. During the fall of Saigon, North Vietnamese tanks broke down the gates and raised the communist flag. It's a trip back in time, particularly the "strategy rooms" in the basement and the upper floors filled with 1960s furnishings.

Shopping

The most interesting market is Cho Ben Thanh, but we also recommend Cholon's Binh Tay market (take a boat down the Ben Nghe Channel). Shop on Dong Khoi Street for the city's highest-quality wares (antiques and other souvenirs).

Cholon is the city's Chinatown and is worth a visit for the bustle, the temples and assembly halls. Visit the Nghia Assembly Hall to see the beautiful gold-

painted wooden boat that hangs over the entrance.

The Tax Department Store opposite the Rex Hotel (a favorite with U.S. officers during the war) has a good selection of Vietnamese items made for export.

Bargaining is an essential skill for everything from heavy teak-wood furniture to a pack of gum. Usually, it's a good-natured negotiation in which you will end up slightly higher than halfway between the original asking price and what you offered.

To discourage street peddlers, the gesture for "no, go away" is a flat hand moved back and forth in a sharp cutting motion at waist level. Don't even glance at their wares unless you want to endure a long siege.

Antique Stores

Le Cong Kieu Street in District 1 is a good place to shop for antiques. It features more than 60 shops with items such as stone statues, ceramic pots, coins, clocks and more.

Liti

40-D Ly Tu Trong St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-824-7114

<http://litishop.com/english.html>

Liti sells a range of vintage and antique goods with a focus on French colonial style.

Bookstores

Fahasa

466 Nguyen Kiem St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3847-9590

<http://www.fahasa.com>

Spanning three floors, this store offers international best-sellers, professional and educational textbooks, children's books and more in English, Vietnamese, Chinese and French. Toys and related products are also available.

Galleries

Apricot Gallery

50-52 Mac Thi Buoi St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3822-7962

<http://www.apricotgallery.com.vn>

This gallery sells artworks created by Vietnamese artists. Its collections include oil paintings and portraits on lacquered wood.

Blue Space Gallery

97 Pho Duc Chinh St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3821-3695

<http://www.vietnamartist.com/blue-space-art-gallery>

Located in the Fine Arts Museum, this gallery sells high-quality artworks.

Daily 9:30 am-5:30 pm.

Markets

Ben Thanh Market

Intersection of Le Loi, Ham Nghi Tran Hung
Dao avenues and Le Lai Street

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

This large market downtown is popular for its offerings of handicrafts, souvenirs and local foods.

Binh Tay Market

57 Thap Muoi 2, Quan 6

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

<http://www.chobinhthay.gov.vn>

Located in Cho Lon, Saigon's Chinatown, this is one of the biggest and busiest markets in the city. It's open from daybreak until around 7 pm and offers everything from kitchenware to clothes, fresh food and noodles.

Daily from 6 am-7:30 pm.

Dan Sinh Market

104-D Yersin (next to Phung Son Tu Pagoda)

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

This market sells a variety of army surplus goods.

Shopping Areas

Dong Khoi Street

Located in District 1, this bustling street is in the heart of the city's vibrant commercial center. There you will find chic local boutiques, upscale shops selling top brand names, shopping centers, art galleries, restaurants and cafes.

Saigon Centre

65 Le Loi Blvd.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3829-4888

<http://www.saigoncentre.com.vn>

This well-organized mall features international fashion and accessories shops on the first floor, home furnishings and lifestyle outlets on the second floor and a cafe on the ground floor.

Zen Plaza

54- 56 Nguyen Trai St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3925-0339

<http://zenplaza.com.vn>

This Japanese-owned shopping center features various well-known fashion brands and a designer boutique.

Specialty Stores

Annam Gourmet Market

16-18 Hai Ba Trung St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3822-9332

<http://www.annam-gourmet.com>

This place sells a wide range of gourmet foods and drinks such as cheese, deli items, fruits, vegetables, wine and gluten-free products.

Coconut Shop

100 Mac Thi Buoi St.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-823-0523

<http://coconutstore.web.fc2.com>

This place sells various hand-embroidered handbags, clutches and purses in various sizes and shapes. Most are made of silk, and handles are designed using lacquered bamboo or fabric.

Mai Handicrafts

298 Nguyen Trong Tuyen

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 08-3844-0988

<http://www.maihandicrafts.com>

Mai offers fair-trade products such as basketware, ceramics, ethnic fabrics and gifts made by poor and disadvantaged women.

Dining

Dining Overview

Ho Chi Minh City is the undisputed culinary capital of Vietnam. Its crowded streets are home to legions of street vendors grilling, steaming and frying fragrant delights to enjoy while perched on a squat plastic chair. Open-fronted shops serve up comforting bowls of pho noodle soup, crusty pork-filled spicy banh mi baguettes, fried spring rolls and numerous other local specialties. As the country's commercial hub, Ho Chi Minh City has acted as a magnet for workers from all over the country, and as a result, all kinds of regional dishes are available there. It's a foodie's paradise. The golden rule for a street stall or noodle shop is that, if it's packed with locals, it's going to be delicious and cheap.

In recent years, the city's dining scene has experienced many changes. Trendy cafes, chic restaurants, and top tables serving modern Vietnamese cuisine have popped up everywhere. But perhaps the biggest change has been the opening of many Western-owned restaurants, from humble to high-end. Ho Chi Minh City food offerings are more cosmopolitan than they have ever been. From Greek souvlaki to Spanish tapas, Middle Eastern meze and Brazilian barbecue, this rapidly evolving city has it all. The city also has more than its fair share of rooftop bars and restaurants where you can enjoy a sundowner and snacks while looking out across the sparkling cityscape.

Although there is quite literally food available at every second step, the highest concentration of restaurants, cafes and bars is in District 1.

Local & Regional

Cuc Gach Quan

10 Dang Tat, Ward Tan Dinh, District 1

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3848-0144

<http://www.cucgachquan.com.vn>

This beautifully restored French colonial-era family home turned restaurant gained notoriety when Brad and Angelina had lunch there. Enjoy unique decor, traditional Vietnamese food, French wines and a special ambience... if you can get a table.

Dong Pho Restaurant

57 Ho Xua Huong St., District 3

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3930-7665

<http://www.dongphorestaurant.com>

Dong Pho is known for its *pho*, a traditional Vietnamese dish of white noodles in broth with beef or chicken. Also serving other local dishes and desserts, this place is popular among locals for its friendly service and affordable prices.

Lemon Grass Restaurant

55-56 Nguyen Hue St., District 1 (in the
Palace Saigon Hotel)
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3829-2860

<http://www.palacesaigon.com/restaurantsbars/lemongrass-restaurant.html>

Dine on authentic Vietnamese cuisine while enjoying panoramic views of the city.

Propaganda Vietnamese Bistro

21-23 Han Thuyen, District 1

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3822-4048

<http://www.propaganda.vn>

Colorful wall art and propaganda posters set the scene at this arty bistro. The menu is modern Vietnamese with light bites, spring rolls, coffee and desserts.

Xu Restaurant Lounge

71-75 Hai Ba Trung, District 1

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Phone: 8-3824-8468

<http://www.xusaigon.com>

If you fancy a bit of a splurge, Xu is a great choice. The chef offers beautifully presented and delicious modern and traditional Vietnamese cuisine.

Daily for lunch and dinner.

Security

Etiquette

If you are invited to someone's home for a meal, consider giving the host a gift that can be used daily. However, avoid giving gifts in an office after a business meeting, as this can be considered a bribe.

Personal Safety

It's been more than 30 years since the fall of Saigon, and Vietnam has worked hard to clear the land of unexploded ordnance, especially near tourist areas. Unless you are hiking in extremely remote regions, it is unlikely to be a problem.

Ho Chi Minh City has a bad reputation for muggings, so be extremely careful. Do not wear expensive jewelry, keep cell phones in back pockets, or drape

your camera or handbag over one shoulder. Carrying your camera and valuables in a double plastic shopping bag held firmly in hand will keep them out of view. Purses should be worn around the neck and under one arm, with a protective hand firmly gripping the strap. Drive-by motorcycle snatchings are extremely common; handbags and cameras are the main target. When reporting an incident to the police, don't be surprised if they are reluctant to take any action or want money to do so.

Solo female travelers report moving through Vietnam without problem, though young women often receive their share of romantic overtures. None are harmful or threatening.

In case of an emergency, call 113 for the police, 114 for the fire department and 115 for an ambulance.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Ho Chi Minh City has full-scale, modern medical facilities. Health clinics can handle first-aid and minor injuries, and they will refer you to the larger centers if necessary. Medicines are often free, but donations are encouraged. Sanitary conditions throughout the country can cause problems for some visitors.

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruits and raw vegetables, make sure meat is cooked thoroughly, and never drink the tap water. Stick with bottled water, soft drinks and, of course, beer. Wine, both imported and domestic, is widely available in Ho Chi Minh City (another legacy from the days of French rule).

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Don't cross your fingers for good luck—Vietnamese consider the gesture obscene. And don't point your finger at people or beckon them with the palm facing upward.

Do remove your shoes before entering Buddhist pagodas, most private homes and even businesses. If there's a pile of shoes outside the door, add yours to it. Be sure not to let the soles of your feet face any sacred monument, such as a statue of Buddha.

Don't, under any circumstances, be tempted to deal in the black market.

Never change money on the street—it's against the law.

Don't argue loudly or shout. A show of bad temper is a sign of poor emotional control and is a sure loss of face in the eyes of Vietnamese people.

Do receive objects and even change with both hands if that is the way it is offered. It is respectful to do so.

Don't bow from the waist as Chinese, Japanese and Koreans do. Close a conversation or transaction with a sharp bow of the head only. Shake hands only if your partner initiates the gesture.

Do take a washcloth if you are accustomed to using one. They are not easily found in Vietnam. Quick-drying, antimicrobial versions are sold in the backpacking-supplies section of sporting-goods stores.

Don't touch people of the opposite sex, but if you find yourself in friendly conversation with a Vietnamese friend, expect to be gently touched on the forearm or shoulder as a sign of trust.

Do dress neatly and modestly. Pants should be below the knee for both men and women. Shirts should have sleeves, especially if you're visiting a religious site.

Don't forget your sense of humor. Most Vietnamese enjoy a joke and often engage in a form of good-natured ribbing that may seem aggressive to new arrivals. Feel free to respond in kind. Where spoken language fails, a smile and pantomime that includes amusing body language will win you many friends.

Do be yourself. Most Vietnamese are as eager to learn about your culture as you are to visit theirs.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements:

Passports and visas are necessary for citizens of Canada and the U.S.

Passports must have at least a year left before expiration. Visas must be obtained prior to arrival. They are available from any Vietnamese Embassy, whether in the U.S. or in the capitals of neighboring Cambodia, Laos or China. You will need three passport-size photos to complete your application.

When leaving, expect to pay a departure tax at the airport and make sure you still have the departure form that was given to you when you arrived in the country. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your travel agent before departure.

Population: 7,980,000.

Languages: Vietnamese (official), French, English, Chinese.

Predominant Religions: Buddhist (Theravada and Mahayana), Christian (Roman Catholic), Taoist.

Time Zone: 7 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+7 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 110 volts.

Telephone Codes: 84, country code; 08, Ho Chi Minh City code;

Money

Currency Exchange

The dong (VND) is the currency of Vietnam. ATMs frequently offer 2 million VND withdrawals, which takes some getting used to. You will learn to count zeros backward from right to left to

determine if you are holding a 1,000 VND or 10,000 VND note in your hand. U.S. dollars are accepted in most locations, but you'll have a better time negotiating a good price if you stick to the VND.

The easiest way to obtain local currency is through ATMs. Banks and better hotels also offer exchange services, but the rates won't be as favorable. Do not change money on the street.

All major credit cards can be used in more upscale locations, but they are rarely accepted in smaller shops and restaurants. Any credit card transactions will incur a 3% or 4% surcharge on the purchase price. As ATMs become more widespread, traveler's checks are becoming less negotiable and will be subject to at least a 2% surcharge where they are accepted.

Do spend down all your VND before leaving Vietnam, because VND cannot be converted back into U.S. or Canadian currency, nor is it possible to exchange VND for the currency of any neighboring countries.

Taxes

Value-added-tax, or VAT, is levied at 10% in Vietnam. Hotel rates are subject to 10% government tax and 5% service charge.

Tipping

Gratuities usually aren't necessary in inexpensive restaurants, but even a small tip will be greatly appreciated. If you're going to visit a restaurant regularly, a tip is a worthy investment to ensure prompt service, and good service should always be acknowledged with a small tip left behind on the table.

Upscale places will often tack on a 5%-12% service charge.

Tips for taxi drivers are purely optional (and most appreciated, however small).

Koh Samui, Thailand

Overview

Introduction



Tropical beach

Koh Samui, 295 mi/475 km south of Bangkok, was one of Thailand's early tourist developments. With its international airport and visitors flying in

for a week of sun and sea, it sometimes resembles a foreign country. In the two main towns—particularly Chaweng—clubs, bars and large hotels dominate. Although quieter areas can still be found, the island is suffering badly from uncontrolled over-development.

Despite the numbers of tourists, Koh Samui does have lovely beaches and water that's a magical blue-green. The idyllic atmosphere can still be found—it's just that there are now three to four times as many people enjoying it.

Highlights

Sights—Ang Thong National Marine Park; Hin Ta and Hin Yai; Na Muang waterfall; the Big Buddha Temple (Wat Phra Yai).

Museums—The Art Samui Museum.

Memorable Meals—Fine French food at Chez Francois; traditional Thai cuisine at Mother Restaurant.

Late Night—Elegant cocktails at Woo Bar; live music at Reggae Pub; the Thai stage show at Starz Cabaret.

Port Information

Location

Cruise ships dock at the Port of Koh Samui in Na Thon, the main port city where the mainland ferries also arrive. There is no passenger terminal, but taxis will be waiting at the pier.

Negotiate your price before stepping into the vehicle. Be prepared for the fact that drivers will try to sell you a full-day tour of the island. If this interests you, bargain hard.

The easiest and cheapest way to reach the beach is by *songthaew*, a shared

pickup that doubles as a local bus. Just flag one down that's heading in your direction. From Na Thon pier, which is on the island's west side, you'll want to travel clockwise and north to reach Big Buddha or Chaweng Beach.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Unlike much of the rest of Thailand, temples worth visiting are few, but a few waterfalls, such as Nom Tok Na Muang might give you reason to leave the beach.

Museums

Art Samui Museum

37/45 Moo 5, Choeng Mon, Bophut
Koh Samui, Thailand

Phone: 61-180-7331

<http://www.kohsamui.com/attractions/art-samui>

Created by a Korean artist, this collection of more than 60 optical illusions and room paintings make for some outrageous and fun photo ops.

Daily 10 am-8 pm.

Nature

Ang Thong National Marine Park

Koh Samui, Thailand

Phone: 77-280-222

<https://www.thainationalparks.com/mu-ko-ang-thong-national-park>

This stunning archipelago of green-crowned limestone islands jutting out of the sea to the north of Koh Samui is a must-see. Speed boats and slow boats make the trip from Samui in an hour or

two and spend the afternoon visiting beaches and coves, allowing tourists time to climb trails to breathtaking vistas. Snorkeling or kayaking are typically part of the experience.

Hin Ta and Hin Yai

126/92 Moo 3, Maret

Koh Samui, Thailand

<http://www.kohsamui-point.com/attractions/hin-ta-hin-yai>

Set along the rocky shore to the south of Lamai Beach, these two rock formations, called "grandfather" (*ta*) and "grandmother" (*yai*) are a common stop on any tour of the island. They resemble male and female genitalia and are good photo ops. It is a beautiful spot to see the sea, but this is not a recreational beach.

Daily 24 hours.

Na Muang Waterfall

Located at the center of the island, this 90-ft/27-m cascade tumbles over purple-tinted rocks. The pool at the bottom is a great place to take a dip after the hike required to reach the falls.

Religious Sites

Wat Phra Yai

Koh Fan

Koh Samui, Thailand

Unmissable with its 36-ft/11-m golden Buddha sitting atop a seaside perch facing inland, this temple is one of the island's top tourist sites. Vendors sell souvenirs, amulets and artifacts on the temple grounds. As this is a holy site, visitors must dress modestly. At night, the statue is impressively bathed in light.

Daily sunrise-sunset. Free.

Wineries, Breweries & Distilleries

Magic Alambic Rum Distillery

44/5 Moo 3, Namuang, Amphoe
Koh Samui, Thailand

The rum there is made by fermenting and distilling fresh sugar cane juice. In addition to the pure rum, it also produces four fruit-flavored varieties. Inexpensive samples are on offer, and there is a Thai-French restaurant on-site.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Shopping

In the beach towns are the usual small shops of clothing, souvenirs and necessities. Night markets have cheap goods, knockoffs, pirated entertainment and some kitchenware or decorative items made from coconuts. One local

product worth noting is cold-pressed coconut oil, which can be found in most big stores. At the markets you may haggle, but at the bigger shops the prices are as posted. Do not purchase anything claiming to be an antiquity or involving ivory or an endangered species.

Bookstores

Island Books Lamai

173/28 Moo 4, Tapee Bungalows, Ban Lamai
Koh Samui, Thailand

Phone: 61-193-2132

<http://island-books-samui.com>

This shop buys, sells and trades used books. The selection is huge and multiple languages are represented.

Shopping Areas

Central Festival Samui

Central Chaweng (between Chaweng Beach Road and Chaweng Lake)

Koh Samui, Thailand

This three-story, four-section mall and food court is the island's largest shopping complex. Along with endless shops and good coverage of the major international brands from clothing to housewares to entertainment, there is also a kids' playground, gaming arcade and cinema.

Daily 11 am-11 pm.

Fisherman's Village

Bophut

Koh Samui, Thailand

At the center of Bophut, this street offers an assortment of designer shops and boutiques selling clothing from the

cheap to the pricey, accessories, housewares, souvenirs, art and more. The street becomes pedestrian-only for its street market on Friday evenings.

Specialty Stores

Jim Thompson Silk

Central Festival Samui Shopping Center
Koh Samui, Thailand

Phone: 77-410-4045

<http://www.jimthompson.com>

Named for the American expat who effectively revived the Thai silk industry and brought it to international attention in the 1970s, this brand of silk is the most famous in Thailand. Selling clothing, accessories and even stuffed animals made from the famous silk, it also offers items made from cotton and other fabrics.

Daily 11 am-11 pm.

Bangkok, Thailand

Overview

Introduction



Bangkok's temples are full of historic treasures.

Bangkok, Thailand, can soothe or ruffle, and it often does both. While contemplating the sunrise at a temple or

monks collecting alms, you'll marvel at what peace can be found in the midst of such a chaotic metropolis.

A cultural hub in Southeast Asia, Bangkok is a collage of urban squalor, gleaming affluence, mass consumerism and pollution. Most certainly, the city will assault your senses. It's fascinating and indulgent, but it requires time and patience.

Comfort of one sort or another is never far away: When your feet tire of wandering through the Grand Palace, head over to neighboring Wat Pho for an hour-long foot massage; if you exhaust your meager supply of Thai words bargaining for souvenirs, pop into an air-conditioned movie theater and take in an English-language film; if you are overwhelmed by the density of people along Sampeng Lane in Chinatown, drop into a coffee shop or open-air restaurant and enjoy a cool

drink; if you are looking for excitement, you can watch Muay Thai (kickboxing) at Lumpini Boxing Stadium or hang around with backpackers at the bars on Khao San Road.

Upon arrival, you may find the constant din shocking, the geography impossible (no map does justice to the city's meandering lanes), and the traffic absolutely unbelievable. But stay more than a night or two and the city's bewildering kaleidoscope begins to make sense. Although the cacophony will never melt away, soon it will transmit the excitement and vibrant charm of one of the world's greatest cities.

Highlights

Sights—The Grand Palace; Wat Pho; Chatuchak Market; the sunset over Wat Arun; the Chao Mae Tubtim.

Museums—The National Museum; the Royal Barges Museum; Jim Thompson House and Museum; the BACC (Bangkok Art and Culture Centre); Kamthieng House.

Memorable Meals—A dinner cruise on the Chao Phraya River and canals aboard the *Manohra*; seafood and fabulous views at Supatra River House; fine Japanese food at Koi; pad thai, the country's quintessential noodle dish, delicious street food at the many food stalls in Chinatown; award-winning Thai cuisine at Nahm.

Late Night—Jazz at the Saxophone Pub and Restaurant or Brown Sugar; eating at one of the top international restaurants on the trendy Soi Thonglor; bar-hopping along Sukhumvit's bustling Soi 11; hanging out with the backpackers in the bars on Khaosan Road; a taste of the risqué nightlife in Patpong or Soi Cowboy.

Walks—Traversing Sukhumvit Road; exploring the little shops of Chinatown; strolling through Lumpini Park in early morning; exploring the green oasis of Bang Kra Jao.

Especially for Kids—Venom-milking demonstrations at Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute Snake Farm; Siam Ocean World.

Geography

Old Bangkok sits on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River. It encompasses many government buildings, as well as important landmarks such as the Grand Palace, the Temple of the Reclining Buddha (Wat Pho) and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew).

Many businesses and hotels are located in the city center, east and southeast of Old Bangkok in the Silom and Sukhumvit areas. The Sukhumvit Road

district is the tourist heart of the city, with many fine restaurants, department stores, world-class business hotels such as the Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, and the city's hippest bars and clubs.

Nightlife thrives in Sukhumvit and Silom (Silom is where you'll find Patpong, the infamous red-light district). Around the intersection of Rama I and Phayathai roads is Bangkok's major shopping hub with many blocks of shops.

Another area for posh hotels and fine shopping is along the river north of Thaksin Bridge; look for the River City Shopping Complex, a great source of Asian antiques.

Be aware that some addresses include a *soi* number at the end. A *soi* is a side street or alley. In such cases, the first numbers usually indicate a street address, followed by a street name and then the *soi* number. Example: 21/3 Sukhumvit 11 would mean that the

building 21/3 is off Sukhumvit Road and down Soi 11. You may also see this written as 21/3 Sukhumvit Soi 11. Outside the center, "road" is written on the signs as thanon, for example Thanon Sriyan. And don't look for consistency in spelling of street names or tourist spots—there are no hard and fast rules for transliterating Thai into English. For example, you'll soon find out that Rajadamri Road and Ratchadamri Road are one and the same, as are Chitlom and Chid Lom, and Triamit and Tri Mitr.

History

Until the late 1700s, the area now known as Bangkok was a small village across the river from the then-capital of Thonburi. In 1782, under the threat of a Burmese attack, the capital and its inhabitants moved to the village, which was named Krung Thep. (The Burmese attack never came.)

It was not until the late 1800s that Bangkok took off as a trade center in the region.

Bangkok's rise as a trading power owed much to the enterprising King Mongkut and his son King Chulalongkorn, who both developed relations with the West. By positioning itself as a Western ally, Thailand was the only country in the region never colonized, and to this day, the country has a mutually beneficial relationship with the West.

After a revolution in 1932, Thailand's monarchs lost their absolute power as the government adopted a constitutional monarchy. After protests brought down a military government in 1992, the military stayed out of politics, and a constitution promulgated in 1997 was seen as a major step toward democratic rule.

In the 1960s, soldiers on leave from the Vietnam War flooded into nearby Thailand, using the country as a place for rest and recuperation. In the decades that followed, a significant economic boom and the development of a strong tourist industry transformed Bangkok into a bustling, smoggy, skyscraper-filled metropolis.

Bangkok spent two decades trying to recover from major health and financial crises. The HIV/AIDS explosion in the 1980s hit Thailand especially hard because of the widespread prostitution throughout the country. Likewise, the Thai economy suffered a violent shock in 1997, when the national currency lost much of its value.

Thailand's successful efforts to fight HIV/AIDS have been recognized internationally, and the economic woes of the 1997 crash were recovered from, though development has not returned to

the booming growth rates of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Tourism has quickly become one of the country's chief sources of foreign capital.

In September 2006, the military ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai government in a bloodless coup d'etat. In late 2006 and early 2007, the military-appointed government wrote a new constitution. In December 2007, in a move to return the country to democracy, a general election was held and was won by the People's Power Party (PPP), led by Samak Sundaravej and sympathetic to deposed Prime Minister Thaksin. Samak won the election, but not with an overall majority. A coalition government led by the PPP was formed.

Thaksin returned to Thailand in 2008 but fled again. Violent demonstrations and court rulings led to Samak's dismissal. The Thai parliament elected Somchai

Wongsawat (PPP) as prime minister, which led to an escalation between Thaksin's supporters (sporting red shirts) and anti-Thaksin royalists (yellow shirts). Thailand's Constitutional Court found the ruling PPP guilty of electoral fraud on 2 December 2008 and the party was dissolved, ending Somchai's term. Shortly afterward, protestors blocked Bangkok airports, leaving travelers stranded and causing Thailand's winter tourism season (typically its high season) to suffer. Unfortunately, the situation remains at least partly unresolved.

In 2010, violence flared again after red-shirt protesters set up stockades in central Bangkok that were eventually smashed in by the Thai military. During the protests and the military crackdown, there was street-to-street fighting and a large department store, Central World, was partly gutted by fire (although it has since reopened). Nearly 100 people,

including some foreign journalists, died. While the protests were removed, the underlying issues remain unaddressed.

Political unrest continues to dog the country. In late 2013 and early 2014, a series of protracted demonstrations and sit-ins by opponents of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister, and her Pheu Thai Party caused severe disruption in Bangkok. An election held in February 2014 was also boycotted by the opposition. Visitors to Bangkok should work to remain informed of developments and take heed of travel advisories issued by their country's embassy.

Port Information

Location

Because of traffic and limited capacity at Bangkok's main port, most cruise ships dock in Laem Chabang, an industrial

port city about 80 mi/125 km south of Bangkok. From there, companies offer shore excursions into the capital, usually via air-conditioned bus, a journey that takes about two hours each way, depending on traffic. Smaller ships dock directly at Khlong Toei Port, also known as Bangkok Port, on the Chao Phraya River, Bangkok's main waterway.

Potpourri

Bangkok has the longest official city name in the world: Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amorn Rattanakosin Mahintara Yudthaya Mahadilok Pohp Noparat Rajathanee Bureerom Udomrajniwes Mahasatarn Amorn Pimarn Avaltarnsatit Sakatattiya Visanukram Prasit. Usually Thais refer to it as Krung Thep, meaning "city of angels."

Bangkok has one of the world's largest Chinatowns. According to local

superstition, the long winding Yaowarat Road resembles a dragon's body and is therefore an auspicious place to conduct business. More than 130 gold shops are found there.

Spread across 8 acres/3 hectares and seating up to 5,000 guests, the Royal Dragon restaurant in Bangkok was the largest restaurant in the world until it was bumped off the top spot by a restaurant in Syria. Its 1,000-strong staff is capable of turning out 3,000 dishes per hour.

Wat Pho, thought to be one of the city's oldest temples, houses a massive reclining Buddha. Covered in gold leaf, it is 151 ft/46 m long and 49 ft/15 m high.

It wasn't until 1941 that the Thai Prime Minister Phibunsongkhram declared that 1 January would become the official start of the New Year. Today, both 1 January and 13-15 April, the period of

the old New Year known as Songkran, are public holidays.

Suvarnabhumi International Airport was built on a marsh called Cobra Swamp 15 mi/24 km east of Bangkok. The name Suvarnabhumi, chosen by the King of Thailand, means "Golden Land."

Chatuchak Market covers 27 acres/11 hectares, making it one of the largest markets in the world.

Traditionally, each Thai person has a birth color, depending on what day they were born. Born on a Monday, the king is represented by the color yellow, hence the yellow flags flying atop of almost every wall and building in the city.

See & Do

Sightseeing

You need not travel far in Bangkok to find that it's an exciting—and sometimes exhausting—blend of modern civilization and historic treasures. Bangkok's temples, despite being in the center of a thriving 21st-century metropolis, are some of the finest in all of Asia.

The most spectacular are centered in Ko Rattanakosin (in English, Rattanakosin Island, even though it is not an island) and include the Grand Palace complex (the old royal city, from which the king and a vast number of relatives ran the country until 1932). The complex includes the Grand Palace itself and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew). Equally impressive is Wat Pho, which houses an enormous reclining Buddha. Wat Pho is also famous for its traditional massage school.

Be sure to see the National Museum, which houses Thai art and artifacts from

Neolithic times to the present; the Vimanmek Teak Palace; and the Royal Barges Museum. Wat Arun (Temple of the Dawn) is on the other side of the Chao Phraya River. Very popular with locals and camera-toting foreigners, the small Erawan Shrine at the corner of Ratchadamri and Ploenchit roads is a nice place to witness classical Thai dancers who perform whenever a devotee makes a suitable donation.

The BTS Skytrain, MRT subway and taxis are convenient and inexpensive ways to see Bangkok's attractions. Special day passes offer a good value. The key is to work out where the stations are located in relation to the places you want to visit. Take the train to the closest point, and then walk or take a bus or a taxi for the final leg. The Skytrain and MRT avoid traffic, and one can cross the city in minutes at very little cost.

Also consider cruising down the river and canals on an extremely cheap commuter ferry or a modestly priced long-tail boat. Or you can enjoy evening dining on a luxurious, restored teakwood rice barge and see the riverside temples lit up in all their glory. If you're walking, drink plenty of fluids, wear comfortable shoes and take a good map with you.

Know that admission prices to the various museums and temples change frequently. As in many other major cities, if you check the city listings, or merely walk around the busy areas, you can find some very interesting temporary exhibits that are either free of charge or cost very little. If you intend to visit temples, ensure that you are dressed modestly—no shorts or tank tops.

Historic Sites

Chao Mae Tubtim

Nai Lert Park, 2 Wireless Road (behind the
Swissotel Nai Lert Park)
Bangkok, Thailand

Located behind the Swissotel Nai Lert Park, this famous Buddhist shrine was once a spirit house built by Nai Lert, the hotel's original owner, for Jao Mae Tubtim, a female spirit thought to live in a large ficus tree in the garden. The shrine is noted for the collection of wooden and stone phallic sculptures that surrounds it. Women seeking to conceive leave offerings of flowering jasmine and lotus blossoms.

Open daily during daylight hours. Free.

Equestrian Statue

Ratchadamnoen Road
Bangkok, Thailand

King Rama V commissioned this statue in 1908 to celebrate the 40th

anniversary of his ascension to the throne. Cast by a French sculptor in Paris, it is located in the center of the Dusit Palace garden in front of the Anantasamakhom Palace. On 23 October, the statue is draped in garlands and flowers to commemorate the anniversary of Rama's death.

Erawan Shrine

Grand Hyatt Erawan (on the northwest corner of the property, near the Chitlom stop on the Skytrain)

Bangkok, Thailand

This large, open-air shrine at the Ratchaprasong intersection was originally built in 1956 to appease the evil spirits dogging the construction of the original Erawan Hotel (now replaced by the Grand Hyatt Erawan). Dedicated to Brahma, the four-faced Than Tao

Mahaprom shrine has become popular with Bangkokians.

Accessible daily 6 am-midnight. Free.

Lak Meuang

Sanam Luang (on the southeast corner by the grassy area in front of the Grand Palace, between Na Phra That and Ratchadamnoen roads)

Bangkok, Thailand

Also called the City Pillar, Lak Meuang sits in a small shrine a five-minute walk from the Grand Palace. The gilded pillar is considered the foundation stone of the city. It attracts many locals who believe the pillar has the power to grant wishes. Foreign tourists may find the Erawan Shrine to be of more interest.

Daily 5:30 am-7:30 pm. Traditional Thai dances are performed at the shrine 8:30 am-3:30 pm (till 4 pm Sunday). Free.

The Democracy Monument

Ratchadamnoen Road (at Pracha Thipatai Road)

Bangkok, Thailand

This monument was erected in 1939 to commemorate the 24 June 1932 coup that ended the 150-year-old absolute monarchy and introduced a constitutional government to Thailand. One of Italian sculptor Corrado Feroci's most striking monuments, it has four arched columns at the center, surrounded by a ring of 75 cannons. In more recent times, the monument has served as a rallying point for protests; in both 1992 and 2010, Thai protesters were killed there.

The Grand Palace

Main entrance is on Na Phralan Road (if you take the Chao Phraya Express Boat, it's within

walking distance—east and south—from the
Tha Chang pier)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-623-5500, ext. 3100

<http://www.palaces.thai.net>

Located on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, the Grand Palace is one of the most famous attractions in all of Thailand. It's actually a large complex that includes many structures, including the Grand Palace itself, with its fantastic spires and ornamentation, and Wat Phra Kaew. Originally built for King Rama I in the late 1700s, the compound has evolved into a vast, golden city that's a top destination for this country's predominantly Buddhist population. The Grand Palace was the king's official residence until 1946. Wat Phra Kaew, the most important structure inside the walled compound, houses the ancient Emerald Buddha (carved from a single block of jade). Don't wait until your last day in town to see the Grand Palace—

many people want to see it more than once.

A few rules for visiting the Grand Palace: No shorts, sleeveless shirts, tight or torn jeans, or leggings. Proper clothing is available for rent just within the entrance; the 200-baht deposit per piece will be refunded, and countless vendors will happily sell you wraps and other apparel just outside the entrance. No photography inside Wat Phra Kaew. Women must not touch the monks.

Daily 8:30 am-3:30 pm. There are free, English-language walking tours through the Palace at 10 and 10:30 am, and at 1:30 and 2 pm. Inquire at the ticket kiosk. 500 baht (includes admission to the Vimanmek Teak Palace in the Dusit area within seven days of purchase). Audioguides can be rented for 200 baht.

The Victory Monument

Phaya Thai Road (at the junction of Phahon
Yothin and Rachawithi roads)
Bangkok, Thailand

Designed by Italian sculptor Corrado Feroci, this monument consists of an obelisk ringed by statues representing the army, navy, air force, police and civilians. It was built to commemorate Thailand's victory in its 1940-41 border war with France over land in present-day Cambodia and along the Thai-Laos border.

Wat Arun

34 Arun Amarin Road (by water taxi from Tha Tien pier, at the end of Thai Wang Road near Wat Pho, or from Tha Chang pier, at the end of Na Phralan Road near Wat Phra Kaew)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-891-2185

<http://www.watarun.net>

This is one of the best-known and most photographed landmarks in Bangkok. The name means Temple of Dawn, and the structure consists of one elongated *prang* (Khmer-style tower) surrounded by four smaller ones. The main *prang*, 269 ft/82 m high, is decorated with mosaics made of porcelain that glisten in the sun. The porcelain arrived in Bangkok as ballast in Chinese trading vessels.

Unlike many of Bangkok's other temples, this one looks better from a distance, especially when viewed from across the river. Despite its name, the best photographs are taken as the sun sets behind it.

Daily 8:30 am-5:30 pm. 50 baht adults.

Wat Benchamabophit

Th Si Ayutthaya (at Th Phra Ram V,
diagonally opposite from Chitlada Palace;
buses 3, 72 and 503 stop nearby)
Bangkok, Thailand

Sometimes called the Marble Temple, this holy site features splendid, symmetrical architecture with gold and lacquer decorations. It has numerous Buddha images in the courtyard, all representing famous styles from other Buddhist countries. Unlike other temples, the monks there stand in a long row (at 6 am) to accept alms rather than roam the streets to seek them.

Daily 6 am-6 pm. 20 baht.

Wat Pho (Wat Phra Chetuphon)

2 Sanamchai Road (within walking distance of
Tha Tien pier)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-226-0335

Next to the Grand Palace, this is one of Bangkok's oldest temples, and it's famous for its numerous ceramic-tiled *stupas* and its gold-plated reclining Buddha—it's one of the largest Buddhas in Thailand (152 ft/46 m long and 49 ft/15 m high). Walk its whole length—the mother-of-pearl inlay on the soles of his feet is sensational. As you explore the temple, you'll see much smaller images of Buddha everywhere. One of Thailand's most-respected teaching centers of traditional Thai massage, Wat Pho also offers massage and reflexology to tired tourists for a reasonable fee. Visitors can sign up for courses to learn the art of massage. The temple is also well-regarded for its fortune tellers and astrologers, as well, who will predict your future for a fee.

Daily 8 am-6:30 pm. 100 baht.

Wat Ratchanatdaram

Ratchadamnoen Klang (at Maha Chai Road,
Phra Nakhon district)
Bangkok, Thailand

This temple is famous for the Loha Prasat or Metal Castle, a square, three-story construction with 37 spires symbolizing the 37 qualities required to achieve enlightenment in Buddhism. Constructed in 1846, it was modeled on similar temples in India and Sri Lanka. Despite its name, the temple is made from bricks and mortar: only the spires are metal. One *viharn*—or temple hall—in the compound features an enormous Buddha image and beautiful murals.

Daily 8 am-5 pm.

Wat Saket and the Golden Mount

Chakkraphatdiphong Road, Ban Bat, Pom
Prap Sattru Phai
Bangkok, Thailand

The major feature at this temple is the Golden Mount, a man-made hill constructed during the reign of King Rama III in the 1800s and topped by a Lanka-style *chedi* covered in gold leaf. From the *chedi*, visitors can enjoy panoramic views of historic Bangkok.

Daily 8:30 am-5 pm.

Wat Suthat and the Giant Swing

Bamrung Meuang Road

Bangkok, Thailand

This temple is noted for its superb 19th-century murals in the main chapel. The main hall houses a beautiful 13th-century, 26-ft/8-m bronze Buddha image. The ashes of King Rama VIII, brother of the current king, are contained in its base. The distinctive giant swing outside the temple was once used in Brahmanic ceremonies, long since discontinued. The original swing,

known as *sao ching chor*, was replaced to honor the King of Thailand. Nearby shops stock a comprehensive range of Buddhist religious supplies—it is a fascinating part of town to wander through.

Open daily 8:30 am-9 pm. Admission 20 baht.

Wat Traimit (Temple of the Golden Buddha)

Yaowarat Road (at Charoen Krung Road, eastern edge of Chinatown, close to Hualamphong Station)
Bangkok, Thailand

This temple houses the famous 14th-century Golden Buddha. Made primarily of gold and weighing more than 10,000 lb/4,500 kg, it was discovered under an unremarkable concrete veneer in 1954, where it lay hidden for hundreds of years. It is believed that the statue was

initially covered in plaster to protect it from Burmese invaders and was then forgotten. There is a museum on-site that traces the history of the statue.

Daily 8 am-5 pm. 40 baht for the temple, an additional 100 baht for each of the two museums.

Museums

Ancient City

296/1 Thanon Sukhumvit, Tambon Bang PuM
Mai, Amphoe Mueang
Samut Prakan, Thailand

Phone: 02-7091-6448

<http://ancientcitygroup.net>

Also known as Meuang Boran, this expansive 320-acre/115-hectare outdoor museum just outside of Bangkok consists of small-scale replicas of Thailand's most famous buildings,

monuments and temples. It has even been laid out to simulate the geographic shape of the country. Vehicles are available on-site to take you around, but we recommend hiring a car and driver for the day so that you can go at your own pace.

Daily 9 am-4 pm. 700 baht adults.

Jim Thompson House and Museum

6 Soi Kasemsan 2, Rama 1 Road (near the National Stadium BTS station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-216-7368

<http://www.jimthompsonhouse.com>

This complex of six teak houses was built for Thailand's most famous *farang* (foreigner), the U.S. citizen credited with revitalizing Thailand's silk industry. The house is filled with Thompson's rare art and antiques collection. Since

Thompson's puzzling disappearance in Malaysia in 1967, his former residence has become a popular tourist attraction. The James H.W. Thompson Foundation also opened a store and cafe next door. Be sure to visit the interesting art gallery above the gift shop.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. Last guided tour begins at 5 pm. 100 baht adults.

Kamthieng House

131 Soi Asoke Montri Road (Sukhumvit 21, inside the compound of the Siam Society)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-6616-4707

<http://www.siam-society.org>

Kamthieng House was originally built in Chiang Mai more than 160 years ago. The traditional northern-style house was later donated to the Siam Society and was reconstructed in Bangkok. It serves

as a folk and ethnological museum exhibiting the northerners' way of life and various household items and equipment they used. The Siam Society, under Royal Patronage, was established in 1904 by Thai and foreign residents of Bangkok to further the study of artistic, scientific and other cultural affairs in Thailand and Southeast Asia. It holds regular lectures by visiting scholars and features a library, exhibition space and shop. Located a two-minute walk from Sukhumvit subway station (exit 1) and a five-minute walk from Asoke skytrain station (exit 3).

Tuesday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm.
Admission 100 baht.

Museum of Contemporary Art

499 Kamphaengphet 6 Road, Lad Yao
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-9531-0057

This museum is one of the few exceptions, if not the only art museum in the city that looks forward rather than backward. While still maintaining its Thai identity, the paintings and sculptures, all by Thai artists, have an individualist feel inspired as much by European modernism as their own culture. In fact, the owner of the museum states he opened it to honor the influence of Professor Silpa Bhasri—an Italian artist who spent much of his working life teaching art in Bangkok.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. Entry is 180 baht, and there are also family ticket promotions available. Free for children younger than 15, visitors with disabilities, and seniors older than 60.

Museum of Counterfeit Goods

64/1 Soi Tonson, Ploenchit Road (at the office of Tilleke and Gibbins International Law Company Limited, at the end of Lang Suan Soi 3 Road)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-653-5555 or 653-5546

<http://www.tilleke.com/firm/community/museum>

This museum was established in 1989 to educate the public about counterfeit goods and promote the value of intellectual rights. Various kinds of fake goods are on display inside the museum, such as clothes, watches, bags, shoes, perfume, food, cars and much more.

Visitors are welcome Monday at 2 pm and Thursday at 10 am. Admission is free, but arrange your visit at least 24 hours in advance.

Museum of Siam

4 Sanamchai Road, Phra Borom Ratcha
Wang (near Rachini Pier)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-225-2777

<http://www.museumsiam.org>

Video presentations and interactive media take you through the history of Siam in an entertaining and accessible way. It may not have the depth of the national museum, but for kids in particular, it makes for a fun and informative day out.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 300 baht adults.

Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall

100 Racha Damnoen Klang Ave., Bawonniwet
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-621-0044

<http://www.nitasrattanakosin.com>

The Rattankosin Exhibition Hall is another museum perfect for kids. Using interactive multimedia, it takes visitors from 1782 to the present day. On the way, visitors learn about the Thai way of life and the Legend of the Emerald Buddha. Well worth seeing is the 3-D multimedia presentation, where visitors stand in the center of a room watching and learning Thai traditional dance and theater. Its only downside is that visitors, rather than having the freedom to wander around at their leisure, have to go on one of the two-hour tours.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-7 pm. 200 baht adults; free for children and visitors with disabilities.

Royal Barges Museum

Khlong Bangkok Noi (near Phra Prinklao
Bridge on the western side of the Chao

Phraya River)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-424-0004

http://www.nationalmuseums.finearts.go.th/thaimuseum_eng/royalbarges/history.html

This museum houses about 50 ornately designed longboats once used by Thai kings. Although fewer than a dozen are on public display, the boats are a spectacle, even on land. Be sure to see the one called *Sri Suppanhong* (golden swan). The barge is arguably the most impressive, with a swan figurehead carved into the bow; its crew included 50 paddlers, seven umbrella holders, two rudder controllers, two navigators, a flagman and a conductor. *Khlong* (canal) tours often stop at the museum.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. Closed New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and 12-14 April.
100 baht (plus an additional 100 baht if you want to take pictures).

Siriraj Medical Museum

Siriraj Hospital, 2 Prannok Road (Express Boat Pier N10 Tha Wang Lang)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-4192-6189

<http://www.si.mahidol.ac.th/museums/en>

Located on the second floor of Siriraj Hospital, this is the museum of the macabre, featuring medical anomalies, injuries and sensational criminal cases. The most notorious—and popular—is the mummified body of Si Ouey, a cannibal who murdered children and ate their organs. Some may find a visit to this museum particularly disturbing or voyeuristic. Not recommended for children.

Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-5 pm. 200 baht.

Thai Life Permanent Exhibition Hall

Thailand Cultural Centre, Ratchadaphisek
Road, Huay Kwang (MRT subway Thai
Cultural Center station)
Bangkok, Thailand

This interesting exhibition charts the history of the Thai people and the different aspects of Thai culture, from prehistoric times to the present. The museum covers five topics: the evolution of the Thai nation, rice and the Thai way of life, Thai language and literature, Thailand and the world, and important achievements and events in Thai society.

Open Monday-Saturday (except public holidays) 9:30 am-4 pm. Free.

The Museum of Buddhist Art

104 Soi 40, Phatthanakan Road, Suan Luang
Bangkok, Thailand

Operated by the Foundation for the Preservation of Thai Arts, this museum features a large private collection of images of the Buddha. The exhibition charts the art of Buddha images throughout Thai history, with high standards of presentation that include light, sound (chanting) and incense. In addition to Buddha images and artifacts from different periods, there is also a shrine.

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm. Advance reservations required for visits except on Saturday. Admission 250 baht.

The National Museum

4 Na Phrathat Road (opposite Sanam Luang, between Thammasat University and the National Theatre)
Bangkok, Thailand

In 1884, King Rama V turned these buildings into a museum to display his vast collection of art and artifacts from around the country (as well as items he picked up during his travels abroad). The collection has grown over the years, and it's now considered the largest in Southeast Asia. With artifacts ranging from Neolithic to modern times, the collection also includes everything from royal cremation chariots and weaponry to delicate textiles and ivory carvings to giant shadow puppets. Volunteers give free English-language tours on Wednesday and Thursday beginning at 9:30 am. No photography is permitted within the exhibits.

Open Wednesday-Sunday 9 am-4 pm.
200 baht adults.

The Queen's Gallery

101 Rajchadamnuen Klang Ave.

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-281-5361

<http://www.queengallery.org>

Built in 1903, this modern gallery in the Musical Art Center Building of Bangkok Bank was established by Queen Sirikit to promote Thai arts and culture. The five-story building displays paintings, sculpture, fine art and a variety of art-appreciation events for the general public.

Thursday-Tuesday 10 am-7 pm. 30 baht.

Vimanmek Teak Palace

Rajavithi Road, Dusit

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-628-6300

<http://www.vimanmek.com>

This structure is the world's largest teak building. It was built by King Rama V in 1868 on the island of Koh Si Chang as a summer palace and moved to its current location in 1910. With 81 rooms and priceless antiques and paintings, it's a fine tribute to Thai architecture and art. You can't walk around on your own, but there are free guided tours in English every half-hour starting at 9:30 am. Free demonstrations of Thai dance in the foyer daily at 10:30 am and 2 pm.

The palace is open daily except Monday 9:30 am-4 pm. Last tickets sold at 3:15 pm. No shorts, flip-flops or revealing clothes. 100 baht adults (free if you have an entrance ticket to the Grand Palace).

Wang Suan Phakkard

352-354 Sri Ayutthaya Road

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-245-4934

<http://www.suanpakkad.com>

The name is sometimes translated as the "Chinese cabbage palace," and indeed the land that this group of traditional Thai houses sits on was once used to grow the vegetable. The five-building compound, set in beautiful landscaping, houses the treasures of its former owner and avid collector, Princess Chumbhot of Nagor Svarga. Don't leave without seeing the large collection of Ban Chiang pottery in the Lacquer Pavilion.

Open Monday-Saturday 9 am-4 pm. 150 baht adults.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Chinatown and Little India

Yaowarat Road is the backbone of Chinatown, but the spirit of the district

lies in the *sois* that branch off this traffic-ridden road. In the interwoven mesh of alleys and lanes that crisscross the canals, you'll find some fantastic fresh-food hawkers, a seemingly limitless number of streetside merchants and traders, and the occasional Chinese temple. Sampaeng Lane is the best known of these areas and can be a great place to buy fashion accessories. Chinatown is also famous for its food, so keep an eye out for clusters of noodle and rice stalls that set up after the markets and shops close at sundown.

Pahurat (Little India) lies just northwest of Chinatown and is also a well-known spot for fabric purchases. Supposedly, silk can be bought at the lowest prices in the city at the market there—but you'll have to bargain hard and watch out for cheap imitations. For excellent quality, check out the Old Siam Plaza north of Pahurat Road. We like walking along Pahurat Road, north of the market, to

see the stores filled with glittering Thai dance costumes and masks. There are also some great little Indian restaurants in the area offering cheap and authentic food. Beware of pickpockets in both areas and take the most detailed map you can find.

Former Foreign Quarter

The old foreign quarter of Bangkok makes for a pleasant afternoon stroll. Once home to European consulates and trading companies, the four-block area between Charoen Krung 34 (also known as New Road) and the Oriental Hotel on Charoen Krung 40 is an interesting mix of cultures and architectural styles. As you explore, be sure to stop inside the beautiful 1910 Assumption Cathedral. Also check out the area around the Haroon Mosque and Cemetery. The maze of narrow alleys in this tiny Muslim community is home to a couple of

breathhtakingly beautiful (though dilapidated) Rattanakosin-era wooden Siamese houses.

Khao San Road

A backpacker's mecca in Southeast Asia, this road is a 10-minute walk north of the old part of town (where the Grand Palace is situated) in the district of Banglamphu. Backpackers flock there because it has the least expensive (and grittiest) accommodations in Bangkok, as well as affordable restaurants and bars. The road is full of pedestrians 24 hours a day and lined with anything backpackers might need: massage parlors, travel agents, restaurants, bars, all manner of shops and Internet cafes. Makeshift stalls sell food and souvenirs. Among the Westerners, you'll find an increasing number of young Thais attracted by the freewheeling atmosphere. Khao San Road is intense

and gaudy, and it has to be seen to be believed.

Patpong

Much is made of Patpong, one of the city's most notorious red-light districts. The two privately owned roads, Patpong 1 and Patpong 2, don't really feel sleazy unless you actually go into one of the clubs. The real danger lurks upstairs where the infamous (but actually rather bizarre) "ping-pong shows" take place and a couple of beers will set you back 2,000 baht in no time. The golden rule if you want to avoid being seriously ripped off is to stick to street-level bars. Even then, watch out for drinks you didn't order being added to the bill. These days Patpong is also noted for its busy night market, which also extends along Silom Road, and there are many cheap souvenir stalls lining the streets. Watch out for pickpockets. The streets are

closed to vehicle traffic after sundown, and you'll find everything from counterfeit designer watches to T-shirts, silk, DVDs and crafts.

Thonglor and Ekamai

Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.thonglor-ekamai.com>

Thonglor and Ekamai are home to hip bars, clubs, antiques shops and art galleries. If visitors want to mix with the Thai celebrities and drink the world's best wine and eat the best food, both international and Thai, these two *soi*, just off Sukhmvit Road, are the place to be. Just don't expect any of it to be cheap. The best and most popular places to frequent include the Belgian pub House of Beers (HOBS for short) and the Shades of Retro, which is like drinking in a very cool—and comfortable—junk shop.

Parks & Gardens

Benjasiri Park

Sukhumvit Road (near BTS Skytrain Phrom Phong station, between Soi 22 and Soi 24)
Bangkok, Thailand

Also known as the Queen's Park, this small park is sandwiched between the Emporium shopping center and the Queen's Park Imperial Hotel. It's a nice place to take a break from the wall-to-wall commerce. The park is also popular with joggers in the early morning and evening hours, and it frequently hosts exhibitions and other open-air events.

Daily 5 am-9 pm. Free.

Chatuchak Park

Phahonyothin Road (at Vibhavadi Rangsit
Road, near the Mochit Skytrain station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Located close to the famous Chatuchak Weekend Market, Bangkok's largest park features nine pieces of sculpture, bicycle rentals and a lake with paddleboats for hire. The pretty park is also popular with joggers.

Open daily 5 am-9 pm. Admission free.

Lumpini Park

Rama IV Road (BTS Skytrain Sala Daeng
station or MRT subway Lumpini station)
Bangkok, Thailand

This inner-city park provides a respite from Bangkok's congestion and noise. There are good walking paths, bicycles for rent and even an artificial lake in the middle (you can rent a rowboat, but keep an eye out for the gigantic 3-ft-/1-

m-long monitor lizards in the water). Try to visit in the early morning (around 6 am) to see locals practicing tai chi and ballroom dancing. Hosts the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra during the Concert in the Park festival each winter.

Daily 4:30 am-9 pm. Free.

Rama IX Royal Park

Rama V Road

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-3281-3856

<http://www.suanluangrama9.or.th>

Spread over 200 acres/80 hectares, Bangkok's nicest park is full of lakes, greenery and a water park. Part of the park has been designated as an agricultural research center. Visit the park if you have a day or afternoon to spare—it's situated in the north of the city near the parliament.

Daily 6 am-6 pm. 10 baht.

Santi Chai Prakan Pavilion and Public Park

Phra Athit Road

Bangkok, Thailand

The park is on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, near Phra Sumen Fort. It opened in 1999 to mark the auspicious occasion of the sixth cycle (of 12 years) birthday anniversary of His Majesty the King. The pleasant park provides a scenic view of the Chao Phraya River and the Rama VIII Bridge. It is popular with Thais and foreigners, especially from the nearby Banglamphu/Khao San area.

Open daily. Admission free.

Religious Sites

Assumption Cathedral

23 Oriental Alley, Charoen Krung, Bank Rak
Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.assumption-cathedral.com>

Built in 1809 by a Thai-Portuguese priest, the church has been built in Renaissance style, with fresco walls and stucco sculptures that depict the ascension of Christ. The original structure was damaged in World War II, but it was renovated in time to receive Pope John Paul in 1984.

Daily 7 am-7 pm. Free.

Brahman Temple

268 Thanon Dinsor Road, Phra Nakhorn
Bangkok, Thailand

Built in tandem with the Giant Swing, this temple was built to house Hindu gods during the reign of Rama I and was once used as a place for the

Brahmins to practice ancient Hindu ceremonies.

Daily 8 am-6 pm.

The World Fellowship of Buddhists

616 Benjasiri Park, Soi Medhinivet, Sukhumvit
24

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-6611-2847

<http://www.wfbhq.org>

The first Sunday of every month, the center presents a free English-language public program on Buddhism. The program includes a Buddhist forum, meditation instruction and practice.

Open daily except Saturday 8:30 am-4 pm.

Tiger God Shrine

468 Tanao Road, Phra Nakhon
Bangkok, Thailand

Built in 1834, the Tiger God Shrine is one of the oldest Chinese temples in the city, home to statues of the Guan Yu, Matsu, the Goddess of the Sea and the Tiger God—well-loved by both the Thai and Chinese for bestowing blessings of good fortune on followers, who curry her good favor with gifts of pork, eggs and sticky rice.

Daily 6 am-5 pm.

Tonson Mosque

447 Wangderm Road, Wat Aroon
Bangkok, Thailand

Originally called Kadee Yai, this 400-year-old mosque is the oldest in Bangkok, and is thought to have been built during the Ayutthaya period by Bangkok's earliest Muslim settlers. The

present mosque was built to replace the original in 1936, and it also houses valuable antiques such as the bronze lamp used for Rama V's cremation ceremony. A graveyard for early Islamic leaders is also on-site.

Daily 6-10 am. Free.

Amusement Parks

Dream World

62 Moo 1, Rangsir-Ongkarak Road, Km. 7,
Tanyaburi (take the 188 bus from the Victory
Monument)

Pathumthani, Thailand

Phone: 2-577-8666

<http://www.dreamworld.co.th>

Dream World is a Western-style theme park with rides including a roller coaster, a log flume and a pirate ship. There's even a Hollywood action set reminiscent

of the action sets at Universal Studios. As one of the city's most recent attractions, it has excellent facilities for wheelchair users.

Admission starts at 450 baht for a day pass. Packages are available from 1,000 baht and include a lunch buffet and free transfer to and from any Bangkok hotel.

Fun-arium

111/1 Sukhumvit 26 (between Sukhumvit Road and Rama 4 Road)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-665-6555

<http://www.funarium.co.th>

Another attraction right in the center of the city, the Fun-arium is Bangkok's largest indoor playground. Parents can drink coffee and check their e-mail while their children wear themselves out on

the slides, climbing frames, sand pits, trampolines, puddle pools, and basketball and football facilities.

Monday-Thursday 9 am-6 pm, Friday-Sunday 9 am-7 pm. Admission starts at 220 baht adults, 200 baht children for three hours.

Siam Park City

203 Suan Siam Road, Kannayao
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-919-7200

<http://www.siamparkcity.com>

Smack-dab in the center of the city, this urban entertainment complex offers carnival rides and a wave pool that's even earned a mention in the *Guinness World Records*. Locals call it "The Sea of Bangkok."

Water park open daily 10 am-6 pm;
entertainment center open daily 11 am-8

pm. 900 baht adults, 120 baht children for a day pass. Combination tickets are available.

Zoos & Wildlife

Safari World

99 Ramindra 1 Road (about 40 minutes outside Bangkok)

Minburi, Thailand

Phone: 02-518-1000

<http://www.safariworld.com>

The complex actually contains two parks: Safari Park and Marine Park. Safari Park offers drive-through viewing of Asian and African animals, as well as daily shows featuring birds, orangutans and elephants. Marine Park has dolphins and sea lions. It's a good place to take children.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. 900 baht adults, 600 baht children for the Marine Park and the Safari Park.

Bangkok Butterfly Garden and Insectarium

Phaholyothin Road, Chatuchak (in the southeastern area of Vachirabenjatas Park)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-272-4359 or 02-272-4680

<http://www.bangkok.com/attraction/butterfly-garden.htm>

The 2-acre/1-hectare Bangkok Butterfly Garden and Insectarium comprises four main sections: a touch-screen computer area introducing the garden; a minitheater for a presentation on insects and the ecological system; an exhibition area and breeding room for butterflies and insects; and a 12,600-sq-ft/1,170-sq-m cage with a 49-ft-/15-m-high dome.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:30 am-4:30 pm.
Admission free.

Dusit Zoo

71 Rama V Road (bus No. 18, 28 or 108)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-281-2000

<http://www.zoothailand.org>

Home to many rare species of animals, the zoo was established in 1939 in the private botanical garden of King Rama V. Adjacent the Royal Plaza, it receives more than 2 million visitors per year.

While not a world-class zoo (don't expect Western-style enclosures), all things considered, this isn't a bad central attraction.

Daily 8 am-6 pm. 100 baht adults.

Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute Snake Farm

Rama IV Road (at Henri Dunant Road,
adjacent the Red Cross building)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-2520-1614 or 02-252-0167

<http://www.saovabha.com>

At this facility, which is run by the Thai Red Cross as a center for collecting venom (to make antitoxin), you can watch as handlers milk poison from cobras, black mambas and other fearsome snakes.

Monday-Friday 8:30 am-noon and 1-4:30 pm; Saturday and public holidays 8:30 am-noon. Venom extraction Monday-Friday at 11 am and 2:30 pm; Saturday, Sunday and holidays at 11 am. Slide presentation in English Monday-Friday at 10:30 am and 2 pm, holidays at 10:30 am. Admission 200 baht adults, 50 baht children.

Sea Life Ocean World

991 Rama I Road (on floors B1-B2 of Siam Paragon department store, access from Siam BTS station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-687-2000

<http://siamoceanworld.co.th>

The largest aquarium in Southeast Asia exhibits more than 30,000 marine animals from around the world, including a wide range of rare and exotic species. The aquarium spans more than 107,639 sq ft/10,000 sq m, as wide as two football fields, giving visitors a rewarding underwater experience. The aquarium offers a "Dive with the Sharks Program" where you can scuba dive with sharks and rays. There is also a 4-D theater. Some visitors feel Siam Ocean World is overpriced for what it offers.

Open daily 10 am-9 pm (last entry 8 pm). Admission 900 baht adults, 700 baht children.

Shopping

Bangkok is a city revitalized and has shaken off its image as a city of crowded markets and street traders. Sure, the bustling markets are still there, and Chatuchak, the world's largest, continues to attract the hordes bartering for a bargain, but Bangkok is becoming increasingly known as home to some of Asia's largest and most ostentatious shopping malls, stocked to the rafters with brand names and luxury goods.

The city is undoubtedly one of the world's great shopping destinations, attracting visitors from all over Southeast Asia. An added bonus for visitors is the value-added tax (VAT) refund on all items purchased, payable when they leave the country. Just show your passport when you make a purchase and present receipts to customs at the airport. Many stores also offer a special discount card for tourists.

Most of the prime shopping hot spots are centered in three main areas, all close to the BTS Skytrain stations, meaning that you do not have to brave the traffic. The city's huge malls are designed as easily accessible, air-conditioned shrines to consumerism. Bangkok is undoubtedly one of the best places in Asia to find quality, brand-name products and unique items. Contemporary Thai design continues to attract considerable attention around the world. Talented local designers are producing some wonderfully chic and affordable home furnishings.

Bangkok's most popular exports are its lovely silks and silk products, jewelry, celadon pottery, lacquerware, masks, carvings and antiques. Although bargaining is still the norm in the markets, the days of reducing the initial asking price by 50% are long gone. But don't worry about a language barrier:

Thai vendors know their numbers in several foreign languages.

Shopping Hours: Generally, daily 10 am-9 or 9:30 pm. Most malls are open until 10 pm. Some smaller businesses are closed on Sunday.

Antique Stores

Be very cautious when buying antiques: Few genuine pieces remain, and Thais are famous for their excellent reproductions. Government regulations are very strict concerning the exportation of genuine antiques and Buddha images. In the better shops, if you do find something you like and it is authentic, the staff will take care of all the paperwork you'll need to export the item. You'll find an especially large concentration of shops up and down Silom and Surawong roads and in Chinatown, north of the Grand Palace.

Golden Tortoise

49 Soi 100 Sukhumvit Road

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-662-5600

<http://www.antikasia.com>

Go there for unusual furniture and antiques from Korea and Japan, as well as Thailand.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Khong Kao

147/7 Sukhumvit Soi 4

Bangkok, Thailand

This small shop offers a range of interesting antiques, carpets and textiles from across Asia. The French owner prefers to sell items as-is rather than restoring them to look new.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm,
Sunday 10 am-5 pm.

OP Place

30/1 Charoen Krung Soi 38

Bangkok, Thailand

Located near The Oriental, this arcade specializes in expensive and high-quality art, handicrafts and antiques.

Daily 10:30 am-6:30 pm. Some shops are closed on Sunday.

River City

23 Trok Rongnamkhaeng, Si Phaya Pier, Yota Road (on the river next to the Royal Orchid Sheraton)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-237-0077

<http://www.rivercity.co.th>

With the largest selection of Asian antiques in Bangkok, this enormous complex is popular with shoppers looking for an all-in-one antiques-and-crafts experience. The real antiques stores are on the third and fourth floors, but many of the shops sell interesting and unusual items. Prices are higher than elsewhere, but the quality of merchandise is consistently high.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Bookstores

Asia Books

Siam Paragon, Second Floor, Rama 1 Road
(BTS Skytrain Siam station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-610-9600

<http://www.asiabooks.com>

This is a convenient branch of a large bookstore chain that has branches in shopping centers all over town. It specializes in books about Thailand and the region. Best sellers are also in stock. Reasonable prices.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Bookazine

Sukhumvit Road 3, BIC Building 33 (10th Floor, close to Nana Skytrain station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-667-2769

<http://www.asiabooks.com>

Bookazine has branches across the city. The stores stock magazines and newspapers, best sellers and guidebooks, as well as some interesting choices in classics and new literature. In Bangkok, there are branches in Patpong, Ploenchit, Siam, Wireless

Road, Gaysorn and Sukhumvit. The latter branch is adjacent to a Starbucks.

Dasa Book Cafe

714/4 Sukhumvit Road (between sois 26 and 28, close to Phrom Phong BTS station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-661-2993

<http://www.dasabookcafe.com>

This cafe offers quality secondhand books at affordable prices and the best lattes in Bangkok. There are tables where you can sit and read, and the staff is helpful.

Daily 10 am-8 pm.

Kinokuniya

622 Sukhumvit Soi 24 (BTS Skytrain Phrom Phong station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-6648-5548

<http://www.kinokuniya.com>

This nice bookstore on the third floor of the Emporium has the most comprehensive selection of English-language books in Bangkok. A second, larger branch is in Siam Paragon on Rama I.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Department Stores

Central Department Store

Chidlom Road (at Ploenchit Road, near the Chidlom BTS station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-793-7777

<http://www.central.co.th>

The grande dame of Bangkok department stores, Central has branches all over town. The main store

at Chidlom attracts the younger, hipper Thai market. There's a good Thai crafts store on the sixth floor, a great play space for children and an excellent food court on the top floor. The Central Department Store offers tourist discount cards. For more information, see customer service.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Tokyu Department Store

Th Phra Ram 1 (at Th Phayathai, National Stadium BKS station)
Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.mbk-center.co.th/jp/tokyu/www/index.html>

There's a walkway leading from the National Stadium BKS station into Tokyu, which is built into the Mah Boon Krong (MBK) shopping center. It's got everything you'd expect in a downtown department store and, if the shelves

there don't satisfy you, just walk into MBK—a Bangkok icon of consumerism—from the fourth floor. Brands there tend to be more down-to-earth than those at the plusher malls.

Open 10 am-9 pm.

Factory Outlets

Factory Outlet Villages

666 Moo 12, Nong Prue, Bang La Mung,
Chonburi
Pattaya, Thailand

On the outskirts of Bangkok is a collection of factory shops selling good-quality factory rejects, end-of-lines and discounted clothing and footwear. At the location nearest Bangkok, in Pattaya, you'll find well-known brand names that are produced in Thailand, including Clark's shoes, Dr. Martins, Gap, Columbia, Von Dutch and many more.

The Outlet Villiage in Petchaburi is also notable.

Jim Thompson Factory Outlet

153 Soi Sukhumvit 93, Bangchak, Phakanong
(BTS Phakanong station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-332-6530

http://www.jimthompson.com/sales_outlet.asp

Go there for Jim Thompson original fabrics at discounted, end-of-line prices.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Pasaya Textiles Outlet

25 1/2 Soi Thonglor 13, Sukhumvit 55 Road,
Klongton-Nua, Wattana

Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.pasaya.com>

You can pick up chic and stylish bedding at outlet store prices. Pasaya is one of Thailand's leading textile manufacturers. There is a second location open daily 9:30 am-6:30 pm at Sinnsathorn Tower, second floor, Krungdhonburi Road, Klongsarn.

Daily 11 am-8 pm.

Galleries

If art acts as a reflection of society, a sort of cultural barometer of the times, the Thai arts scene should be composed of a palette of vibrant colors and seemingly complex and contradictory elements. And indeed it is. There has never been a better time to view or buy art in Bangkok. After years in the shadows, Thai artists are attracting significant attention from buyers both domestically and abroad. There are now many good galleries in

the city. For a complete listing, visit <http://www.thavibu.com/Bangkok.htm>.

H. Gallery

201 Sathorn Soi 12

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 081-310-4428

<http://www.hgallerybkk.com>

The traditional exterior of this beautifully restored wooden building belies the modern gems that grace the walls within. The owner, H. Ernest Lee, hails from New York but has been based in Bangkok for about a decade. With a background in the arts and a keen eye for the up-and-coming, H. is an enthusiastic promoter of young, contemporary Thai artists. He also holds regular exhibitions at Eat Me restaurant, on Soi Pipat, just off Convent Road.

Wednesday-Monday 10 am-6 pm.

Hof Art

224, 248 Soi Vibhavadi Rangsit

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-6901-3478

<http://www.rama9art.org/gallery/hofart/index.html>

This art incubator is run by a bunch of young Thais who found the more regular gallery scene too formulaic and expensive. Displays are predominantly Thai and range from painting to involved installation work.

Kathmandu

87 Thanon Pan (between Sathorn and Silom roads; BTS Surasak station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-234-6700

<http://www.kathmanduphotobkk.com>

Photographer and artist Mani Srivanichpoom has created a fabulous little gallery in a beautiful old shophouse. He hosts permanent and temporary photography exhibitions. There's also a stock of prints, books and cards.

Tuesday-Sunday 11 am-7 pm.

Numthong Gallery

72/3 Aree 5, Phahonyothin Road (in the Co-Op Housing Building)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-918-5067

<http://www.gallerynumthong.com>

Despite its location in a run-down cooperative housing project, Numthong shows the creme-de-la-creme of Thai contemporary artists.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm.

Thailand Creative & Design Centre (TC&DC)

Sixth Floor, The Emporium Shopping
Complex, 622 Sukhumvit 24
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-664-8448

<https://web.tcdc.or.th>

This excellent, government-funded resource features exhibition spaces for temporary exhibitions, a shop for Thai design products, and a cafe and restaurant. There's also a resource center with a library of art and design books.

Tuesday-Sunday 10:30 am-9 pm.

Markets

Despite the growing number of shopping centers and malls, wet markets (meaning that the concrete floors are

always wet) remain one of the most popular ways for Thais to shop. If you only have time to visit one market, it has to be J.J., as the locals affectionately term the ever-changing cluster of stalls and stands at Chatuchak Park.

Amulet Market

Maha Rat Road (near Tha Chang pier)
Bangkok, Thailand

The amulet market is perhaps Bangkok's most unique shopping area. Some Thais put amulets in a small plastic casing with a chain or string threaded through and wear them around their necks. They are supposed to ward off evil spirits and bring luck. Some people, including monks, will spend a lot of time examining them to calculate their power. Visitors may find some of the amulets of Western symbols rather

amusing—for example, the Playboy bunnies.

Open daily 7 am-5 pm.

Aw Taw Kaw Talaat

Kamphengphet Road (opposite Chatuchak Market; MRT subway Kamphaengphet station)
Bangkok, Thailand

If you're in the area to visit Chatuchak, we recommend that you stroll through Aw Taw Kaw. It has a reputation for high-quality produce and often prices to match. There's an array of fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, cooked food to take home, and an area to sit down and dine.

Open daily.

Bangkok Farmers Market

Rama IV at Sukhumvit 26 (MRT subway stations Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre or Klong Toey, or BTS Phrom Phong.)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 088-507-8694

<http://www.bkkfm.org>

Fuelling the growing interest for locally sourced and organic produce, the monthly Bangkok Farmers Market is held at K Village. There's an array of tasty treats to take home or eat there and then, as well as handmade soaps and shampoos, seeds, environmentally friendly products and much more. Also live music and entertainment for youngsters. Check the website for the schedule.

Bo Bae

Krung Kasem Road (a 15-minute walk from
Hua Lamphong railway station)
Bangkok, Thailand

This market is famous for inexpensive garments. It is busy all day, but you will see most activity in the early morning and right before sunset when it closes. Because it is mainly a wholesale market, most products are sold by the dozen or more. It's not really a tourist market, but if you have a lot of bulk purchases to make, you won't find better prices anywhere else in Bangkok.

Chatuchak Market

Pahonyothin Road (accessible via the Mo Chit
BTS station and Kampaengphet MRT station)
Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.chatuchak.org>

Nothing rivals Chatuchak (known as J.J.) for sheer volume of regional

handicrafts, real (and not-so-real) antiques, pottery, textiles, jewelry, clothes and even animals. The selection is both exhilarating and slightly daunting, especially by midafternoon when it gets crowded—there are more than 8,000 shops and stalls from which to choose. To get the most out of a Chatuchak excursion, buy a map (available at the market), go early and take breaks at the charming little cafes that are dotted throughout the market. As for buying, when you see something you like, bargain as hard as you can and buy it immediately. (You may never find your way back.)

Open Saturday and Sunday from 6 am, though many vendors don't show up until 10 am. Activity winds down between 6 and 7 pm. The plants and flowers section is also open Wednesday and Thursday 6 am-6 pm. Some sections are open during the week.

Pratunam Market

Ratchaprarop and Phetchaburi roads (near the Amari Watergate Hotel; BTS Chidlom or Phayathai stations)

Bangkok, Thailand

For ready-to-wear clothes at affordable prices, this is the best bet—just be prepared to bargain hard to get a reasonable price. The garments are churned out in the closed markets behind the stalls where sewing machines stay busy round-the-clock. There are also some food sellers.

Talaat Pak Khlong

Memorial Bridge

Bangkok, Thailand

This fascinating, bustling market has been wholesaling flowers, vegetables and fruit for more than 40 years. The

riverside streets are lined with bunches of baby roses, multicolored orchids, sweet-smelling jasmine and lotus blossoms. Exploring the cavernous wooden warehouses offers a fascinating window into Thai horticulture. Be sure to watch out for delivery boys who wheel their fully loaded dollies around at breakneck speed. If you want to take fresh-cut tropical flowers home, this is the place to buy them. Highly recommended.

There's something going on 24 hours a day, but the liveliest time to go is between midnight and dawn.

Talaat Rot Fai

Seacon Square on Sri Nagarindra Road (BTS Udom Suk station then a taxi)

Bangkok, Thailand

Previously located near Chatuchak, the "Railway Market" recently reopened at a

new and expansive location on the outskirts of Bangkok, but it is worth the trek. Make a night of it exploring hundreds of stalls selling clothing and warehouses packed with everything from furniture and crockery to vintage cars. There are also trendy bars and restaurants.

Open Wednesday and Friday-Sunday nights 6 pm till late.

Shopping Areas

Most shopping malls in central Bangkok offer discount cards for tourists. Inquire at the information desk with your passport.

Asiatique

2194 Charoenkrung Road (BTS Skytrain
Saphan Thaksin station, then take a free

shuttle boat)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-108-4488

<http://www.asiatiquethailand.com>

Drawing inspiration from Bangkok's historic waterfront, the open air shopping center on the banks of the Chao Phraya features more than 1,500 boutiques with fashions and accessories, gifts, crafts, retro homewares and much more. There are also several riverfront restaurants and bars, and a huge Ferris wheel.

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-6:30 pm.

Central World Plaza

Between Chit Lom and Siam BST stations

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-635-1111

<http://www.centralworld.co.th>

This eight-story labyrinth of commerce, Bangkok's largest shopping destination, has more than 500 shops, 100 restaurants, salons, spas and a 15-screen Cineplex. Prepare to get lost, and take your credit card.

Open 10 am-10 pm.

Mah Boon Krong Center

Phayathai Road (at Rama I Road, National Stadium BTS station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-620-9000

<http://www.mbk-center.co.th>

Visit the wildly popular Mah Boon Krong (MBK) if you want to check out the future generation of Thai leaders (it's adjacent to a university). It's a six-story maze that strikes us as chaotic.

Nonetheless, MBK offers great deals on fake designer-label merchandise and

everything you'd ever want in the way of cell phone paraphernalia. It is attached to Tokyu Department Store, and there is a cinema up top.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Pantip Plaza

New Petchburi Road (between Phayathai and Ratchaparop roads)

Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.pantipplaza.com>

This is the ultimate source for electronics—a five-story mall with shops selling computers and related gear. It is also stacked full of pirated software, DVDs and CDs for as little as 100 baht a disc. Take a taxi or catch the BTS to Ratchathewi—it's a 10-minute walk from there.

Most shops are open daily 10 am-10 pm.

Siam Center

979 Rama 1 Road (BTS Skytrain Siam station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-658-1000

<http://www.siamcenter.co.th>

Revamped in 2013, Siam Center is home to more than 200 fashion boutiques, many by leading Thai designers. There are also multimedia and tech stores, leading international brands, and cool cafes.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Siam Paragon

991 Rama I Road (between Phya Thai and Rajprasong roads; it can be accessed directly from the Siam BTS station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-610-8000

<http://www.siamparagon.co.th>

If you are looking for quality goods, go to Siam Paragon—all the top brand names have outlets there. It also houses the Paragon Gourmet Market and Food Hall, which covers 215,278 sq ft/20,000 sq m of the ground floor. The upper floors also have good restaurants, including a Blue Elephant outlet. Ocean World aquarium, the largest in Asia, is on the lower ground floor. The entertainment zone also includes The Paragon Cinepolis, The Siam Opera and the Royal Paragon Hall.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

The Emporium

622 Sukhumvit Soi 24 (take the walkway from Phrom Phong BTS station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-260-1000, ext. 1726

<http://www.emporiumthailand.com>

This elegant mall not only showcases popular trends, but also helps create them. You'll find lots of stores focused on interior-design items and furnishings. Seamlessly blending consumerism with entertainment, the Emporium also plays an important cultural role for the city: It's used for fashion shows, book signings, concerts and film festivals.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Specialty Stores

Bangkok is a great place to have clothes made, sometimes at a fraction of the normal cost, especially if you provide your own material. Many of the major hotels have tailor shops working within or adjacent to their premises. If you want your favorite piece of clothing copied, be prepared to leave it at the

shop while the work is being carried out. If you want to have a suit made, have several fittings to be sure they've got it right. Beware of shops that offer incredible deals (for example, three suits ready in two days) and check around before you commit yourself.

If you buy material from a shop, make sure you're getting what you ask for: Some shops have been known to sell a polyester blend as cotton. Most tailors will request a sizable deposit. Other foreigners have been scammed by placing orders (and advance payments) with tailor shops that fail to deliver on the finished product.

The following tailors have good reputations: Siam Emporium, third floor Siam Center (phone 02-251-9617; <http://www.siamemporium.net>); Queen Thai Silk, Ruamchitt Plaza, 199 Sukhumvit Road, near Soi 15 (between Nana and Asoke BTS stations); and

Peter Armani, 1/3 Sukhumvit Soi 11
(phone 02-255-7949).

Hours and opening days for shops can vary; call ahead to make sure the store you wish to visit is open.

Almeta Silk

20/3 Sukhumvit Road Soi 23

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-204-1413 or 02-258-4227

<http://www.almeta.com>

Very personal store with a fabulous selection of flowing plain or patterned silks in literally thousands of colors, from "golden shades of raw sugar" to iridescent "strong lotus colors," all handwoven to order. Take your measurements, choose among four different thread types (*buoy* yarn silk being the finest and shiniest) and weights, combine the desired colors and

return a few days later to pick up. No minimum order required. It does silk embroidery, including clients' personal logos, and will even treat the silk fabrics to be machine-washable if requested.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Jim Thompson's Thai Silk Shop

9 Surawong Road (BTS station Sala Daeng)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-632-8100

<http://www.jimthompson.com>

This is probably the most famous and reputable silk shop in Thailand—but also the most expensive one. The shop bears the name of the man who revived the silk industry in Thailand in the 1950s and '60s. In addition to this flagship location, which has the largest selection of fabrics, branches can be found in

most upscale hotels and malls, and at the Jim Thompson House Museum.

Daily 9 am-9 pm.

Karmakamet

Central World Plaza, Ratchadamri Road
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-613-1397

<http://www.karmakamet.co.th>

The shop looks like a traditional Thai pharmacy and will charm your olfactory sense with perfumes, pure and blended essential oils, aromatic candles, traditional incense sticks, perfume sachets and aromatic moisturizing soaps. There is a second location at Chatuchak Market (Section 2, Soi 3).

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Narai Phand

973 Ploenchit Road, Lumpini
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-6560-3989

<http://www.naraiphand.com>

This joint venture between The Ministry of Industry and the private sector has created the largest center for Thai handicrafts, with four levels of shopping.

Daily 11 am-8 pm.

Nittaya Curry Shop

9/10 Moo 4 Ladlumkeao-Banglane
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 02-976-1600 or 02-282-8212

<http://www.nittayathaicurry.com>

Nittaya's world-famous pungent curry pastes are a delight for everyone who wants to try a hand at Thai cuisine back home. The curries are sold at almost all Thai food retailers or by order. Choose

among red curry, green curry, panang paste, yellow curry (Indian style) and chili in oil. Nittaya also stocks spicy sauces, tamarind paste, dried chili and palm sugar.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Old Maps & Prints

River City Complex, Thanon Yotha, Bangrak
(Fourth Floor; BTS Skytrain Saphan Thaksin
station)

Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 2-2370-0778

<http://www.classicmaps.com>

Beautiful historical charts and rare hand-colored engravings, with lots of old prints of Siam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. Check out splendid views of Ayutthaya or Angkor Wat.

Daily 11 am-7 pm.

Tamnan Mingmuang

Thaniya Plaza (Third Floor; east end of Soi Thaniya, Thanon Silom; BTS Skytrain Sala Daeng station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Carved coconuts, bambooware and beautiful baskets, lampshades, trays, betel-nut boxes, and handbags intricately woven in rattan, wild grass, water hyacinth and the ultrafine and fernlike *yan lipao* vine.

Daily 11 am-8 pm.

Zud Rang Ma Records

7/1 Sukhumvit 51 (BTS Thonglor station)
Bangkok, Thailand

Phone: 88-891-1314

<http://www.zudrangmarecords.com>

Lovers of world music can discover original and reissued vinyl records of Thai stars. There is a large collection of northeastern Thai *mor lam* and *luk thung* music, and much more.

Tuesday-Sunday 2-9 pm.

Security

Etiquette

Thailand is justifiably called the Land of Smiles. The famous Thai smile goes with the all-important concept of *mai pen rai* (roughly translated as "never mind"). Rather than exhibiting anger, a Thai will smile and say *mai pen rai* in response to almost every uncomfortable social situation. Foreigners may not even know that they have done or said something offensive.

The concept of the heart (*jai*) is just as important. Thais place great value on maintaining a cool and calm heart (called *jai yen*). Foreigners who display strong emotions (anger, impatience or even extreme happiness) are considered to have *jai rawn* (a hot heart), and their standing will diminish in the eyes of their Thai hosts. Politeness and courtesy are highly valued, and public displays of emotion should be avoided.

The head is the highest and most sacred part of the body. The foot is the lowest. It's considered extremely rude to touch a Thai on the head, and never touch or point at anyone with your foot. Don't sit with your feet pointed at a Thai, as it is a sign of gross disrespect. And never put your feet up on a chair or table. Never point the soles of your feet towards a Buddha, especially when visiting temples, and be sure to remove your shoes before entering temples,

homes and even some shops and guesthouses.

Thais usually greet each other by placing their hands together, palms touching and held close to the body between the face and the chest. This form of greeting is called a *wai* and is often accompanied by a slight bow. Given a *wai*, one replies in kind (although you should never *wai* someone who is providing a service, such as a server or a taxi driver). Sometimes it's difficult for visitors to discern the appropriate times to *wai*. When in doubt, use our rule of thumb: It's always safer to respond to a *wai* than to initiate one.

Personal cleanliness and appearance can make a big impression. Thais are puzzled by the fact that although many Westerners are wealthy, young Western tourists often dress in ragged and wrinkled clothes.

One aspect of Thai taboo, in which Westerners make unwitting gaffes, is uttering anything critical of Buddhism (or monks) and the monarchy. It is actually illegal in Thailand to say or write anything derogatory of the religion or the monarchy—doing so, even for a foreigner, can result in a long prison sentence. If you criticize or dismiss anything on these subjects, you will make any Thais present deeply uncomfortable, and they are likely to ostracize you in the future. Likewise, women should not touch monks or sit next to them on buses; when a Thai woman needs to speak to a monk, she kneels down in front of him and keeps a conscious social distance.

Personal Safety

Overall, Thailand is fairly safe. Most crime is committed among locals, but travelers should take basic precautions to avoid becoming victims. Don't wear

expensive jewelry or watches when touring, especially after dark. Beware of pickpockets on overcrowded public transportation and in high-traffic tourist areas—the lower end of Sukhumvit Road (around the Nana BTS station) is notorious for pickpockets. Cell phone thievery has been increasing, as have violent crimes and muggings. There have been a few daring raids on buses, and lone travelers have been mugged crossing overhead pedestrian passes. Drive-by bag snatches by motorcyclists have become increasingly common, so beware when walking on side streets. Err on the side of caution—at night, for example, try to stay in well-lit areas.

However, the biggest threats come from motorists who never yield to pedestrians and from smiling con artists who hang around the major tourist attractions (Westerners are the targets of numerous scams, and it's wise to be aware of your surroundings to avoid

becoming a victim). Disregard *tuk-tuk* drivers and other chatty folk who tell you that an attraction, usually a temple, is closed today: They're hoping to take you on a shopping tour to places where you'll most assuredly be ripped off—be especially wary of gem stores. In general, anyone paying you undue attention or appealing for money should be treated with suspicion. Avoid answering questions about where you are going or staying, and avoid *tuk tuk* drivers who offer low fares in exchange for just "one stop." This quick stop often turns into a high-pressured sales pitch at a shop where he collects a hefty commission.

Be wary of strangers offering you food or drink. Although uncommon, there have been reports of visitors being drugged and robbed or worse. This is more likely to happen in the seedier parts of town, so stay alert if you're in a red-light district. Buying drinks in Pat

Pong's sleazier clubs, especially for any of the working girls, often comes with a hefty bar tab. Bars on the upper floors are notorious for rip-offs. The golden rule is stay in bars on the ground floor.

Don't buy drugs, which are readily available in Bangkok. Thailand forcefully prosecutes foreigners. Drug consumption is taken seriously in Thailand, and in Bangkok the police even mount highly publicized raids on clubs and force everyone inside to submit to a drug test. In the backpacker area of Khao San, the police regularly stop and search Westerners for drugs. Those who are caught might go free if they pay a huge bribe (the police will empty their bank accounts), but they are more likely to end up languishing in a Thai prison. The prisons are filled with drug offenders.

If anything goes wrong, phone 1155 to contact the Tourist Police. For the latest

information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Hepatitis A vaccines, obtained at least two weeks before departure, are recommended for travelers. Typhoid vaccines are also a good idea for adventurous eaters who plan to dine outside the five-star restaurant circuit. Visitors should also be up-to-date on tetanus and MMR vaccines.

As long as you take some reasonable precautions, trying the local food should pose no problems other than an occasional bout of diarrhea. If the restaurant looks clean and well-run, chances are the food is safe. In general, try to eat at places that are busy, because the food is being cooked and eaten quickly, not left sitting around.

Salads, fruits and vegetables should be washed with purified water or peeled. The same common sense applies when buying food from street vendors. Fortunately, you can usually watch the food being cooked and decide if something doesn't look as fresh as it should.

The better hotels have water-filtration systems, and restaurants typically serve bottled water. We recommend that you stick with bottled water: It's inexpensive and readily available (make sure the cap seal hasn't been broken). Some areas around the center have reverse-osmosis machines that can purify tap water. It doesn't come out cold, but you can always store it in the fridge in your hotel room. Ice cubes are generally made from treated water, but crushed ice from street vendors may be problematic and should be avoided.

HIV/AIDS is a concern in Bangkok, as it is elsewhere in the world. The Thai government has launched many awareness and prevention programs, and the rate of infection seems to be under control.

Malaria isn't really a problem in Bangkok, but Thailand's jungle areas, including the Burmese and Laos border areas and forested parts of Phang Nga and Phuket, do pose some malarial risk. Cases of dengue fever outbreaks rise during the rainy season. Don't forget the insect repellent. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a good resource for anyone planning to visit these areas, and can provide the latest vaccine and health recommendations. The CDC malaria hotline can be reached by calling 770-488-7100. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/thailand.htm>.

If you need hospital care while in Bangkok, the city has several excellent hospitals. Most of them have medical staff members who speak English, the standards are very good, and they are remarkably inexpensive. Bumrungrad Hospital on Sukhumvit 3 (phone 02-667-1000;

<http://www.bumrungrad.com/thailandhospital>) and Samitivej Hospital on Sukhumvit 49 (phone 02-711-8181; <http://www.samitivejhospitals.com/Sukhumvit/en>) are the best for travelers. A favorite for expats is BNH Hospital (formerly Bangkok Nursing Home) on Convent Road where it intersects with Silom Road (phone 02-686-2700; <http://www.bnhhospital.com>). The dental hospital on Sukhimvit 49 is best for foreigners needing dental work (phone 02-711-8181; <http://www.dentalhospitalbangkok.com>).

Pharmacies are plentiful in Bangkok, including a British pharmacy chain

called Boots and an Asian chain called Watsons. Most pharmacists around the city center and in the shopping malls speak English.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do smile even if you are stuck in an unpleasant situation. It's the quickest way to resolve a misunderstanding.

Don't lose your patience or show any form of anger. Talking too loudly is regarded as impolite behavior.

Don't sunbathe naked. Thais are modest people.

Do carry some form of identification with a photo. Foreigners are required to carry

their passports at all times. This is rarely enforced, but it is the law. If you are uncomfortable doing this, carry a photocopy of your passport.

Don't step on a Thai banknote. It's illegal because the notes bear the image of the king of Thailand.

Do dress conservatively in temples. Short trousers or skirts and shirts that expose the shoulders are not acceptable. Always remove your shoes when entering the inner area of a temple.

Don't climb on Buddha sculptures to take photographs.

Do show respect for the Thai royal family. Thai people have deep respect for the monarch, and disrespect for the royal family is a criminal offense taken very seriously.

Don't get involved with drugs. Penalties for drug offenses are severe in Thailand.

Do remove your shoes before entering houses, temples and some shops.

Do learn a few basic Thai phrases; they're easy to pronounce and a simple way to return some of the warmth you'll encounter in the land of smiles (*sa-wat-dee* means "hello," *kob khun* means "thank you," *mai-pen-rai* means "no, thanks," and *lar-karn* means "goodbye").

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: All tourists must possess passports valid for at least six months longer than their intended stay in Thailand and with at least one empty visa page. If their stay will not exceed 30 days, citizens of Canada and the U.S. do not need to obtain a visa ahead of time; instead, they receive a 30-day entry permit

stamp on arrival if they arrive by air; arrivals by land border crossing are granted 15-day entry only.

Thai tourist visas can be arranged at any Thai embassy or consulate for a processing fee of US\$40 per entry. They allow 60-day stays in the Kingdom regardless of entry point. Proof of onward passage is officially required, but customs officers rarely check. The visa, which must be used within 90 days of issue, may be extended twice for 30 days each at 1,900 baht per extension.

Visitors from countries qualifying for visas on arrival can apply for a visa for a period not exceeding 15 days for a fee of 1,000 baht. People from these countries can only apply for an visa extension under special circumstances such as illness.

"Visa runs," or day trips into a neighboring country for the purpose of

obtaining a new visa upon arrival, are common. Popular runs include Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Malaysia. Some countries charge a small fee—Myanmar, for example, charges 500 baht. Check the amount before you leave.

The 30-day entry permit stamp on arrival can only be extended for seven days for 1,900 baht at the Immigration Bureau Office at Building B, Government Centre, Chaeng Wattana Road Soi 7, Laksi, Bangkok. Open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-noon and 1-4:30 pm. Phone 02-287-3101-10, or 1178 for the call center.
<http://www.immigration.go.th>.

Consult the Thai Immigration Bureau for additional information and locations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website also publishes the latest visa information for U.S. citizens.
<http://www.mfa.go.th/web/12.php>.

A departure tax of 700 baht for international flights is included in your ticket price. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 8,426,080.

Languages: Thai. English is spoken in tourist areas and at business meetings. Many signs of relevance to travelers are also in English.

Predominant Religions: Buddhism, Islam.

Time Zone: 7 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+7 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts. There are several types of plugs and sockets in use, so travelers with electric shavers and other appliances should take an adapter or plan to buy one

(readily available) upon arrival in Thailand.

Telephone Codes: 66, country code; 02,city code;

Money

Currency Exchange

Thailand's currency is the baht. There are 100 satang to one baht. Coins are used in denominations of 25 satang, 50 satang, 1 baht, 2 baht, 5 baht and 10 baht. Bank note denominations comprise 20 baht, 50 baht, 100 baht, 500 baht and 1,000 baht. The satang coins are virtually worthless today and rarely seen.

Banks and currency-exchange booths, particularly Forex booths, are in all major tourist areas. Both will issue cash advances on your Visa or MasterCard. (Be sure to take the carbon paper if any

is used for the transaction.) Traveler's checks are also widely accepted.

ATMs are located outside convenience stores, banks and shopping areas. Most ATMs are connected to international banking systems. The ATMs charge 150 baht with each withdrawal and allow 20,000 baht to be taken out per day. ATMs at some of the major banks have 24-hour service. Hotels will change money around the clock, but the rates won't be as good.

Taxi drivers and street vendors rarely have change for 500 baht or 1,000 baht notes, so it's best to have a good supply of change. However, 7-Eleven shops will usually give change for 1,000 baht notes if you buy something small. Major credit cards can be used in most upmarket shops and high-quality restaurants, but sometimes they will charge a small fee of around 3% or more (they will tell you if this is the

case). Most smaller businesses insist on cash payments.

Taxes

Visitors to Thailand can claim VAT (value-added tax) refunds at Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai and Phuket international airports. The conditions stipulate that the purchase must be for a minimum of 2,000 baht per person, per store, per day and be from an approved store (the approved stores have VAT refund stickers at the cashier desk or in the entrance). Tourists should show their passport at the point of purchase and ask for a VAT refund form (Por Por 10). Be sure to retain all original tax receipts. When leaving the country and passing through passport control, visitors will have the form and receipts processed by Revenue Department officials and receive a VAT refund. Be sure to allow extra time to your check-in

schedule for the process. VAT is 7% and usually included in the sale price.

Hand-carried luxury goods including jewelry, gold, watches, glasses and pens valued at 10,000 baht or more per item will be re-inspected at the VAT Refund Office after passport control.

The Customs office is located in the passenger terminal on the fourth floor, behind the check-in counter on Row H.

If you are in a hurry, you may drop your application form and tax invoices (after all inspections have been made by Customs and Revenue officers) into the box located in front of the VAT Refund Office. Or you may mail them to VAT Refund for Tourists Office, The Revenue Department of Thailand, 90 Phaholyothin 7, Phayathai, Bangkok 10400, Thailand. Consult the Thai Department of Revenue website for

more information.

<http://www.rd.go.th/vrt>.

Hotel accommodation is subject to a 7% VAT, and some places add a 10% service charge as well.

Tipping

Some major hotels and restaurants exact a service charge that is included in the bill (usually 10%). In a restaurant, a tip of 30 baht is adequate for a meal of around 500 baht. You are not expected to tip in cheap restaurants, cafes or noodle shops. Ladies in massage parlors survive off tips. 100 baht for a one or two hour massage is appropriate.

Taxi drivers don't expect tips, but passengers often round up the metered fare to the next 5 baht-10 baht. As anyone who has ever driven in Bangkok's hideous traffic will agree, it's

hard to begrudge the drivers a few extra baht.

Weather

The climate is tropical and humid for most of the year. The best time to visit Bangkok is November-February, when the northeast monsoon is blowing cool, dry air that serves as a respite from the heat. Temperatures at that time of year range 65-90 F/18-32 C. Nights in December can be particularly cool.

The worst time to visit is in April and May, when the heat has even the Thais complaining. (Air pollution is also at its worst then.) In the hot season, temperatures average about 92 F/34 C, although it's not uncommon to exceed 100 F/37 C. The wet season (late May-October) is characterized by heavy rain almost every day. The city has a poor drainage system, and even brief spells

of rain can result in moderate flooding in some parts of the city.

Singapore

Overview

Introduction



Skyline

Singapore has always been a crossroads between East and West. Once upon a time, its port swelled with Chinese, Arab, Malay, Indian and

European traders who went to exchange exotic wares. Today, the city-state has expanded to become one of the world's busiest ports, and over time, as goods have been exchanged, cultures have mingled as well. To the casual observer, Singapore appears to be a clean and orderly mass of shopping malls and McDonald's. But the curious who dig a bit deeper will find that the cultures of the original settlers are still very much alive and well in this truly multicultural melting pot.

Singapore's dedication to preserving cultural heritage has created a number of excellent museums and thriving, ethnically distinct neighborhoods. Chinatown and Little India still retain some of their original cultural relevance for Singaporeans while attracting foreign visitors who marvel at the endurance of cultural identity. A stroll through any of the city's neighborhoods will reveal Taoist temples, Muslim mosques and

Christian churches cohabitating peaceably side by side. Cultural intermingling has also produced unique Eurasian and Peranakan (Straits Chinese) cultures, each with its own fashion, furnishings and food.

Speaking of food, with so much cultural diversity, dining in Singapore is varied and good—gastronomic experiences range from the finest Continental cuisine served with polished silver to delicious local dishes served in an open-air hawker center with plastic chopsticks. It's a small wonder Singaporeans love to eat.

Singapore is both an island and a country, but perhaps it is best described as a city-state. Like the great city-states of the past, it offers civilization and order in the highest degree. Its combination of Western-style development and Eastern-style order seems to present the best of both hemispheres: It's a

modern metropolis where you feel safe walking the streets, and it's an Asian business center that's a model of efficiency. Singapore is also an ethnically mixed city, and close to one-quarter of its population is made up of expatriates or foreign workers from all over the world. Known for its desire to become the technology hub of Asia, Singapore is the most wired country in the region.

Another trait Singapore shares with historical city-states: Its authorities strongly believe that they can safeguard the status quo with regulations against almost anything and everything that—in their view—could possibly upset the sense of tranquility. It is important to note that in terms of cultural values, Singapore is a relatively conservative society compared with most Western countries and even other developed cities in Asia. Controversial topics such as same-sex marriage and religion

should be approached with sensitivity. In reality, visitors will find the place is not as restrictive as suggested by the long lists of hefty fines for such things as littering and jaywalking. Some visitors to Singapore leave singing the praises of a society that "works," but others feel the government's near-compulsive fixation on cleanliness and order makes Singapore sterile in every sense of the word.

Highlights

Sights—The colonial grandeur of Raffles Hotel; the National Orchid Garden at Singapore Botanic Gardens and the futuristic Gardens by the Bay; Singapore's nightscape, seen from atop Mount Faber or the Sands SkyPark observation deck; the Hindu temples and sari shops of Little India; the Thian Hock Keng Temple and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Chinatown; the kitsch Chinese mythology on display at

Haw Par Villa theme park; the theater and concerts at the durian-shaped Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay.

Museums—Modern art from Asia at the Singapore Art Museum; a glimpse of Indian, Chinese and Southeast Asian cultures at the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Peranakan Museum; the beautifully restored National Museum of Singapore.

Memorable Meals—Spicy chili or black pepper crabs at the East Coast Seafood Centre; juicy Kobe steaks at CUT by Wolfgang Puck; authentic Tokyo sushi at Shinji by Kanesaka; exquisite Chinese fare at Summer Pavilion Restaurant; an Indian feast at Rang Mahal; dining in a classic black-and-white colonial bungalow at P.S. Cafe at Harding Road; inexpensive and authentic local fare from an outdoor hawker center.

Late Night—Live jazz at Harry's @ Boat Quay; live blues at the Crazy Elephant; bar-hopping at St. James Power Station; all night beach parties on Sentosa Island; late-night *shisha* water pipes at Arab Street; or hanging out with nocturnal creatures at the Night Safari.

Walks—Taking in Singapore's colonial heritage at and around the grassy *Padang* (an open field in the heart of downtown), starting from Raffles Hotel and ending up at nearby Boat Quay or Clifford Pier; a jaunt through busy Chinatown anytime or an after-dark stroll through nearby Club Street; a walk down Little India's Serangoon Road; perusing hip shops and cafes along Arab Street.

Especially for Kids—The thrilling amusement park rides at Universal Studios Singapore; a cable car ride to Sentosa Island, with its thrilling rides and miniature golf; Jurong Bird Park;

many different attractions and animal shows at the Singapore Zoo; rides and interactive exhibits at the Singapore Discovery Centre; enjoying man-made snow and a snow-covered hill at Snow City.

Geography

Singapore's strategic location at the southern tip of the Malaysian peninsula has ensured its importance, which is greater than its size might seem to justify. Singapore consists of the island of Singapore and some 63 islets within its territorial waters. The main island is about 26 mi/42 km from west to east and 14 mi/23 km from north to south. Total land area is 264 sq mi/683 sq km, about three times the size of Washington, D.C. It's a mostly undulating country with low hills (the highest, 540-ft/166-m Bukit Timah Hill, is to the northwest of the city).

Singapore's Central Business District (or CBD, as it is called locally) actually spreads across both the central and southern parts of the island (you'll know when you're there—it boasts striking high-rise structures designed by such world-famous architects as I.M. Pei and Kenzo Tange). You can get a good visual orientation to the city as you cross the Benjamin Sheares Bridge on the East Coast Parkway, which links the airport to the city center. The Singapore cityscape looks magnificent, particularly at night when buildings are brilliantly lit. Offshore, there appears to be another city all lit up because of the many ships anchored there—Singapore is one of the two busiest seaports in the world, along with Hong Kong.

Naturally, many of the city's attractions are clustered closely together. Orchard Road, the shopper's haven, is located in

the northern part of the city center. Chinatown, where you'll find the charming restaurants of Boat Quay, is just to the southeast of Orchard Road, and Little India is northeast. Sentosa Island, with its many amusements, is directly to the southwest of the city center. These frequently visited neighborhoods, as well as more suburban areas, remain a bustling hive of pedestrian activity well into the evening.

History

The earliest records of Singapore date back to the second century AD, where it was identified as a trading post. In the 11th century, it was part of the Indian Srivijaya Empire, and in the 14th century, it was ruled by the Javanese Majapahit empire. It was an important trading centre of the Sultanate of Johore in the 16th and early 17th century, until Portuguese raiders burned

it down. It faded into obscurity until 1819, when Sir Stamford Raffles established the British East India Company's presence in Singapore. This began the city's status as a free port and British colony. As thousands of Chinese, Indians and Malays flocked to the island, Raffles maintained control by segregating the city into ethnic neighborhoods: the Chinese in Chinatown, Indians in Little India and Muslims on Arab Street. This division had the unintended effect of preserving the distinct cultures you can find there today.

Singapore flourished during the mid-1800s, as the Industrial Revolution in the West created a demand for rubber and other Asian raw materials. The introduction of steamship travel and the opening of the Suez Canal brought the East and West closer than ever. Thanks to its strategic location and port status, Singapore boomed.

The country remained under the control of the British until it was captured by the Japanese at the start of World War II—one of the most embarrassing defeats in British history. After the war, the Allies' plan to unite Singapore with Malaysia was scuttled by Malaysian nationalist groups who feared that the ethnic Chinese would dominate the less populous Malays. The plan for a union was revived in the 1950s by Singapore's prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who believed his country could not survive without the natural resources of Malaysia. Lee realized his dream in 1963 when Singapore was united with Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. But the union lasted only 23 months with much racial and political tension—Malay leaders, shocked to see Lee's party attempt to become a national force, unceremoniously tossed Singapore out of the federation.

Since then, and contrary to Lee's fears, Singapore has done very well on its own. Under the stable authoritarian leadership of Lee and his handpicked successor, Goh Chok Tong, the country has averaged more than 8% growth annually and become a major service and transportation hub. Although much of the rest of Asia suffered a steep economic decline at the end of the 1990s, Singapore's bustling economy merely slowed down.

In 2004, Singapore elected a new prime minister to succeed Goh Chok Tong, Lee Hsien Loong, who had been groomed for the role by his father, Lee Kuan Yew. The Singapore government continues to be ruled by Lee's party, with little tolerance for dissent. However, corruption is very low, and the economy is back on track. The government maintains a firm grip on politics but has allowed greater expression in media and the arts, a signal of its emerging

understanding that creativity is essential to the kind of technological innovation Singapore seeks.

Today, Singapore's melting pot continues to draw new immigrants. The Economic Development Board has successfully spearheaded initiatives over the past decade to draw some of the world's top talent in industries critical to Singapore's economic vitality, particularly in areas such as finance, wealth management, higher education, and research and development. An influx of high-net-worth individuals (such as Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin) has driven the market for luxury housing sky high, with new, super-luxury apartment buildings mushrooming in every corner of the city's downtown, posh neighborhoods and waterfront districts.

Snapshot

Among Singapore's main attractions are shopping, eating, the Singapore Zoo and Night Safari, excellent museums, cultural events and festivals. Those who like to shop, who want to take a comfort break from traveling through less-developed Southeast Asian countries, or who enjoy various cultural festivals will want to visit Singapore.

Given Singapore's central-Southeast Asia location and its state-of-the-art airport with frequently scheduled flights to just about everywhere, we recommend combining Singapore with a visit to another country in the region—we found it to be an ideal complement to neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Potpourri

Immigration figures show that at any given time, 25% of Singapore's resident population is made up of foreigners who

have traveled there to work, either alone or with their families. Of these foreigners, Western expats make up a small percentage: Most arrive as "guest workers" from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines to build skyscrapers or clean homes for the island's upwardly mobile population.

The name "Singapore" derives from the Sanskrit term "Singapura" which means Lion City. There are no lions in Singapore, but a popular legend tells of an 11th-century Sumatran prince named Sang Nila Utama, who went there on a hunting trip and saw a wild animal that resembled a lion (it was most probably a tiger). He thought this was an auspicious sign and decided to build a new city there as part of the Srivijaya empire.

The Merlion, Singapore's national symbol (a lion head on a fish body), does not find its origins in ancient lore. It

was invented by the Singapore Tourism Board in 1972 to attract tourists.

Contrary to popular belief, it is legal to chew gum in Singapore. It is illegal to buy it, sell it or dispose of it in an improper way. Visitors may take small quantities for their own consumption.

It is illegal to use a toilet without flushing. To protect its citizens from this oversight, which carries a fine, the government introduced self-flushing toilets in most public areas around the island. Many hotels, restaurants and shopping malls have followed suit.

Singlish, a unique English-based creole peppered with Chinese, Indian and Malay words, is spoken widely across the country, especially among blue-collar classes. While the average Singaporean also speaks proper English, the slang's rising popularity has caused government concern, as seen

by the Speak Good English Movement, a government initiative that encourages Singaporeans to discard the local syntax.

The Singapore Sling was first served in 1915 by a Hainanese-Chinese bartender named Mr. Ngiam Tong-Boon, who worked at the Long Bar in the Raffles Hotel. Today, the cherry-pink cocktail has become synonymous with the island nation, and the Long Bar is estimated to whip up almost a thousand Slings per day. Dust off the credit card, however. At the Long Bar, Singapore's signature drink comes with the very modern price tag of S\$30.

At just 253 sq mi/655 sq km, Singapore is one of the world's smallest countries. Yet with a population nearing 5 million people, it's also one of the world's most densely populated countries, just after Monaco.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Although a small island, Singapore offers a broad range of sightseeing options, thanks to its ethnic and religious diversity. And not all attractions are associated with modern, urban Singapore: Surviving enclaves of the early migrant settlers dot various parts of the island.

The country's nerve center during the days of British rule, the Colonial District still has the regal charm of the original British government buildings and living quarters. Sites include the old Parliament House (which sits back-to-back with the current Parliament House completed in 1999), the National Museum of Singapore (it has a remarkable jade collection), the waterfront Fullerton Hotel (formerly the

central post office building) and St. Andrew's Cathedral.

Belatedly, Singapore has curbed its aggressive campaign to replace old buildings with new ones and has begun revitalizing some of its most cherished landmarks. Empress Place, which now houses the Asian Civilisations Museum, the waterfront's Clarke Quay and the Raffles Hotel (birthplace of the Singapore Sling) have all been restored to highly polished versions of their former glory. For the most part, neighborhood restorations are relatively small in scale—they're more like exhibits than neighborhoods—but with a little imagination, you can get a feel for Singapore's colorful past.

Many of the top attractions, including the National Orchid Garden at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, and the Chinese and Japanese Gardens, are best enjoyed on foot in the morning, the

coolest part of the day, or in the early evening. Maps of established walking trails are available at the entrances and at the tourist offices. Among the other attractions that should not be missed: Little India's Sri Veeramakaliamman temple or Chinatown's Thian Hock Keng temple, and the Singapore Zoo and Night Safari. For those who want to get a feel for the bustling lives of the locals, we recommend taking the MRT trains to any of Singapore's outlying districts, especially Katong in the East, Geylang (the area near the Paya Lebar station), Pasir Ris or Toa Payoh.

Casinos

The two casinos in Singapore—Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa—are also known as "integrated resorts" (or IRs), a euphemism that was given to them when faced with public opposition to their openings a few years

ago. To enter Singapore's casinos, you must be 21 or older. Foreigners (take your passport and use the lanes marked "Foreigner") are admitted free of charge, but citizens and residents of Singapore must pay a S\$100 entry levy for 24 hours of access, a policy that was put in place to deter locals (mostly of Chinese origin, as Muslims are not allowed to gamble) from gambling their savings away. The dress code is smart casual, so people sporting beachwear, flip-flops, casual shorts and sleeveless T-shirts will not be admitted.

Resorts World Sentosa

10 Sentosa Gateway (Crockfords Tower,
basement level)

Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6577-8899

<http://www.rwsentosa.com/language/en-US/Gaming>

Singapore's first casino opened in 2010. It's located in the basement of the Festive Hotel at Resorts World Sentosa. Take your passport. The Casino has 530 gaming tables with about 20 different games, plus 1,300 electronic game machines set amid glass sculptures and a garden court.

Open daily 24 hours.

Marina Bay Sands

10 Bayfront Ave. (take the MRT to Bayfront station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6688-8868

<http://www.marinabaysands.com>

Spread across four levels, this giant casino offers a choice of table games (almost 500 tables) including baccarat, roulette, sic bo and Singapore Stud poker (but not regular poker). Only one

level is reserved for nonsmokers, a rare thing in health-obsessed Singapore. Big spenders head straight to the High Limit, Ruby and Paiza areas, mostly located in exclusive, invitation-only salons on the upper floors of the casino. You can also try your luck at any of the 1,600 slot machines. There are three main entrances to the casino via the shopping mall.

Open daily 24 hours.

Historic Sites

The cultures of the early migrants and British colonials—as well as other marks of Singapore's rich history—have left behind fascinating historical sites. The city center showcases the best of colonial architecture as well as memorials dedicated to the heroes of World War II.

Arts House at the Old Parliament

1 Old Parliament Lane

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-6900

<https://www.theartshouse.sg>

Renamed to denote its use as a multifunctional arts and concert space, this neo-Palladian structure was designed in 1827 by Colonial architect Sir George Coleman as a private home for a well-known merchant, but it was sequestered shortly afterward for government duty to house parliament. Parliament has since moved to the huge granite structure next door, and in 2003 the old structure reopened as a space for arts events, socials and lectures. It is also home to cafes and bars. Check out the bronze elephant in front of the building, a gift from King Chulalongkorn of Siam (now Thailand) in 1871.

Daily 10 am-10 pm. Free.

Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum

288 South Bridge Road, Chinatown
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6220-0220

<http://www.btrts.org.sg>

The major attraction of this five-story, red-and-white Buddhist complex built in the Tang Dynasty style and consecrated in 2008 is the left canine tooth of the Buddha, which is believed to have been recovered from his funeral pyre in Kushinagar, Northern India. The tooth is only shown on Chinese New Year and Vesak Day, which commemorates the birth and enlightenment of Buddha and his entry into nirvana. The relic is encased in a 926-lb/420-kg solid-gold stupa on the fourth floor. This magnificent shrine is unveiled daily 9 am-noon and 3-6 pm, when it can be admired from the public viewing area

(no photography allowed). The third-floor Buddhist Cultural Museum has rare artifacts on display illustrating the story of Buddhism and its different traditions in various Asian countries. Start your visit in the huge 100 Dragons Hall on the first floor, where you can see a sitting 15-ft/4.5-m Maitreya Buddha. Do not miss the peaceful rooftop garden, which features a huge enameled prayer wheel inside the Ten Thousand Buddhas Pavilion. Free vegetarian meals are served in the dining hall.

Open daily 7 am-7 pm including public holidays. Free entry, but donations are welcome.

Tiger Sky Tower

Located next to the Sentosa cable car station
Sentosa Island, Singapore

<http://www.skytower.com.sg>

Singapore's tallest public viewing tower offers panoramic views across Singapore, Sentosa and the Southern Islands. With a capacity of 72 in its enclosed, air-conditioned cabin, the tower offers guests an informative commentary on key points of interest. Each revolving ride takes approximately seven minutes. Day or night, the views look all the way to Malaysia and neighboring Indonesian islands.

Daily 9 am-9 pm. S\$18 adults.

CHIJMES

30 Victoria St. (take the MRT to City Hall)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-7810

<http://www.chijmes.com.sg>

Formerly the site of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (hence the partial acronym, pronounced *chimes*),

CHIJMES is a charming blend of historical architecture and modern restoration. This former convent school and orphanage has cloistered courtyards and a beautiful Gothic chapel, erected in 1890, showcasing plasterwork, delicate wall frescoes and stained glass. The Caldwell House has a sunken forecourt, waterfalls and fountains. After a 1996 restoration that cost S\$100 million, the complex is now home to numerous boutiques, art shops and galleries, along with a lavish selection of restaurants, wine bars and cafes, making it one of Singapore's entertainment hot spots.

Shops open around 11 am, and most restaurants, pubs and clubs open in the evening. Free.

Hajjah Fatimah Mosque

4001 Beach Road (take the MRT to Lavender station EW11 and walk toward Beach Road)
Singapore, Singapore

Built in 1846 by Hajjah Fatimah, a wealthy businesswoman, this little mosque represents the best of Singaporean Muslim life—its architectural style combines influences from many cultures: Malay, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indian and Western. The minaret leans to one side and has an interesting Christian symbol, a bleeding heart, on the outside.

Daily 9 am-9 pm. No visiting is permitted during Friday prayers 11:30 am-2:30 pm. Free.

Istana

Orchard Road (take the MRT to Dhoby Ghuat station)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6737-5522

<http://www.istana.gov.sg>

The official residence of the elected president of Singapore. Although he chooses not to live there, the compound, which was built in 1869, is still used for state occasions. *Istana* means "palace" in the Malay language. During British colonial rule, it was known as Government House and it was where the governor resided. The grounds are only open to the public at the president's discretion, generally on five public holidays: New Year's Day, the first day of the Lunar New Year, Hari Raya Puasa, Christmas and Deepavali. Visitors are then invited to stroll the gardens and take a tour of the rooms inside the Istana. Check with your hotel or a newspaper for information about opening times, typically 8:30 am-6 pm.

S\$1 for foreign visitors.

Kranji War Memorial and Cemetery

9 Woodlands Road (take the MRT to Kranji station and either walk five minutes or take SBS Bus 170 from Rochor Road)

Singapore, Singapore

A peaceful cemetery north of the city center on a slope overlooking the Straits of Johor, this is a memorial to those Allied troops who lost their lives during the Japanese occupation. It was started by prisoners of war during the Japanese Occupation of 1942-1945.

Daily 7 am-6 pm. Free.

Lian Shan Shuang Lin Temple

184 E. Jalan Toa Payoh (take the MRT to Toa Payoh, or take a taxi)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6259-6924

<http://www.shuanglin.sg>

Built in 1908, this ornate Chinese temple follows the architectural tradition of the Chinese province of Fujian and incorporates three distinct regional design styles. Shuang Lin is well-known for its exquisite workmanship and beautifully carved Buddhas.

Daily 7:30 am-5 pm. Free.

Merlion

Fullerton Road (in Merlion Park; take the MRT to Raffles Place)

Singapore, Singapore

Half lion, half fish, this mythical creature is the official symbol of Singapore.

Interestingly, Merlion sprung from the minds of clever tourism marketing teams rather than local legend. However, the city's name is derived from Singapura, meaning Lion City. Built in 1972, the 28-ft/8.6-m Merlion statue stands across

the bay from the Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay. There is a 6.5-ft/2-m Merlion cub statue behind it. A 12-story Merlion also resides on nearby Sentosa Island and offers a panoramic view of Sentosa and southern parts of Singapore.

Raffles Hotel

1 Beach Road (take the MRT to City Hall)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-1886

<http://www.affles.com/singapore>

This grande dame from 1827 is a must-see and possibly Asia's most charming hotel. An extensive renovation years ago restored its colonial grandeur to reflect the days when writers Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham, along with other members of the colonial elite, frequented the establishment, particularly at cocktail hour. The spacious courtyards, ballroom, old cake

and pastry store, and jewelry shops help to recall the glorious past, and chic art galleries keep the vibe alive. The Long Bar, where the Singapore Sling was invented, is accessed through a side entrance, not through the lobby—hotel staff will redirect you. On the third floor, a museum details the history of the hotel.

Museum open daily 10 am-7 pm; the hotel's public spaces are open daily 24 hours. Free.

Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple

366 Race Course Road (take the MRT to Dhoby Ghaut station, then get a taxi or take SBS bus 64, 65, 106 or 111 from Orchard Road)
Singapore, Singapore

Known as the Temple of a Thousand Lights, this is one of the very few Theravada Buddhist temples in

Singapore. Built in 1927 by a Thai monk, it houses a 49-ft-/15-m-high, 300-ton Buddha illuminated by colored lights. The temple contains a bit of bark that is believed by Buddhists to come from the bodhi tree in Nepal beneath which the Buddha himself attained enlightenment. At its base, a fresco portrays important events in the Buddha's life. Behind the main altar, find the doorway to the reclining Buddha chamber underneath. Photographing the reclining Buddha is prohibited.

Daily 8 am-4:45 pm. Free.

Sands SkyPark Observation Deck

10 Bayfront Ave. (take the MRT to Bayfront station; enter at Hotel Tower 3 porte cochere)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 65-6688-8888

<http://www.marinabaysands.com/sands-skypark.html>

A major attraction at the Marina Bay Sands integrated resort is Sands SkyPark, a 3-acre/1.2-hectare cantilevered boat-shaped platform with lush gardens and hundreds of trees and plants connecting the top of the hotel blocks. SkyPark is 787 ft/340 m long and overhangs the north tower by 220 ft/67 m. The open-air observation deck is open to the public, and the 360-degree views from the 56th floor, over the city's skyline, Marina Bay and out to the sea, are truly spectacular. It's best to visit in the early morning or at sunset.

Sands SkyPark is open daily 9:30 am-10 pm (till 11 pm Friday-Sunday) but closes during lightning, extreme rain and private events. Call ahead to confirm it is open. Tickets are S\$22 adults, S\$19 seniors, S\$16 children. You can purchase them at the box office, one level beneath the third hotel tower.

Singapore Flyer

30 Raffles Ave.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6333-3311

<http://www.singaporeflyer.com>

Situated on the southeast tip of the Marina Center amid some of the city's best shopping, dining and entertainment, the 541-ft/165-m Singapore Flyer is the tallest Ferris wheel in the world. (It's even 16 ft/5 m taller than the London Eye). With 28 capsules holding 28 passengers each, those at the top enjoy sweeping views, not just of Singapore, but also the Indonesian islands of Batam and Bintan, and Johor, Malaysia. The Singapore Flyer originally turned in a counterclockwise direction (one rotation takes 37 minutes) until Feng Shui masters advised a clockwise rotation.

Daily 8:30 am-10:30 pm. Tickets cost S\$29.50 adults, S\$20.65 children and include a visit of the multimedia showcase *Journey of Dreams*. Its seven galleries tell the story of Singapore and the Singapore Flyer.

Skyline Sentosa Luge

45 Siloso Beach Walk

Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6274-0472

<http://www.skylineluge.com>

A fun, family-friendly way to experience Sentosa Island is to go on a sky luge, which is part go-cart, part toboggan. After that, board the Skyride chairlift down to enjoy a panoramic view of Singapore.

Daily 10 am-9:30 pm. Luge and Skyride combo S\$23.50 per person.

Sri Mariamman Temple

244 South Bridge Road (take the MRT to City Hall Station, then take SBS bus 103, 166 or 197 or SMRT Bus 61 from North Bridge Road)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6223-4064

<http://www.heb.gov.sg/temples/8-sri-mariamman-temple>

This magnificent structure is Singapore's oldest Hindu temple and is dedicated to Sri Mariamman, a manifestation of the Great Goddess, worshipped for health and prosperity. The brick foundation of the present structure was built around 1843. Over the years, bells, carvings of deities, and frescoes have been added to its doors, walls and ceiling. The annual fire-walking festival (Thimithi) is celebrated there, usually in October or November. As a sign of respect, remove your shoes before entering and do not wear shorts or sleeveless tops.

Daily 7 am-noon and 6-9 pm. Free.

Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

397 Serangoon Road (take the MRT to Farrer Park)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6298-5771

<http://www.heb.gov.sg/temples/18-sri-srinivasa-perumal-temple>

Dating from 1855, this temple, devoted to the worship of Vishnu, is listed as a national monument. Smaller than Sri Mariamman, but at least as brilliantly decorated and festooned on the outside with deities great and minor, it is a prime example of Hindu temples as works of devout art. This temple is the starting point for the Thaipusam Festival every January or February, when devotees pierce their bodies and carry *kavadis*, colorfully adorned steel racks attached to the body with steel pokers, as they

parade through the streets to Chettiar Temple on Tank Road.

Daily 7 am-noon and 6-9 pm. Free.

Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple

141 Serangoon Road (take the MRT to Little India station; the temple is a short walk from there)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6295-4538

<http://www.sriveeramakaliamman.com>

At the center of Little India's Serangoon Road, this colorful temple, constructed in 1855 by Bengali laborers, is dedicated to the female deity Kali, consort of Shiva, although hundreds of other immortals are depicted on the temple's colorful sloping roof and inside the main prayer hall. Tiny bells cover the front door, which devotees ring to ask God to grant them personal requests

before entering the prayer hall. Inside, Kali's statue, with 16 arms and wearing a necklace of skulls, is at the center of the prayer hall, flanked by those of her two sons, Ganesh and Murugan.

Daily 5:30 am-2 pm and 4-9 pm. Free.

St. Andrew's Cathedral

11 St. Andrew's Road (take the MRT to City Hall)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-6104

<http://www.livingstreams.org.sg/sac>

Built in 1861, St. Andrew's was constructed by Indian convict laborers using *chunam*, a plaster made of lime from seashells, egg whites and coarse sugar mixed with the hulls of coconuts. Especially noted for its fine, classical lines and an impressive stained-glass window, the cathedral was converted

into a temporary hospital before the city was occupied by the Japanese in early 1942. Today, Anglicans again worship at this site, and the cathedral offers visitors a tranquil respite from city life.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. Guided tours Monday-Saturday at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm. Free.

Statues of Sir Stamford Raffles

There are two statues in memory of the man who founded modern Singapore in 1819. The original stands outside the Victoria Concert Hall at Empress Place and was cast in 1887, and a replica stands behind the old Parliament House on North Boat Quay, the site where it is believed that Raffles first set foot on the island. Take the MRT to Raffles Place and walk across the Cavenagh Bridge.

Sultan Mosque

3 Muscat St. (take the MRT to Bugis station
and walk toward North Bridge Road)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6293-4405

<http://sultanmosque.sg>

The spiritual heart of Singapore's Muslim community, this large mosque is the center point of Kampong Glam, the district given to the Malay royalty who oversaw Singapore before Raffles' arrival. The building you see today was built in 1928, replacing the mosque previously on the site. Its golden onion dome and minarets belie the fact that it was designed by Irish architect Denis Santry. Non-Muslim visitors are free to walk the grounds outside the mosque; they are also invited inside—at the door, visitors can find cloaks to cover themselves if they are not properly attired—but they cannot enter the main prayer hall.

Monday-Thursday, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-noon and 2-4 pm; Friday 2:30-4:30 pm. No visiting is permitted during Friday prayers 11:30 am-2:30 pm. Free.

Thian Hock Keng Temple

158 Telok Ayer St. (take the MRT to Tanjong Pagar or Raffles Place)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6423-4616

<http://www.thianhockkeng.com.sg/home.html>

One of the oldest temples in Singapore, erected in 1821, "The Temple of Heavenly Bliss" is dedicated to Ma Po Cho, "The Mother of Heavenly Sages" and the Taoist deity who protects those who travel far from home. Even the materials used to construct the temple reflect the far shores, with ironwork from Scotland, tiles from England and the Netherlands, and soaring granite pillars

with dragons carved in China. Early Chinese sailors, upon completing a safe journey to Singapore, offered thanks to her at this shrine. Before massive land reclamation extended the shoreline outward, this site was on the beach. Inside the temple, you can also find an altar to Kuan Yin, the goddess of compassion, and a display of ancestral tablets and remembrances of esteemed members of the temple's community. Temple restoration in 2000 uncovered a 1907 calligraphic panel from the Qing dynasty Empress Dowager Cixi.

Daily 7:30 am-5:30 pm. Free.

Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple

30-B Phillip St. (take the MRT to Raffles Place)

Singapore, Singapore

Surrounded by urban skyscrapers, Wak Hai Cheng Bio seems oddly out of

place. Inside its two temple chambers are altars for "The Mother of Heavenly Sages," Ma Po Cho, who safeguards those who travel, and Siong Tek Kong, the deity who oversees all business affairs—most appropriate for Singapore's commerce-minded immigrant population.

Daily 6 am-6 pm.

Museums

Asian Civilisations Museum

1 Empress Place (take the MRT to City Hall)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-7798

<http://www.acm.org.sg>

Empress Place, a handsome Victorian building that served administrative purposes, was renovated and is now the Asian Civilisations Museum, showcasing

an excellent display of cultural and anthropological exhibits with more than 1,300 artifacts covering the major civilizations of China, India, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia, from prehistory through the present day. The museum also welcomes international touring exhibits and organizes regularly scheduled culture and history lectures.

Monday 1-7 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-7 pm (Friday till 9 pm). Free guided tours in English Monday at 2 pm; Tuesday-Friday at 11 am, noon and 2 pm; Saturday and Sunday at 11 am, and 2, 3 and 4 pm. S\$8 adults (discounted admission after 7 pm Friday).

Changi Chapel and Museum

1000 Upper Changi North Road (take the MRT to Tanah Merah station and take a taxi to the museum, which is to the left of the

prison's main gate)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6214-2451

<http://www.changimuseum.sg>

Located about 25 minutes from the Central Business District, the chapel is a replica of the original built by Allied prisoners of war during World War II. The museum houses photos, sketches and personal items dating from the Japanese occupation of 1942-45. Most of the items were donated by former prisoners of war.

Daily 9:30 am-5 pm (last entry at 4:30 pm). Free.

Chinatown Heritage Centre

48 Pagoda St. (take the MRT to Chinatown station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6325-2879

<http://www.chinatownheritagecentre.sg>

In the center of the historic Chinatown walking district, in three adjacent preserved prewar shop-houses, this museum has 15 galleries with displays that depict the lives and experiences of early Chinese migrants to Singapore. Rooms show scenes from Chinese work, home and social life.

Daily 9 am-8 pm (last entry 7 pm). S\$10 adults, S\$6 children ages 3-12.

Images of Singapore Museum

Imbiah Lookout (MRT to Harbourfront then take the cable car or the Sentosa bus from HarbourFront Interchange or the Sentosa Express from VivoCity to Imbiah Station)
Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6275-0426

<http://www.sentosa.com.sg/en/attractions/imbiah-lookout/images-of-singapore>

This museum makes a wide sweep of Singapore's past and present.

Interactive exhibits depict Singapore's diverse cultural traditions, such as the Chinese Festival of the Hungry Ghost and the Hindu Thimithi (also known as the fire-walking festival). The wax figures in one popular display depict the British surrender to Japanese forces in 1942, and a film shows the actual surrender. Other exhibits focus on customs practiced by Malay, Chinese, Indian and Peranakan (Chinese-Malay) communities. One section, *Stories of the Sea*, tells Singapore's maritime history through the eyes of an amusing Chinese merchant.

Daily 9 am-7 pm (last entry at 6:30 pm).
Free guided tours Friday-Sunday and public holidays at 11 am and 2 pm.
S\$10 adults, S\$7 children.

Malay Heritage Museum

85 Sultan Gate (take the MRT to Bugis station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6391-0450

<http://www.malayheritage.org.sg>

The building that houses the Malay Heritage Museum was the *istana* (palace) granted to the Malay royal family that originally oversaw Singapore in the days before Raffles' arrival. The *istana* suffered decades of neglect and ownership squabbles until the state took it over, renovated and converted it into this cultural exhibit that depicts the everyday lives and religious and cultural ceremonies of the Malays in Singapore.

Daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm. S\$4 adults.

National Museum of Singapore

93 Stamford Road (exit the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station and walk Orchard Road east to Stamford Road)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-3659 or 6332-5642

<http://www.nationalmuseum.sg>

The original 1887 structure has been expanded to gorgeous effect, with larger exhibition spaces and a basement theater. Choose from the Singapore History Gallery, an exhibit covering 400 years of local history, or the Singapore Living Galleries, covering the everyday life of Singaporeans with themes such as food and fashion.

History Gallery open daily 10 am-6 pm (last admission 5:30 pm); Living Galleries open daily 10 am-8 pm (last admission 7:30 pm). English-language tours of History Gallery Monday-Friday 11 am and 2 pm; Saturday and Sunday

11:30 am, and 2 and 3:30 pm. S\$10 adults.

Peranakan Museum

39 Armenian St. (take the MRT to City Hall or Raffles City stations)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-7591

<http://peranakanmuseum.org.sg>

This spiffy interactive museum, a small branch of the Asian Civilisations Museum housed in a beautiful old white villa from 1910, illustrates the story and hybrid culture of the Peranakan people. These locally born people are descended from immigrants who married local, mostly Malay women. The largest Peranakan group in Singapore is the Straits Chinese, who speak a mix of Bahasa Malay, Hokkien dialect and English. The ancestors of Chitty Melaka and Jawi Peranakan were Indian traders

who married local Malay women and also have their own unique traditions. The most colorful displays pertain to the lavish marriage traditions. A traditional Peranakan wedding spans 12 days and requires complicated rites. Admire fine textiles featuring intricate embroidery and beading, teak furniture and the porcelain decorated in typical Peranakan colors of delicate pink, blue, green and yellow. Multimedia displays are state of the art.

Monday 1-7 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-7 pm (Friday until 9 pm). Tickets are \$S6 adults, S\$3 for children.

Red Dot Design Museum

11 Marina Blvd.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 65-6514-0111

<http://www.museum.red-dot.sg>

A creative hub housed in the former Singapore Traffic Police headquarters, this museum showcases commercial design excellence from around the world. The museum also bestows the annual Red Dot Award for innovative design concepts. Interactive installations and interesting exhibitions engage visitors while educating on design. It is also the venue for MAAD (Market for Artists and Designers), a recurring Sunday market for original creative works.

Monday-Friday 11 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-8 pm. S\$8 adults.

Singapore Art Museum

71 Bras Basah Road (take the MRT to City Hall or Dhoby Ghaut)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6589-9580

<http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg>

Housed in the beautifully restored St. Joseph's Institution building, which began as the first Catholic school in Singapore, the museum showcases 20th-century art from Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia. The E-mage Gallery features art on large, high-definition, visual monitors. Frequent live performances, lectures and arts-related events are held in the galleries.

Daily 10 am-7 pm (Friday until 9 pm).
Tours in English Tuesday-Friday 11 am and 2 pm with additional tours Monday at 2 pm, Friday at 7 pm, Saturday and Sunday at 11 am, and 2 and 3:30 pm.
S\$10 adults.

Singapore Discovery Centre

510 Upper Jurong Road (take the MRT to Boon Lay station, change to SBS Bus 182 or

193)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6792-6188

<http://www.sdc.com.sg>

Not to be confused with the Science Centre, the Discovery Centre houses fascinating, kid-friendly exhibits, some permanent, others changing. It features high-tech exhibits such as virtual parachuting, a motion simulator and an interactive display showing the development of military technology. Exhibits also showcase some of Singapore's milestones and achievements. Tickets sold until one hour before closing time.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-6 pm. S\$10 adults.

Singapore Philatelic Museum

23-B Coleman Street (MRT to City Hall
Station NS25/EW13)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-3888

<http://www.spm.com.sg>

A niche museum housed in a 19th century building that was once a boys' school, this place is perfect for those who loved (or still love) collecting stamps. The main galleries chronicle the history of stamps, how stamps are made, and the role of stamps in society. Their range of archival philatelic material from Singapore and other parts of the world dates all the way back to the 1830s.

Monday 1-7 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-7:30 pm. S\$6 adults, S\$4 children.

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

12 Tai Gin Road (take the train to Toa Payoh Station NS19, then take bus 139 or 145 from the interchange)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6256-7377

<http://www.sysnmh.org.sg>

Did you know that the legendary Sun Yat Sen spent time in Singapore while planning revolution in China? This heritage spot traces Dr. Sun's revolutionary efforts in Southeast Asia and shows how the Chinese community in Singapore played a key role in the 1911 Chinese Revolution, which ended monarchy in China. It is housed in a restored early-20th-century Chinese bungalow, where Dr. Sun himself stayed during some of his visits.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. S\$4 adults.

The National Art Gallery

61 Stamford Road (Stamford Court No. 04-01)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6690-9400

<http://www.nationalartgallery.sg>

Construction of the new National Art Gallery is under way, folding the former City Hall and Supreme Court buildings into its grand 646,000-sq-ft/60,000-sq-m design. Meanwhile, the curators keep busy building the city's largest collection of contemporary Southeast Asian arts, furthering the city's ambition to be considered a global arts powerhouse. Occasionally, building tours are organized for the public; check website for dates and details.

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-7 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-10 pm. Admission free.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Chinatown

South Bridge Road (take the MRT to Chinatown, or catch SBS Bus 61, 103, 166 or 197 to South Bridge Road from the center of town)

Singapore, Singapore

Chinatown was once the heart of the Chinese community in Singapore. In the early days, many of the townsfolk who lived there worked in the ports and godowns (warehouses) by the Singapore River. You will find several old gold shops there, still operated by Cantonese families. The most reputable are Ban Cheong and Poh Heng. You will also encounter grocers selling abalone, dried seahorses, fish, birds' nests and fruit, and you will meet calligraphers, fortune-tellers and makers of Chinese lanterns, screens, big-headed dolls and masks. Some antiques and curio shops also fill the lanes of this quarter. Indian

and Muslim temples and a mosque are interspersed among the Chinese surroundings, evoking the harmonious mix of cultures that stretches back into Singapore's early history. The Sri Mariamman Temple (a Hindu temple) is open to respectful visitors of all faiths and is a most impressive structure.

Clarke Quay

3 River Valley Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-3292. For river taxi information, phone 339-6833

<http://www.clarkequay.com.sg>

A popular food and entertainment enclave on the bank of the Singapore River. Named after the city's second governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, it is home to a number of restaurants. The 176 godowns (warehouses) and rundown shop-houses have been turned into

trendy nightclubs and restaurants serving a variety of international cuisines. On Sunday, the area has a decent flea market with more than 100 stalls that sell a wide variety of antiques, trinkets and toys. Clarke Quay can be reached via river taxi from Clifford Pier and also by MRT (Clark Quay station).

It is open daily 10 am-9 pm. Pubs are open Sunday-Thursday 6 pm-1 am, till 2 am Friday and Saturday. Many offer happy hour until 6 or 8 pm. Restaurants are open till 10:30 pm.

Geylang

Lower Geylang is home to Singapore's red-light district and presents a fascinating, grittier side of this city-state. It's also a popular supper haunt with the locals. If you stroll around Geylang at night, you will see red lanterns above specific street signs, which signify the registered red-light establishments.

Farther east, you move into Geylang Serai, the traditional Malay part of town, which also has a sprawl of popular late-night dining spots. Locals like to take visitors there, and the Malay food is good and inexpensive—but keep in mind that few of the eateries are air-conditioned, and that Malay food can be quite spicy. The diminutive Malay Village is worth a quick visit if you're already in the area. Take the MRT to Paya Lebar or Aljunied for upper Geylang, Lavender or Kallang station for the seedier sections.

Holland Village

A cosmopolitan hangout for well-heeled Singaporeans, expatriates and trendy individuals of all ages, this destination offers a stimulating mix of old and new—somewhat shabby coffee shops and hawker stalls sit cheek by jowl with ritzy wine bars, pubs and a wide range

of restaurants. The main shopping complex boasts several good antiques shops specializing in furniture and other items for the home. Across from Holland Village is Chip Bee Gardens, another stretch of popular restaurants. Take SBS Buses 7, 77 and 165 from downtown or take the train to Holland Village station (CC21).

Holland Village stores are generally open daily 10 am-9 or 10 pm.

Kampong Glam

Singapore, Singapore

<http://www.kampongglam.org.sg>

This was the historic seat of the Malay royalty in Singapore. The main attraction today is Arab Street, the enclave where Arab merchants and traders settled in the early 1820s. Today, the walkways on both sides of this bustling street are packed with vendors selling fabrics,

spices, condiments, basketry, leather and Malay clothing. Do expect to bargain. Some of the original shops and surviving *rumah panjangs* (long houses) are still there. The streets around Arab Street have been transformed into open-air cafes serving Middle Eastern fare, with *shisha* pipes burning until the wee hours of the morning. Other must-sees in this area are the old Malay cemetery and the impressive Sultan Mosque, Singapore's largest and most majestic. To get there, take the MRT to Bugis station.

Katong

One of Singapore's first suburban residential areas, Katong was known for its hodgepodge of residents, many of whom were families of mixed-marriage heritage such as Peranakans, mixed Chinese and Malay families, and Eurasians, descended from early

European settlers. The streets of Katong are lined with ornate terrace houses. From the junction of East Coast and Joo Chiat roads, you can explore shops that sell Peranakan and Eurasian foods, clothing and antiques. If you're a fan of spicy food, don't miss out on trying the famous Katong Laksa (a spicy noodle soup) found at 53 East Coast Road. To get there, take SBS Bus 14 from the Central Business District.

Little India

Singapore, Singapore

<http://www.littleindia.com.sg>

The place to go for cheap and good restaurants, Hindu temples, fortune-tellers with parrots, flower-garland vendors, backroom goldsmiths, colorful sari shops and grinders of aromatic spices. The best times to visit Little India are in January or February during the

Hindu Thaipusam festival, and in October or November during the Deepavali celebrations, when the entire area is decorated with lights and candles.

One highlight of walking in the Serangoon Road vicinity is Zhujiao Centre, known locally as Tekka Centre. The ground floor is a bustling open-air market for fresh foods and vegetables. There's also a food center and several shops selling clothing and trinkets at bargain prices.

The other attraction in the area is Serangoon Plaza, which houses the famous department store known as Mustafa Centre. Dubbed the Jewel of Little India, the plaza is a modern, air-conditioned complex with plenty to offer shoppers and gourmets. It's a little chaotic, but you'll find everything from exotic Indian imports and luxurious

pashmina shawls to competitively priced electronics.

Visit the area on a weekday morning, when it's cooler and not so crowded. Take SBS Bus 111 from Orchard Road, or take the MRT to either Little India or Farrer Park stations.

Mohamed Sultan Road

A stretch of restored shop-houses, this area has been transformed into one of Singapore's hippest entertainment hubs. The entire street is always pulsing with young people and loud music. The older crowd enjoys the supper clubs and more sophisticated nightspots. Take SBS Bus 143 from the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station, or catch a taxi from Orchard Road.

Parks & Gardens

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

177 Hindhede Drive (take the MRT to Newton station then take SMRT Bus 171)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6468-5736

<http://www.nparks.gov.sg>

This 405-acre/164-hectare patch of forest in the central part of the island is one of the only places in the world where there is primary rain forest within a city's limits—the only other city that can claim this is Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It's also the highest point on the island and one of the more peaceful spots in Singapore. Bird-lovers can observe squadrons of their winged friends, and there are also some resident monkeys to be seen. Clearly marked hiking trails and signposts guide the trekker; trails are designated as easy, medium and challenging.

Daily 6 am-7 pm. Free.

Chinese and Japanese Gardens

Yuan Ching Road (take the MRT to Chinese Garden station)

Singapore, Singapore

Two beautifully landscaped parks situated side by side. Perfect locations for a picnic or a leisurely morning stroll. Don't forget to visit the Chinese teahouse.

Daily 6 am-10 pm, Saturday and Sunday until 11 pm. Free. Entrance to Bonsai Garden and Garden of Abundance costs S\$2 for adults.

Fort Canning Park

51 Fort Canning Road (take the MRT to Dhoby Ghaut station and walk through Park Mall)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-1200

<http://www.nparks.gov.sg>

A hill in the center of the city, it was originally called Bukit Langaran (Forbidden Hill), possibly because of the rumors that Malay kings of the 14th century were buried there.

Archaeological findings from the site are displayed at the National Museum of Singapore. Outdoor concerts are held regularly on the main grassy slope of this 44-acre/18-hectare park. Excellent for picnics, the park also affords panoramic views of the Singapore River. The ruins of Fort Canning are evident—one of its underground bunkers has been converted into the Battle Box, a war museum that tells the story of how Singapore fell to the Japanese in World War II

(<http://www.legendsfortcanning.com/fortcanning/battlebox.htm>).

The Battle Box is open daily 10 am-6 pm. S\$8 adults.

Gardens by the Bay

18 Marina Gardens Drive

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 65-6420-6848

<http://www.gardensbythebay.org.sg>

Over S\$1 billion has been spent on the newest attraction at Marina Bay, the ultimate City in a Garden, which looks like something out of a science fiction movie. The Bay Garden South section features 18 striking "supertrees," which are tall constructions made of steel and concrete modeled after giant mammoth trees that are illuminated at night. An aerial walkway (S\$5 adults, S\$3 children) connects the two biggest trees. The IndoChine restaurant is located on top of the tallest tree, which is 164 ft/50 m high. Some of these trees produce electricity with solar cells. They serve as vertical gardens, but they also ventilate and irrigate the gigantic state-of-the-art

conservatories housing 220,000 plants from endangered habitats. The Flower Dome has plants that grow in temperate Mediterranean and subtropical climate zones (a good place to get a respite from Singapore's tropical weather), while the Cloud Forest recreates a cool mountain forest of the tropics including an artificial cloud mountain with a 115-ft/35-m waterfall. Four Heritage Gardens features Chinese, Indian, Malay and Colonial Gardens surrounding the Supertree Grove at the northwestern corner.

The Flower Dome and the Cloud Forest are open daily 9 am-9 pm; Supertree Grove and Heritage Gardens open 5 am-2 am. Gardens are free, but admission to the two conservatories costs S\$28 adults.

MacRitchie Reservoir Park

Junction of Lornie and Thomson roads (take
SBS Bus 132 or TIBS Bus 167)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6468-5736

<http://www.nparks.gov.sg>

A scenic park where monkeys and turtles reside. Also a jogging track, food kiosks, exercise stations and lush vegetation. On weekends it's often the starting point of national running events. For a look at the forest canopy, the HSBC TreeTop Walk is a freestanding suspension bridge up to 82 ft/25 m above the ground.

Daily 8:30 am-6:30 pm (the HSBC TreeTop Walk is open daily except Monday 9 am-4:30 pm). Free.

Mount Faber Park

Junction of Kampong Bahru and Telok
Blangah roads (take SBS Transit Service

Parks 409 from HarbourFront Centre)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6377-9688. Toll-free 800-471-7300

<https://www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/parks-and-nature-reserves/mount-faber-park>

One of the highest points in Singapore, Mount Faber affords a commanding view of the harbor, skyline and offshore secondary islands. It is a romantic place where you can enjoy drinks and dinner. You can also hop over to Sentosa Island via cable car from there.

Daily 7 am-7 pm. Free.

Singapore Botanic Gardens

Cluny Road (from Orchard Boulevard take SBS Bus 7, 105, 75 or 77)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6471-7361

<http://www.sbg.org.sg>

Spread over 128 acres/52 hectares and close to the center of the city, this extensive collection of local and imported trees, shrubs and plants is augmented by special and rare collections of certain species: the National Orchid Garden, the rose garden, and the palm and bonsai garden. Try to catch a live concert outdoors at Symphony Lake, usually held on weekends.

Daily 5 am-midnight (the National Orchid Garden is open daily 8:30 am-7 pm). Free (S\$5 adult admission to the National Orchid Garden).

Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

301 Neo Tiew Crescent (take SMRT Bus 925 from either Woodlands, or take the MRT to Kranji station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6794-1401

<http://www.sbwr.org.sg>

See the fabulous plants and animals of the mangroves and freshwater wetlands. Home to more than 500 species of tropical flora and fauna, the 321-acre/130-hectare conserved wetland is also a natural habitat for birds on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. On Saturday, meet at the visitors center for a free guided walk at 9 and 10 am, and 3 and 4 pm. No reservations are required.

Monday-Saturday 7:30 am-7 pm,
Sunday and public holidays 7 am-7 pm.
Free entry.

Amusement Parks

Haw Par Villa

226 Pasir Panjang Road (Haw Par Villa
station CC25)

Singapore, Singapore

This unusual theme park centers on Chinese mythology and has more than 1,000 statues and 150 giant dioramas. It's a popular spot for many Chinese Singaporean families because parents hope to teach their children about traditional Chinese values. But even as a tourist, Haw Par Villa makes for some trippy entertainment.

Daily 9 am-7 pm. Free.

Snow City

21 Jurong Town Hall Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6560-2306 or 6560-4773 on weekends and holidays

<http://www.snowcity.com.sg>

Year-round winter fun in the tropics. Toss snowballs, crawl into an igloo, speed down a snow-covered slope on

inflated tubes—even take skiing and snowboarding lessons.

Daily 10 am-6 pm. S\$15 for a one-hour session, S\$28 for a two-hour session (prices include jackets, boots and snow tubes).

Universal Studios Singapore

8 Sentosa Gateway (HarbourFront station CC29 and board the Sentosa Express from VivoCity to alight at Waterfront station)
Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6577-8888

<http://www.rwsentosa.com/language/en-US/Homepage/Attractions/UniversalStudiosSingapore>

Located at Resorts World Sentosa, it has an array of thrilling rides based on blockbusters such as *Revenge of the Mummy* (with fireballs and mummy

warriors) and *Battlestar Galactica* (the world's tallest dueling rollercoasters).

Daily 10 am-7 pm. S\$74 adults.

Wild Wild Wet

1 Pasir Ris Close (take the MRT to Pasir Ris station EW1)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6581-9128

<http://www.wildwildwet.com>

Wild Wild Wet is the perfect place to play during those scorching, sunny days Singapore is known for. Some of the fun rides include Ular-Lah, which simulates white-water rafting, and Torpedo, where you're ejected from a 60-ft-/18-m-high capsule and propelled high-speed through a twisty water tunnel.

Monday-Friday 1-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-7 pm. Wild Wild Wet admission S\$19 adults, S\$14 children.

Zoos & Wildlife

Jurong Bird Park

2 Jurong Hill (take the MRT to Boon Lay station and change to SBS Bus 194 or 251)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6265-0022

<http://www.birdpark.com.sg>

Spread across 50 acres/20 hectares, this park is home to more than 8,000 birds representing 600 species. Most of the birds fly free in aviaries rather than living in small cages. Stroll through a tropical rain forest and pass beneath one of the world's tallest (100-ft/30-m) artificial waterfalls. The Parrot Paradise displays more than 500 parrots.

Daily 8:30 am-6 pm. S\$25 adults, S\$16 children. "Park Hopper" packages are available for combinations with

Singapore Zoo, Night Safari and/or River Safari.

Marine Life Park

8 Sentosa Gateway (HarbourFront station CC29 and board the Sentosa Express from VivoCity to alight at Waterfront station)
Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6577-8888

<http://www.rwsentosa.com/language/en-US/Homepage/Attractions/MarineLifePark>

At Resorts World Sentosa, the world's largest oceanarium combines three sections: the S.E.A. Aquarium, with more than 100,000 marine animals; Dolphin Island, where you can interact up close with Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins; and the Adventure Cove Waterpark, with adrenaline-packed waterslides.

Daily 10 am-7 pm. Aquarium tickets S\$38 adults, S\$28 children. Dolphin Interaction Programs start from S\$198 adults and S\$188 children. Adventure cove tickets S\$36 adults, S\$26 children.

Nature Walk

This 1-mi/1.6-km walk highlights Sentosa Island's flora and fauna, with a focus on the more than 20 species of birds, including a small colony of white cockatoos, monkeys and geckos, plus interesting flora such as the insect-devouring pitcher plants. The trail itself takes you through tropical rain forest to the summit of Mount Imbiah, which contains remnants of British army fortifications.

Daily 9 am-7 pm. Free after you've paid the entrance fee to the island. To get there, take the Sentosa Escapade bus from Orchard Road or the MRT to

Harbourfront station and then take the Sentosa bus. Phone 6275-8672.

Singapore Zoo, Night Safari and River Safari

80 Mandai Lake Road (take the MRT to Chua Chu Kang, change to TIBS Bus 927, or take the MRT to Ang Mo Kio and take SBS Bus 138)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6269-3411

<http://www.zoo.com.sg>

One of the most beautiful zoos in Asia, with natural barriers instead of cages to contain the animals. The zoo has more than 3,000 animals, from polar bears to regional fauna. Some 20 orangutans constitute one of the largest social colonies of primates in captivity; Ah Meng, the renowned matriarch of the colony, poses for photos (with an attendant's help) having lunch or tea

with zoo visitors. The zoo's Night Safari is a chance to observe nocturnal animals from more than 130 species. You can strike out on your own along the walking trail or take a 50-minute tram ride. It's one of the most unusual and interesting visitor experiences in Singapore. The River Safari is the latest attraction for animal lovers and is Asia's first river-themed wildlife park. There you can cruise in an open-top boat and meet animals that live along the Amazon. It also houses Singapore's first giant pandas, Kai Kai and Jia Jia.

The zoo is open daily 8:30 am-6 pm. The Night Safari is open 7:30 pm-midnight. The River Safari is open daily 9 am-6 pm. Daytime zoo admission is S\$28 adults, S\$18 children. Night Safari admission, including tram ride, is S\$39 adults, S\$25 children. River Safari admission is S\$25 adults, S\$16 children. Combination "Park Hopper" packages are available.

Nightlife

The entertainment scene in Singapore is highly competitive. Clubs tend to have a short lifespan, so they try to cram as much action as possible into whatever space they have. Larger establishments have live music, dancing, food, karaoke rooms and multiple bars. In general, clubs close around 2 am Sunday-Thursday, 3 am Friday and Saturday. Sometimes the doors are closed at the official closing time, but the party carries on inside.

Nightspots are mostly concentrated on Orchard Road and its outskirts, in the Mohammed Sultan area and in the Tanjong Pagar District (south of Chinatown). Pubs within crawling distance of one another are clustered in Peranakan Place (Emerald Hill Road, just off Orchard Road opposite Specialist Shopping Center), the CHIJMES complex, the St. James

Power Station, Clarke Quay and the traffic-free enclave on the riverside, Boat Quay. Locals are known to pub crawl until early morning and then settle down to breakfast in a suburban food center once the subways and buses start running again at 6 am.

Bars, Taverns & Pubs

1-Altitude Gallery & Bar

1 Raffles Place

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6438-0410

<http://www.1-altitude.com>

Perched on the rooftop of the OUB building in the Financial District, 1-Altitude Gallery & Bar is the city's highest rooftop bar at 925 ft/282 m, treating guests to a stunning 360-degree view of the city. Restaurants 282 and City Golf (on the 61st floor) and Stellar

(on the 62nd floor) offer similarly stunning views on the levels just below. The Chocolate Sidecar (S\$16), a cocktail with cognac, lemon juice and creme de cacao, is a house favorite.

Bitters & Love

118 Telok Ayer St.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6438-1836

<http://www.bittersandlove.com>

One of the classier cocktail bars in Singapore, this place uses fresh ingredients for its bespoke creations ranging S\$19-S\$25. The mind-reading bartenders there will work out what's the best drink for you after a chat about your preferred flavors.

Brewerkz

30 Merchant Road (Riverside Point, No. 01-05)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6438-7438

<http://www.brewerkz.com>

An American-owned microbrewery that creates fabulous beer and ale. Pretty good food, too. Observe the brewing process within the factorylike interior, and even carry home a six-pack—or a keg—for private parties. Or enjoy your pint at an outdoor table with a view of Singapore River.

Sunday-Thursday noon-midnight;
Friday, Saturday and the day before
public holidays noon-1 am.

Brix

10 Scotts Road (basement of the Grand Hyatt Hotel)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6738-1234

<http://www.singapore.grand.hyattrestaurants.com/brix>

Split into three rooms, Brix is a popular retreat both for those who crave a quiet drink and those who want to dance and meet people.

Sunday-Wednesday 9 pm-3 am,
Thursday-Saturday till 4 am.

Potato Head Folk

36 Keong Saik Road
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6237-1939

<http://www.pttheadfolk.com>

An offshoot of Bali's popular Potato Head Beach Club, Potato Head Folk retains the laid-back vibe with quirky walls painted with birds, butterflies and flowers. The first and second floors

comprise the Three Buns dining area, serving cocktails and gourmet burgers. The third floor is a design studio, and the fourth floor is The Rooftop Bar, with tiki cocktails and barbeque dishes.

Tuesday-Sunday 11 am-midnight.

Que Pasa

7 Emerald Hill Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6235-6626

<http://www.quepasa.com.sg>

Sit outside to enjoy the ambience at this convenient and cozy wine bar with tapas good enough to eat for dinner. A longtime after-work favorite for expats and others who live near Orchard Road, so expect a well-dressed crowd of regulars. Not a raging scene, but a reliably good vibe.

Daily noon-2 am.

The Screening Room

12 Ann Siang Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6221-1694

<http://www.screeningroom.com.sg>

Just off Ann Siang Road in Southeast Chinatown, the relaxed rooftop bar offers great views of the neighborhood from a large wooden deck. Drinks are slightly expensive compared with other bars in the area, but the view of Chinatown's rooftops and temples make at least one round there worthwhile. Afterward, wander up or down Ann Siang Road, the site of Chinatown's traditional "remittance" houses and exclusive social clubs, and then over to adjoining Club Street. It often presents movies and dinner pairings. Check the website for schedule and prices.

Monday-Thursday 6 pm-1 am, Friday and Saturday till 3 am.

Dance & Nightclubs

Attica & Attica Too

3-A River Valley Road, Clarke Quay
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6333-9973

<http://www.attica.com.sg>

Two clubs, New York-style under one roof: The smaller Attica is a popular party location with lots of R&B music, whereas the large Attica Too on the other side of the courtyard (a prime flirting spot for beautiful people) is dedicated to electronic sounds.

Wednesday-Saturday 10:30 pm-5 am.
S\$28 cover charge on Friday and Saturday (includes two drinks).

Avalon

2 Bayfront Avenue, B2-05

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6688-7448

<http://www.avalon.sg>

Housed in one of the Marina Bay Sands Crystal Pavilions, this is the club where you're most likely to see celebrities (its parent club is Avalon Hollywood) with snazzy visual, sound and light effects and a huge dance floor. Plenty of world-renowned DJs have had gigs here, but there's a S\$1,500 minimum spend if you and your friends request a table.

Wednesday and Friday-Sunday 10 pm-6 am.

St. James Power Station

3 Sentosa Gateway

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6270-7676

<http://www.stjamespowerstation.com>

The old 1927 coal-fired power station now serves as a 60,000-sq-ft/5,574-sq-m space for some of the hottest clubs and discos in Singapore. There are lots of independent clubs catering to different tastes. The largest club is the Powerhouse, also a popular gay hangout. The Boiler Room plays live music; the Dragonfly has Mandarin and Cantonese pop music shows featuring live performers and dancers on stage; the Gallery Bar serves drinks in a relaxed atmosphere with a great view; and the Movida rocks with African, Caribbean and Asian sounds. There also is a jazzy show lounge, a karaoke bar and a sports bar.

Hours vary from club to club, but are typically 8 pm-5 am. Some clubs are only open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Entry is free before 9 pm;

thereafter it is S\$20 for men, S\$15 for women.

Top 5

400 Orchard Road (No. 04-35/36 Orchard Towers)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6733-4666

<http://www.top5.com.sg>

An institution, Top 5 (formerly known as Top Ten) is the king of sleazy nightlife—a novelty in squeaky-clean Singapore—and one of the city's most successful nightclubs. Live bands play Top 40 hits, with DJs spinning between sets.

Located in Orchard Towers, along with other clubs offering similar entertainment options.

Daily from 7 pm. S\$18.

Zouk

3C River Valley Road, The Cannery (each club-within-a-club has its own entrance)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6738-2988

<http://www.zoukclub.com>

Zouk hosts events with top DJs and up to 4,000 revelers on a regular basis; various events appeal to audiences ranging from hip-hop lovers to a slightly older, professional crowd. The elegant wine bar has a great selection of excellent wines and cocktails served with soothing music.

Zouk open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 pm until late; Phuture and Velvet Underground open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9 pm until late; Wine Bar open Tuesday 6 pm-2 am, Wednesday and Thursday until 3 am, Friday and Saturday until 4 am. Cover from S\$20.

Live Music

Crazy Elephant

Clarke Quay, No. 01-07, 3E River Valley Road
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6337-7859

<http://www.crazyelephant.com>

A live blues band performs every night except Monday. Impromptu jam sessions every Sunday give visitors and regulars a chance to play with other musicians.

Sunday-Thursday 5 pm-2 am, Friday and Saturday 5 pm-3 am. Live performances begin at 10 pm.

Harry's @ Boat Quay

28 Boat Quay (Raffles Place)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6538-3029

<http://www.harrys.com.sg>

There are many branches of Harry's, but this location is one of the best places to hear live jazz in Singapore. Harry's often features accomplished international and local jazz musicians playing together—even customers are encouraged to play on stage. Music starts around 9:30 pm daily except Monday. Happy hour daily until 9 pm.

Daily from 11 am.

No. 5 Emerald Hill

5 Emerald Hill Road (off Orchard Road)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6732-0818

<http://no5.emerald-hill.com>

A full-service bar with live blues and classic rock upstairs. Try the potent

vodka concoctions with Chinese herbs or hot peppers.

Monday-Thursday noon-2 am, Friday and Saturday till 3 am , Sunday from 5 pm.

SingJazz Club

101 Jalan Sultan, No. 02-00

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 8139-9059

<http://www.singjazzclub.com>

There's a small but talented community of professional jazz musicians in Singapore, and this is the best place to catch them jamming together. Look out for performances by jazz pianist Jeremy Monterio and jazz/bossa nova vocalist Joanna Dong. Visiting jazz performers from various parts of the world also go there to perform.

Thursday-Sunday 9 pm-1 am.

TAB

442 Orchard Road No. 02-29 (Orchard Hotel)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6493-6952

<http://www.tab.com.sg>

Orchard's newest music venue aspires to be all things—a grand concert hall with the ambience of an intimate jazz alley, drawing international acts, local artists and thirsty tourists with great music, food and drinks.

Open only during performances—check the website for event listings.

Shopping

Singapore is no longer the bargain-hunter's paradise it once was, but it's still something of a treat for most consumers. The city remains an international marketplace of jewelry, sporting goods, fashion, watches,

cameras, electronics, Asian artifacts and curios.

The most famous shopping district in Singapore is the Orchard Road-Somerset Road shopping belt, with major shopping centers such as Centrepoint, Ngee Ann City, Wisma Atria and Lucky Plaza. Other big shopping complexes include Suntec City and Marina Square, located just outside the Orchard area, Plaza Singapura at Dhoby Ghaut MRT station and Parco Bugis Junction at Bugis MRT station.

If you venture out to the suburbs, the prices will be lower and the ambience less touristy. The major suburban shopping centers are Tampines, Bishan, Jurong East and Yishun, which are linked on the MRT subway line from Orchard Road. The old premises of the Singapore Turf Club have been transformed into a giant shopping complex called Turf City. You can take a

bus from Ang Mo Kio bus interchange or Toa Payoh bus interchange.

Peranakan antiques (blending Malay and Chinese styles) are best found along Smith Street, Pagoda Street and Temple Street in Chinatown, on Dempsey Road (a short taxi ride from the Botanic Gardens), and at the Tanglin Shopping Centre on Tanglin Road. Other places to search for Peranakan and Chinese antiques are River Valley Road, Geylang, Paya Lebar and Katong. Stock up on saris, Punjabi suits, handicrafts and gold jewelry at the Little India Arcade on Serangoon Road and the nearby Tekka Market.

Keep in mind that, although there are bargains to be had, not every purchase will be a fantastic deal. Most items can be found for less in Bangkok or Hong Kong, or even in the United States. Singapore's strength is the sheer quantity and variety of merchandise

available. (Perhaps the best time to shop is during the six-week "Great Singapore Sale," generally beginning in late spring, when almost all the shops in town offer their best discounts.)

We recommend that you know exactly what big-ticket item you want before you leave home (including the model and make) and take note of what it costs at home when it's on sale. Once in Singapore, don't buy unless the item is far enough below the sale price to justify shipping or carrying it back and possibly paying import duty.

Fixed prices are the rule at department stores and at an increasing number of other outlets. Bargaining is mostly confined to smaller shops. But remember that, as a traveler, you may be at a disadvantage bargaining in these places, as you'll be viewed as having plenty of money. When bargaining in a flexible-price store, begin

by asking the retailer for his "best price" and then make your counteroffer. Once you agree on a price with the shopkeeper, you're expected not to back out, so don't be hasty and make an offer unless you're serious about buying. Generally you can expect to save 10%-30% through bargaining.

The Singapore Tourist Board's free publication, *Singapore Shopping*, summarizes the atmosphere and offerings of the major shopping areas. It's advisable to shop in stores displaying the red and white Merlion sticker in their windows—this indicates they are part of the Good Retailer Scheme, supported by the Singapore tourism authorities.

Remember that international visitors can get the government sales tax refunded. Request the tax refund form from your merchant and hand it in at the airport. (Allow extra time at the airport to take

care of this.) Visitors should also grab the free Tourist Tax Refund Guide, published by the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, which outlines the VAT refund process in greater detail.

Shopping Hours: Most stores and shopping centers are open daily 10 am-9:30 pm.

Antique Stores

Dempsey Road off Holland Road is lined with a number of antiques warehouses. Don't be turned off by the buses that drop tourists off. Expats and locals also shop there, but be sure to bargain. Most shops are open daily 11 am-6 pm.

Asiatique

14-A Dempsey Road
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6471-3146

<http://www.asiatiquecollections.com>

Sells antiques from China and the region, teak home furnishings, Asian carpets and fine arts.

Daily 11 am-7 pm.

Tong Mern Sern Antiques Arts & Crafts

51 Craig Road (in the heart of Chinatown)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6223-1037

<http://www.tmsantiques.com>

For those willing to dig through junk, true treasures such as antique Chinese bird cages and Dutch-influenced art-deco furniture can be found there.

Hours vary.

Bookstores

Books Actually

9 Yong Siak St.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6222-9195

<https://www.booksactuallyshop.com>

A small independent bookstore brimming with personality that has won the hearts of many locals and travelers. The owner Kenny Leck curates a sharp collection of literary titles, and also sells retro knick-knacks, handmade stationery and indie magazines.

Sunday and Monday 10 am-6 pm,
Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm.

Kinokuniya Books

391 Orchard Road, No. 3-10/15,

(Takashimaya Shopping Centre, Ngee Ann City; take the MRT to Orchard Station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6737-5021

<http://www.kinokuniya.com.sg>

This sprawling shop inside one of Singapore's nicest malls has an impressively large stock of English-language books, with special attention to books on the arts—especially Asian arts. A highly recommended browse, particularly in the fantastic magazine section. Other locations at Bugis Junction and Liang Court

Monday-Friday 10 am-9:30 pm,
Saturday and Sunday until 10 pm.

Department Stores

Mustafa Centre

320 Serangoon Road (at the corner of Syed Alwi Road)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6295-5855

<http://www.mustafa.com.sg>

A crazy maze of a department store, this place is six stories in two huge buildings connected by an overpass. You'll find all sorts of imported goods from India, from saris to sandalwood. Check out the eye-popping, elaborate gold creations in the two-story jewelry department. There's also a grocery store with shelf after shelf of boxed and tinned Indian food preparations. Just add water.

Daily 24 hours.

Takashimaya

391 Orchard Road (in the Ngee Ann City shopping complex; take the MRT to Orchard Station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6738-1111

<http://www.takashimaya-sin.com>

The island's largest department store is famous for its high-quality merchandise, fashions and jewelry.

Daily 10 am-9:30 pm.

Galleries

ART-2

140 Hill St., No. 01-01 (No. 01-03 MITA Building)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6338-8713

<http://www.art2.com.sg>

The gallery features works for sale by Singaporeans and Southeast Asian artists and is housed in the elegant old Hill Street Police Station. The MITA building houses a few other galleries as well.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm.

Objectifs

155 Middle Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6336-2957

<http://www.objectifs.com.sg>

While its core business is photography and film classes, there is a fascinating photography gallery there that is open to the public. This gallery exhibits works of local photographers based on prevailing social themes (e.g. migrant labor), giving uncanny insights into Singapore that you won't find in a guidebook.

Monday-Friday 11 am-7 pm, Saturday noon-6 pm.

Singapore Tyler Print Institute

41 Robertson Quay

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6336-3663

<http://www.stpi.com.sg>

The largest print workshop in Asia, the print institute has an enormous collection of international art on exhibit and for sale: paintings, sculptures, collages and drawings.

Monday-Friday 10 am-7 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm.

Utterly Art

20-B Mosque St. (Level 3)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 9487-2006

<http://www.utterlyart.com.sg>

The small but important and very active gallery offers a great introduction to Singapore's contemporary art scene, but also has a large selection of Filipino art and works by other Asian artists. The gallery specializes in paintings, but it

also has a small, interesting selection of sculpture and ceramics. Call Keng Hock for appointments.

Open Monday-Saturday noon-8 pm,
Sunday until 5:30 pm.

Markets

Bugis Village

Located just outside Bugis MRT station
Singapore, Singapore

<http://www.bugis-street.com>

This market comes as close to a *pasar malam* (night market) as you can find in modern Singapore. Shops and stalls there sell everything from CDs to clothes to handheld computer games and toys. Expect loud music and hawkers touting their wares, as well as a good selection of food stalls selling traditional snacks such as dragon-beard candy and hot buns. Things really come

to life between 7 pm and midnight, though the action spins all day long.

Kreta Ayer Wet Market

Kreta Ayer and Keong Siak roads (from North Bridge Road take SBS Bus 61, 103, 166 or 197), Chinatown
Singapore, Singapore

Named after the carts that used to deliver water (the water station was nearby), this Chinatown market sells exotic fresh meat, fish and produce. Arrive early (6 am or earlier) to watch local housewives bargain for such freshly prepared meats as turtles, frogs, black-skinned chicken and eels. A huge food center above the market offers local breakfast cuisine before or after your market tour.

Public Garden

Singapore, Singapore

<http://www.public-garden.com>

Here is where you'll find the bohemian, creative souls in Singapore peddling their handmade wares—from vintage clothes and cute little trinkets to colorful ceramics and homemade baked goodies. Held twice monthly at various locations; check website for details.

Shopping Areas

ION Orchard

2 Orchard Turn

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6238-8228

<http://www.ionorchard.com>

In Singapore, this is the shopping mall of all shopping malls, spanning over 640,000 sq ft/59,460 sq m and eight floors of shops and restaurants. It's the

first mall you'd see upon exiting Orchard MRT station, and has a good variety of mid- to high-end labels. Its circular, shimmering facade has become the highlight of Orchard Road. If there is just one shopping center to visit in Singapore, this would be it.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Raffles Hotel Shopping Arcade

Beach Road (behind the Raffles Hotel)

Singapore, Singapore

<http://www.raffles.com/singapore/guest-services/arcade/arcade>

This is the place to go if you're in the mood for brandishing that credit card and picking up quality goods. Otherwise, steer clear: Only top international brands or fine but costly local goods are sold there. The Raffles Hotel charm makes it a worthwhile shopping—or browsing—experience that's different

from the glitzy, modern malls of Orchard Road. Even the hotel souvenirs are a delight.

Daily 11 am-9 pm.

Sim Lim Square

1 Rochor Canal Road (take the MRT to Bugis station or Little India)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6338-3859

<http://www.simlimsquare.com.sg>

Floor after floor of shops selling the latest deals in electronics and computers. Some excellent bargains can be had, but make sure you haggle and check all warranties to make sure they're in effect internationally.

Daily 10:30 am-9 pm.

Singapore Handicraft Centre

Chinatown Point, 133 New Bridge Road (take the MRT to Chinatown station)

Singapore, Singapore

Lots of imported Chinese goodies in a number of small shops. Calligraphy scrolls, carved stamps, porcelain, wood carvings and jade all make great gifts and souvenirs. Also cosmetics, perfumes and other beauty products for sale.

Most shops open daily 10 am-6 pm.

Suntec City Mall

Raffles Boulevard and Nicoll Highway
(opposite the Marina Mandarin Hotel; main entrance is on 3 Temasek Boulevard)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6825-2669

<http://www.sunteccity.com.sg>

This mall is so big, there are buggies to take people from one end to the other (it takes 20 minutes to walk). Includes retail shops, entertainment centers, a megamarket (the massive Carrefour) and Fountain Court, where dozens of food outlets and restaurants surround what's billed as the world's largest fountain.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Tanglin Shopping Centre

19 Tanglin Road (between St. Regis and Orchard Parade hotels)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6877-1818

<http://www.tanglinsc.com>

For some reason, a lot of antiques, Asian carpet and art shops have gathered in this one shopping center, which makes for excellent browsing

through old curio items from China, Myanmar, India, Indonesia and beyond.

Most shops are open Monday-Saturday
10 am-6 pm.

The Centrepont

176 Orchard St. (near the Somerset MRT station)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 65-6737-9000

<http://www.thecentrepont.com.sg>

Located in the heart of Orchard Road, this is one of the most popular shopping centers among locals and tourists alike. Stores specialize in clothing, sporting goods and electronic equipment, and the center also is home to the flagship store of Robinsons & Co. Well-regarded by many for its quality goods and services, Robinsons & Co. attracts more

shoppers during its sale season than any other department store.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Specialty Stores

Ashley Isham

01-27 Orchard Central

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6509-5408

<http://www.ashleyisham.com>

Ashley Isham, currently based in London, is one of Singapore's most famous and successful fashion designers. Angelina Jolie, Christina Aguilera and Zara Philips are only three of his most distinguished clients who swear by his stylish, flamboyant and elegant creations. Mere mortals should check out his less pricey "diffusion line."

Daily 10 am-8 pm.

Atelier Ong Shunmugam

16 Raffles Quay, B1-36, Hong Leong Building
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6223-4804

<http://ongshunmugam.com>

If you want to get clothes by one of Singapore's hottest fashion designers, Priscilla Shunmugam, then this is the place to go for both ready-to-wear pieces or made-to-measure clothes. Ong Shunmugam, her womenswear label, is inspired by Asian heritage, and her thoughtful reinterpretation of tradition results in fashion that is feminine and romantic, yet cutting edge. Her cheongsams are especially delightful and pretty. For ready-to-wear purchases, walk-ins are accepted, but bespoke orders are by appointment only.

Monday-Friday noon-7 pm.

Eu Yan Sang Medical Hall

269A South Bridge Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6225-3211

<http://www.euyansang.com>

The oldest and best-known Chinese medical hall in town sells herbs and other traditional essences, teas, and roots said to cure just about anything. Most remedies come with English instruction, or opt for a friendly consultation given by a specialist for a flat fee of S\$12.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-6 pm.

Rumah Bebe

113 East Coast Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6247-8781

<http://www.rumahbebe.com>

Housed in a beautifully restored old Peranakan shop house from 1928 in Katong, this shop offers a very charming collection of arts and crafts produced in Malay-Chinese Peranakan style: colorful embroideries, beadworks, batik-textiles, jewelry and porcelain. You can watch beading demonstrations by Bebe Seet, the doyenne of Peranakan beadwork in Singapore.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-6:30 pm.

Sia Huat

20 Pandan Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6268-3922

<http://www.siahuat.com>

Even those who can't cook will find themselves yearning for the shiny industrial and domestic culinary

appliances at this chef's dream of an emporium in central Chinatown. Watch the door—it seems no one leaves without at least some small purchase sure to keep them at home for their next meal.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-6:15 pm.
Showroom by appointment only.

Soon Lee

73 Haji Lane

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6297-0198

<http://www.soonlee.sg>

A feel-good shop selling all things girly, including blouses, bags, books, homeware, cardigans and jewelry. It carries products by local designers, along with some indie fashion brands from Hong Kong, Korea, the Phillipines and the U.K.

Daily noon-9 pm.

Victor York

40B Boat Quay

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6220-5908

<http://www.victoryork.com>

Tailors can be very hit-or-miss around Asia, with more uneven sleeves than perfect fits. At Victor York, European fabrics and speedy service take Singapore tailoring up a notch. It will even send a tailor to your hotel room for measurements and delivery.

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-6:30 pm,
Saturday 11 am-4 pm.

Yue Hwa Chinese Products

70 Eu Tong Sen St. (from North Bridge Road
take SBS Bus 61, 103, 166 or 197)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6538-4222

<http://www.yuehwa.com.sg>

A five-story Chinese emporium selling everything from porcelain to silk cheongsams to Chinese tea leaves and medicines. An excellent selection of chinoiserie at affordable prices.

Sunday-Friday 11 am-9 pm, Saturday till 10 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

Singapore has a well-deserved reputation for satisfying the most discerning gourmet. Cuisines range from spicy Indian curries and tantalizing Chinese fare to Nyonya (a combination

of Chinese and Malay) delicacies, as well as the finest in French and Italian cooking.

However, restaurants in Singapore open and close with amazing rapidity, and key staff, responsible for a restaurant's success, job-hop with similar speed. New and exciting establishments pop up everywhere, in everything from restored shops to godowns (warehouses). Club Street, in the Tanjong Pagar district, offers a host of upscale restaurants and bistro-type establishments. Or try visiting one of Singapore's neighborhood food centers—bazaars with stalls offering Indian, Chinese, Indonesian and Malaysian food, all at very low prices.

You get the best value at the hawker centers, which are either open-air, with a common area for diners, or air-conditioned food courts occupying the basement or the top level of shopping

centers. For a glimpse of Chinatown's colorful past, visit the stretch of Smith Street known as "Food Street," where you'll find a long row of stalls offering a broad palette of local and other Asian hawker favorites. Popular with both locals and tourists, the streetside tables along Smith Street are usually packed during prime evening hours.

Two stretches along the Singapore River—Boat Quay and Clarke Quay—offer more than 35 alfresco and indoor establishments serving diverse cuisines. Boat Quay is the preferred destination for local workers from the financial district after they escape their offices. Expect aggressive hawking as you stroll along Boat Quay, which has even more dining places than does Clarke. (Best refusal: "Sorry, I've just eaten.")

General dining times are 7-10 am for breakfast, 11:30 am-2:30 pm for lunch and 7-10 pm for dinner. Most food

outlets stop serving dinner by 10 pm, although some hotel coffeehouses and many stalls at certain hawker centers are open throughout the night.

Reservations are generally not required at most restaurants but are recommended for large groups, on weekends and some public holidays.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than S\$15; \$\$ = S\$15-\$30; \$\$\$ = S\$31-\$75; and \$\$\$\$ = more than S\$75.

Local & Regional

Blue Ginger

97 Tanjong Pagar Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6222-3928

<http://www.theblueginger.com>

Serves up traditional Nonya fare such as *sambal* chili prawn and *otak otak* (fish grilled in banana leaves). Order plenty to drink because the chili factor can shock foreign taste buds. However, there are several items on the menu for the chili-intolerant: The steamed sea bass, *tahu* (bean curd) and grilled boneless chicken marinated with coconut milk and spices are all relatively mild.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended on weekends. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Chinatown Food Street (Smith Street)

Singapore, Singapore

[http://www.chinatown.sg/index.php?fx=directory
&g1=category&g2=2&g3=17&m=map](http://www.chinatown.sg/index.php?fx=directory&g1=category&g2=2&g3=17&m=map)

Whether you're hungry for noodles, dumplings, rice or an entire fried fish,

few places are as ambient—or economical—as Chinatown's Smith Street. Just order a la carte from any hawker cart and then take your tray to one of the tables in the street. (Don't worry, it's a pedestrian-only zone). We recommend the *kway teow*, a Singaporean classic of stir-fried noodles with cockles, scrambled eggs and chopped Chinese chives that, while originally created by poor Chinese fishermen in Singapore's early days, retains its popularity on the hawker stall circuit.

Most stalls open daily for dinner. \$.

Lagoon Hawker Centre

East Coast Lagoon Hawker Center

Singapore, Singapore

The best hawker-center setting in all of Singapore: a relaxed, spacious area looking out over the sea. Among the

local favorites, you'll find the best selection of *satay* in town at stall 17.

Daily except Tuesday for dinner, closed some Mondays. \$. No credit cards.

Lau Pa Sat Festival Market

18 Raffles Quay (between Robinson Road
and Shenton Way)
Singapore, Singapore

A huge food center without air-conditioning, it sells mainly local specialties augmented by Japanese and Korean cuisine. At night, Boon Tat Street, a road fronting the food center, is closed off and transformed into a lively dining area.

Open 24 hours daily. \$. No credit cards.

Makansutra Gluttons Bay

8 Raffles Ave. (along the edge of the Esplanade theater complex on Raffles Avenue)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6438-4038

<http://www.makansutra.com>

The concept is simple: a collection of Singapore's best hawkers without the maddening din. Instead, 12 stalls with outdoor seating for 500 line the Singapore riverfront. Signs in English, Chinese and Japanese give information about the vendors and the food served. Dine on affordable street eats such as *char siew baw* (stuffed pork buns), Indonesian-style *satay*, *mee goreng*, five-spice prawn fritters and Heng Heng's famous fried carrot cake. For those who want an unusual splurge, spend S\$50 or more on favorites among the various stalls, then settle down for an eight- to 10-course dinner with full waiter service.

Nightly for dinner (till 3 am on weekends). \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Maxwell Road Hawker Centre

1 Kadayanallur St. (Maxwell Food Centre)

Singapore, Singapore

This extremely popular, densely packed hawker center in Chinatown with more than 100 food stalls across three rows is a Singapore institution. Before you hit the stalls, reserve a seat by leaving a box of paper tissues. A favorite food stall is Tian Tian Hainanese Chicken Rice (Stall 10; daily except Monday 11 am-8 pm). The fragrant rice is cooked in chicken broth, served with succulent chicken meat and tastes absolutely fabulous. The impressive queue at noon (handled very efficiently by the vendors) doesn't lie. Another recommended stall is Senat Issan Thai (Stall 85). Try the spicy green Thai curry for S\$5; it may be

the best you will find in Singapore, and the cheapest, too. Other stalls sell exotic Chinese fare difficult to find in other food centers. Also recommended are 75 Peanuts Soup (Stall 57) and China Street Fritters (Stall 64), while lovers of noodle soup (with fish) should head straight to Jin Hua Sliced Fish Bee Hoon (Stall 77). Usually you won't pay more than S\$10 to fill up.

Most stalls are open daily for lunch and dinner. Some are closed on Monday, Tuesday, or on weekends. \$. No credit cards.

Newton Circus

Newton Circus (near Newton MTR)

Singapore, Singapore

Newton Circus caters to tourists, with higher prices than other hawker centers. Although this place serves mostly traditional street food, we recommend

its seafood dishes such as grilled prawns, grilled stingray with hot *sambal* (chili peppers combined with coconut or other ingredients), shellfish and *roti pratha* (fried Indian bread with curry), especially after a round of late-night clubbing. A word of warning—order all seafood very carefully. If you're not specific, you'll be given the most expensive catch, which will be charged by weight. Said to be a favorite of Hong Kong movie star Chow Yun-Fat, who eats there whenever he is in town.

Nightly for dinner until 4 am. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Straits Kitchen

10 Scotts Road (Grand Hyatt Hotel)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6732-1234

<http://www.singapore.grand.hyattrestaurants.com/straitskitchen>

Very popular stylish restaurant in the Grand Hyatt hotel designed like a very upmarket hawker food court. There you can sample all the culinary favorites of Singapore: Indian, Chinese, Malay and Indonesian dishes all prepared before your eyes, at fixed buffet prices. Try black-pepper crab or roasted duck, but leave room for the Peranakan desserts such as the homemade durian ice cream. Service and quality are both excellent, but stay away from the overpriced wines and stick to the delicious fresh juices.

Daily 6:30 am-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Ya Kun Kaya Toast

Multiple locations, including on Orchard Road in Takashimaya/Ngee Ann City Shopping Centre, Scotts Road in Far East Plaza, Sunte Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6222-4567

<http://www.yakun.com>

Since 1944, this local chain has been a favorite breakfast haunt for its grilled bread slices spread generously with *kaya*, a deliciously creamy mixture of coconut and egg infused with fragrant pandan leaves. Enjoy your toast by dipping it in soft-boiled egg with soy sauce, and have it with a cup of local coffee (known as *kopi*) or tea (*teh*). Additional locations throughout Singapore.

Daily 7:30 am-10 pm. \$. No credit cards.

Cuisines

Asian

Akashi

1 Tanglin Road (Tanglin Shopping Centre)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6732-4438

<http://www.akashigroup.com.sg>

The restaurant chain is reasonably priced, and the fish is fresh from the sea. The menu at these casual sushi spots is a standout for taste and value. Lunchtime draws office workers to its three bustling Central Business District locations, but dinner is a quieter affair. Expect to see visiting Japanese businesspeople and tourists laden with the day's purchases sit down to platters full of perfectly sliced pieces of raw fish and traditional Japanese cooked fare.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Banana Leaf Apolo

54-56 Race Course Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6293-8682

<http://www.thebananaleafapolo.com>

Arguably the top eatery in Little India, the two branches of this restaurant sit close together, one specializing in South Indian (largely vegetarian), the other North Indian (milder, with more chicken, mutton and seafood dishes). Curry dishes are served on banana leaves, and you eat with your right hand (the left is considered impure). Try the fish head curry and the spicy chili prawns. Inexpensive set lunch meals available, too.

Daily 10:30 am-10:30 pm. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Hai Tien Lo

7 Raffles Blvd.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6826-8240

http://www.panpacific.com/en/singapore/restaurants_bars/Hai_Tien_Lo.html

Considered by many to be the best Cantonese restaurant in Singapore, it has a menu with prices to match that reputation. Menu specials change with the seasons, but you can always count on perennial favorites such as Peking duck, barbecue suckling pig and house specialties, including baked codfish in champagne sauce or handmade spinach tofu. A wonderful experience in terms of food, service and ambience, and it's located on the 37th floor of the Pan Pacific Hotel with panoramic views of the city.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6:30-10:30 pm. Weekend reservations

recommended (ask for a table near the window). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Makan Dulu

865 Mountbatten Road (Katong Shopping Center)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6334-1012

<http://www.sundanesefood.com>

A satisfying taste of Indonesian cuisine in a casual setting with popular and traditional Indonesian music. Specialties include a range of charcoal-grilled dishes.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Rang Mahal

Pan Pacific Hotel, Level 3, 7 Raffles Blvd.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6333-1788

<http://www.rangmahal.com.sg>

Singapore's premier Indian restaurant. A stunningly elegant design serves as backdrop for truly excellent classical Indian cuisine. *Rogan josh* (lamb curry), *tandoori kumbh* (stuffed portobello mushroom) and stuffed prawns are some of the highlights. Sister locations in Hard Rock Hotel and Stadium Waterfront.

Daily noon-10:30 pm. Reservations available online or by phone. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Shinji by Kanesaka

76 Bras Basah Road (in the Carlton Hotel)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6338-6131

<http://www.shinjibykanezaka.com/raffles-place>

Singapore's best Japanese restaurant (and maybe one of the best outside of Japan), takes up a quiet hidden space in the famous Carlton Hotel. The main sushi counter is carved from a very old Japanese cypress tree. Sushi is simply spectacular there: Only the finest cuts of raw fish are served (in traditional Edomae style), and rice of the very best quality is prepared and cooked to perfection. If you want to splurge, order the Omakase dinner, which consists of sashimi, cooked food and sushi.

Monday-Saturday noon-3 pm and 6-10:30 pm. Reservations highly recommended. \$\$\$\$.

Shiraishi

7 Raffles Ave. (in the Ritz-Carlton Millenia Hotel)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6338-3788

<http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Singapore/Dining/shiraishi>

Singapore's best raw fish bites can be had at this chic sliver of a restaurant inside the Ritz-Carlton Millenia Hotel. Seats at the sushi bar fill up early with homesick Japanese and discerning locals willing to pay for premium cuts of the freshest fish, flown in daily from Japan.

Daily noon-2:30 pm and 6-10 pm.
Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$.
Most major credit cards.

Silk Road

165 Tanjong Pagar Road (Amara Hotel, Level 2)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6879-2555

<http://www.silkroadrestaurants.com>

The glass-floor entrance, embedded with verses from a famous Chinese poem, is just the beginning of a beautiful dining experience. The kitchen offers cuisine from all major stops along the Chinese stretch of the historic Silk Road. You may find something mild there, but the specialties are the spicy items of the Chinese southwest. The kung pao chicken and braised eggplant in a torrid sauce are great, and don't miss the house-made shaved noodles. There also are nice, light desserts to cool the fires.

Daily 11:30 am-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Summer Pavilion Restaurant

7 Raffles Ave. (in the Ritz-Carlton Millenia Hotel)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6434-5286

<http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Singapore/Dining/SummerPavilion>

This is a don't-miss dining experience. The style is light Cantonese. Especially recommended are the duck slices with mango as a starter, followed by steamed prawns with garlic, the rack of lamb in black-bean sauce and any of the exquisite desserts.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6:30-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$.
Most major credit cards.

Tatsu Sushi

30 Victoria St. (No. 01-16 Block F, CHIJMES)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6332-5868

<http://www.tatsu.com.sg>

A popular spot with both the working Singaporean lunch crowd and Japanese executives at night. Try the fresh *bento* set lunches, which include succulent sashimi and sushi. All ingredients are imported directly from Tokyo's Tsuji Market. For dinner, you can either order a la carte or ask them to plan a dinner menu for you.

Daily noon-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

French

DB Bistro Moderne

2 Bayfront Ave. (The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6688-8525

<http://www.dbbistro.com/singapore>

Michelin envoys have one more reason to go snooping around Singapore's new French eateries. While some are very expensive, formal affairs, French chef Daniel Boulud has opted for smart casual Parisian-bistro style, and his Marina Bay Sands restaurant is the talk of the town. Enjoy modern culinary creations with a twist such as duck confit, tuna tartare, fresh oysters, foie gras terrine, sablefish, *assiette lyonnaise* and tarte flambee, or just choose the signature DB burger. The coq au vin is just as good as the seafood risotto, and best enjoyed with one of the 30 wines served by the glass.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations highly recommended for dinner Thursday-Sunday. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon

8 Sentosa Gateway, Hotel Michael Level 1
Sentosa Island, Singapore

Phone: 6577-6888

<http://www.joel-robuchon.com/en/restaurants-singapour-atelier.php>

One of the award-winning celebrity restaurants in Resorts World Sentosa to cater to its wealthy clientele. Here, guests are seated up close to the central kitchen where they can watch chefs create artistic masterpieces. You can even interact with the chefs to discuss how you would like to create your meal, and they will be happy to oblige. It's French cuisine, but served in small, tapas-style portions that are paired with wines. To make the most of this experience, opt for the 10-course Discovery Menu (S\$240).

Thursday-Monday 5:30-10:30 pm.
Reservations available online. \$\$\$\$.

Le Carillon de l'Angelus

24 Ann Siang Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6423-0353

<http://www.lecarillondelangelus.sg>

This restaurant, located in a prewar shop-house, has served satisfying French comfort food since it opened in 1998. Everything about it is French, from its Parisian owners to its warm chocolate cake with a melted chocolate center. Inside the high-ceilinged room, crisp white-linen-covered tables are set spaciouly apart. Its outside dining area is romantic, but make reservations if you want to dine alfresco, because there are only two tables outside.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner,
Saturday for dinner only. \$\$\$\$. Most
major credit cards.

Les Amis

1 Scotts Road (Shaw Towers No. 02-14/16)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6733-2225

<http://www.lesamis.com.sg>

Top French cuisine and one of the premier wine lists in town. One of the best restaurants in Singapore, Le Amis excels at turning out French dishes in the classical tradition with some pleasing original touches. Special dishes there include a French variation of roasted suckling pig and lamb roasted with Pauillac wine.

Monday-Saturday noon-2 pm and 7-9:30 pm. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Restaurant Andre

41 Bukit Pasoh Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6534-8880

<http://restaurantandre.com>

This unique shophouse restaurant serving progressive French cuisine has won the respect of epicureans worldwide. The dynamic and young Chef Andre Chiang ascribes to Octaphilosophy, a set of eight characteristics that every meal should encapsulate. As such, the menu each day is always unexpected and goes by the broad themes of Unique, Texture, Memory, Pure, Terroir, Salt, South and Artisan. He is also one of the few chefs in Singapore who tries to use as much local produce as possible.

Open Tuesday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for dinner only. Reservations available. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

St. Pierre

31 Ocean Way, Quayside Isle

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6438-0887

<http://www.saintpierre.com.sg>

Owner-chef Emmanuel Stroobant is widely considered Singapore's top chef, and there is no doubt why. Stroobant offers an innovative take on French cuisine, turning out standards such as *tournedos a la Rossini* with seared lamb fillet wrapped in phyllo pastry and nori leaves with a red miso sauce.

Tuesday-Friday 11:30 am-3 pm, daily 6:30-11 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Fusion

Buko Nero

126 Tanjong Pagar Road

Singapore, Singapore

The name may be Italian for "hole in the wall," but this tiny dining secret boasts the 20 most sought-after seats in Singapore, thanks to the delicious Italian and Asian dishes from a husband-and-wife chef duo. Book at least one month ahead and let your mouth start watering for signature dishes such as Tau Kwa Tower, pan-fried bean curd topped with veggies and sauced with *kecap manis*, or the inventive polenta-crusted trout served with cherry tomatoes in a seafood bisque reduction sauce. Save room for dessert.

\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The Rice Table

360 Orchard Road, No. 02-09 (International Building)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6835-3783

<http://www.ricetable.com.sg>

One of the few places in town that serves *rijsttafel*, a traditional fusion of Dutch and Indonesian tastes served in numerous small courses brought to your table. Pay one price and savor up to 20 dishes in portions small enough for a juicy bite of each—it's a fabulous way to try many dishes without committing yourself to a whole plateful. The restaurant is decorated with shadow puppets, face masks and carvings to give it an Indonesian feel. Great for large groups and festive occasions.

Daily noon-2:30 pm and 6-9:30 pm.
Reservations recommended. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tippling Club

38 Tanjong Pagar Road
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6475-2217

<http://www.tipplingclub.com>

Another chef in Singapore with rave reviews is Briton Ryan Clift, who makes it a point to weave in local food influences with his inventive gastronomic concoctions. The cocktails are just as colorful, and despite how zany some of the dishes might seem (think deconstructed chicken curry and Styrofoam truffle), they are always accessible and delicious.

Monday-Friday noon-midnight, Saturday 6 pm-midnight. Reservations available online or by phone. \$\$\$\$.

Greek

Blu Kouzina

893 Bukit Timah Road

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6875-0872

Walking into the Kouzina is like walking into a light-blue and white Mediterranean dream. Singapore's most popular (and probably only) Greek restaurant is a charming family affair occupying three levels. For starters, sample the tasty mezes, the Greek version of tapas, or order a succulent Greek salad of feta cheese, cucumbers, onions, tomatoes and black olives, before you move on to grilled lamb chops with fried potatoes, roasted red pimiento peppers and eggplant, or grilled whole sea bream prepared with only a sprinkle of lemon, olive oil and herbs. For dessert try the warm, syrupy baklava (prepared with walnuts). Everything is prepared with extra-virgin olive oils, made from hand-picked organic olives at the owners' family estate in Greece (for sale in the restaurant).

Daily 11:30 am-3 pm and 5-9:30 pm.
Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most
major credit cards.

Italian

Da Paolo

80 Club St.

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6479-6522

<http://www.dapaolo.com.sg>

One of the first hip little eateries to open in an old Chinese shop-house, this authentic Italian place is still a hot spot. The ground floor offers elegant, intimate dining—or head upstairs for a romantic retreat with sunlight streaming through the tall windows. Sink your teeth into the succulent buffalo mozzarella salad, then indulge in house-made seafood pasta or the fettuccine *vegetale*.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner.
\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Michelangelo's

Chip Bee Gardens, Block 44, No. 01-60, Jalan
Merah Saga (opposite Holland Village)
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6475-9069

<http://www.michelangelos.com.sg>

This cozy restaurant remains a favorite, even though it faces stiff competition. Named after its owner, Michelangelo's serves hearty portions of pasta and tantalizing sauces. Try the squid-ink or vodka cream pasta, which are light and flavorful. The fish dishes are also quite good. If nothing on the menu interests you, the chef will prepare a special dish to order.

Tuesday-Sunday 11:30 am-2:30 pm and
6-10:30 pm. Reservations required on

weekends. Reservations recommended.
\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Pizzeria Mozza

10 Bayfront Ave. (The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands)

Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6688-8522

<http://singapore.pizzeriamozza.com>

The restaurants at the Marina Bay Sands are usually pricey, but co-owner and pizza superstar Mario Batali from New York and Filipina executive chef Karla Mendoza make sure that the wood-fired crispy pizzas are not only the best you will find in Singapore, but they won't break the bank either. Do try the antipasti and the pasta dishes, too. The next-door Osteria Mozza is a more refined affair.

Daily noon-11 pm. Reservations available online or by phone. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$.

Most major credit cards.

Spanish

Esquina

16 Jiak Chuan Road
Singapore, Singapore

Phone: 6222-1616

<http://www.esquina.com.sg>

Singapore's best tapas restaurant is the brainchild of British chef Jason Atherton, who has teamed up with critically acclaimed Singapore hotelier and restaurateur Loh Lik Peng. The Esquina (Spanish for "corner") is an intimate casual affair with a stainless-steel counter, where you can sample all the Iberian delicacies you'd expect in Barcelona or Madrid. Do try *jamon*

iberico (Iberico ham), squid-ink paella, ox cheek *oloroso* braised in sherry, or baked bone marrow served in the bone with pieces of escargot. Interesting wine list with some good Spanish sherries. Service can be slow at times, and the restaurant won't seat more than maybe 20 guests, so be prepared to wait.

Monday-Friday noon-2:30 pm and 6-10:30 pm, Saturday 6-10:30 pm.

Reservations available online.

Reservations not accepted. \$\$-\$\$\$.

Most major credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

English is taught in schools, so many people, including most taxi drivers, speak and understand the language. You will hear plenty of Singlish, though—a truly indigenous blend of

English and various local dialects that has an engaging ring to it. Don't be surprised if you hear the taxi driver say "OK lah?" (*lah* is often added at the end of a phrase). Certain shorthand phrases of English have also worked their way into the mainstream dialect: Your sales assistant may say "Can or not?" during your fitting, wondering simply if the item meets with your approval.

Businesspeople in Singapore expect the people they're dealing with to be fairly punctual for meetings and dinners. Upon meeting, they give and receive business cards with both hands after the handshake. (Admire the card for a few moments before placing it on the table in front of you to help you remember the person's name.) Meetings might take place anywhere—in boardrooms, restaurants and even on golf courses. Because of the humid tropical heat, businesspeople seldom wear suits (although if you are in development,

finance or sales, we recommend wearing one). Most wear casual clothes, though men usually wear ties. Slacks and pantsuits are fine for women. Modesty is more important than formality. Do not be put off if your business associate in Singapore prefers to communicate via e-mail or text message; they are the de facto platforms of communication, given that 87% of Singapore's population are smartphone users. Likewise, do not be offended if people are checking their phones during business meetings or networking sessions, even if they are having a conversation with you. It is part of the prevalent multitasking culture.

The service culture is not strong, so lower your expectations in retail shops and hotels when it comes to customer service. The upside is that efficiency is valued in this society, so most of the time, you will get what you ask for, but

perhaps not in the most courteous and friendly of ways.

If you are unsure about customs—for example, what to wear to a wedding or what sort of gift to give for any occasion—consult your hotel's concierge. Some local customs are contrary to Western ideas, and it's best to be on the safe side. Clocks and knives, for example, are considered inappropriate gifts in the Chinese tradition.

Personal Safety

Singapore has earned the distinction of being one of the most crime-free countries in the world. The streets are quite safe at all times of the day and usually at night. Many are patrolled by hidden police cameras. Still, pickpockets and purse snatchers occasionally prey on unsuspecting victims, particularly in hawker centers, food courts and

shopping centers. It's wise to avoid dark and secluded streets, particularly in the lower Geylang area, and especially if you're alone.

Try to keep your bag or purse zipped up at all times and close by your side.

Similarly, be wary in crowded areas, as terrorists have been known to target Westerners and Americans, and avoid all public demonstrations, which are illegal in Singapore and may lead to fines or worse for participants.

For police, dial 999, or for the police hotline, dial 6225-0000. For ambulance services, dial 995.

For more information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

The authorities have stringent standards for water treatment, so tap water is safe

to drink anywhere on the island. Still, travelers may want to err on the side of caution and drink bottled water, which is available in all supermarkets and restaurants. Food sold on the streets and in food outlets is equally safe, as long as it has been freshly cooked.

All food outlets are issued a hygiene rating by the Environment Ministry, ranging from an A to a D (you're safest staying with A- and B-rated establishments). Rating certificates are prominently displayed, usually at the entrance of a restaurant or on the front of a food stall. But do be careful when eating seafood (especially dishes that use raw fish, cockles or oysters).

Recent years have seen a rise in dengue fever, a virus spread through a bite from an *Aedes* mosquito. Once infected, the victim experiences high fever and rash, which, if left untreated, can lead to internal bleeding and shock.

If you're spending a lot of time outdoors, it is advisable to apply mosquito repellent along with sunscreen.

Avian influenza, or bird flu, does not pose a problem for the average visitor to Singapore, and all attractions that feature birds have taken very stringent precautions to protect their species from infection.

Food- and waterborne illnesses usually lead to vomiting and diarrhea. We recommend taking along a diarrhea medicine to treat mild cases yourself.

All general physicians speak English, and clinics are registered with the Singapore Medical Association, a government-appointed agency. You can receive emergency care at hospitals 24 hours a day. A centrally located private hospital with excellent international healthcare standards, Mount Elizabeth Hospital, is located just off Orchard

Road at 3 Mount Elizabeth (phone 6737-2666). For Accidents and Emergency at Mount Elizabeth, call 6731-2218 or 6731-2219; for an ambulance, call 6473-2222.

<http://www.hospitals.sg/hospital/mount-elizabeth-hospital>.

Major hotels have in-house doctors.

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do call for a taxi booking if you're at an outlying area or stranded during rush hour. It can save lots of hassle with little additional cost.

Don't put anyone's business card into your pocket immediately upon receiving it. Take a second to read it, perhaps

comment about it and keep it visible for a bit before stowing it. It's a sign of respect.

Do feel free to mingle with your Singaporean hosts. Because most locals speak English, it's easier to make friends in Singapore than it is in many other foreign countries.

Do speak a little slower than usual though to ensure you're being understood. There's a tendency for many Singaporeans to nod even if they don't understand what you're saying. And if your accent is different from the Singaporean accent, it is likely that some words may get garbled along the way.

Do visit a mosque. In multicultural Singapore, these beautiful buildings are open for anyone to view; just be sure to dress modestly (which means women shouldn't bare shoulders or knees) and,

if you are not Muslim, respect areas reserved for Muslims.

Don't jaywalk, litter (especially chewing gum), smoke in public areas, forget to flush a public toilet or stand near your hotel window immodestly. If you are seen in a state of undress it is considered pornography, and you will be charged with breaking the law, even though it might seem from a Western perspective that the viewer is a Peeping Tom. In fact, to report you is a civic duty.

Do take off your shoes when entering a temple, mosque and some shops—and do the same when entering a person's home.

Don't point with one finger when trying to get someone's attention, as this is seen as rude. Rather, wave your hand if you need to attract someone's attention.

Don't feel offended if passersby don't respond if you smile or greet them. People in Singapore are generally somewhat shy. However, if you initiate a conversation about what to do in Singapore, most will enthusiastically recommend their favorite spots.

Do be adventurous in trying local food if you don't have any food allergies. It's a good way to experience local life through the multicultural offerings such as chili crab, chicken rice, and rojak (a salad with prawn paste sauce).

Singaporeans get particularly excited when foreign friends are game enough to partake of the country's favorite fruit, the durian: a green, thorny fruit with yellow, custardy flesh inside and a pungent smell that has been described as resembling sewage or ripe cheese.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need a passport with at least six months' validity, proof of onward passage and sufficient funds for the length of their stay. Visas are not required. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

Population: 5,187,930.

Languages: The national language is Malay, and English is the official government administrative language. The official languages are Chinese, Malay, English and Tamil. English is understood and widely used.

Predominant Religions: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Taoist.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 65, country code;

Money

Currency Exchange

The local currency is Singapore dollars (S\$2, S\$5, S\$10, S\$50, S\$100, S\$500, S\$1,000 and S\$10,000—the world's most valuable banknote) and cents (S\$0.01, S\$0.05, S\$0.10, S\$0.20, S\$0.50 and S\$1 coins). It is one of the most stable currencies in Southeast Asia.

Traveler's checks and foreign currencies can be changed at most banks and licensed money changers. Authorized money changers offer more competitive rates than banks, but because rates vary only slightly, for small amounts there is little difference between the two. Money changers are found throughout the shopping and business districts as well as the Departure Check-in Hall,

Arrival Hall and Departure/Transit Lounge at the airport. You'll get the best rates in the Orchard Road, Raffles City and Chinatown areas; your hotel will likely give you the worst rates.

ATMs are available at major shopping centers and business districts as well as at the airport's Terminals 1 and 2. Be aware that, in Singapore, ATMs do not give the best rates. If you find yourself in need of quick cash, however, ATMs do accept Visa and MasterCard as well as cards for the Cirrus, Plus and Star networks.

The banks in Singapore include DBS Singapore, United Overseas Bank (UOB), Citibank, Standard Chartered Bank, HSBC Bank and OCBC Bank. Banking hours are generally Monday-Friday 9:30 am-3 pm, Saturday 9-11:30 am. Some banks may have extended hours.

Taxes

The 7% Goods and Services Tax (GST) is refundable. This tax applies to all goods that have been imported into Singapore for sale. If you are not a resident, you qualify for a refund provided you spend a minimum of S\$100 on goods displaying the tax-refund logo and take the goods out of the country within two months of purchase.

After making purchases, ask for a GST shopping check (have your passport with you to verify your eligibility for a refund). Before you check your bags at the airport, customs officials will verify your goods and stamp your check. Then take the check to the Asia Tax Free Shopping refund counter for an immediate refund. Grab a *How to Shop Tax-Free in Singapore* pamphlet at the airport or any visitor center for more information.

Tipping

Tipping is not required in Singapore and is somewhat discouraged in hotels and restaurants where there is a 10% service charge. You may, however, tip when the bill does not include a service charge or when you feel the service has been exceptional. Many people simply round up the total on the bill and leave the difference as a tip. No tips are paid to taxi drivers, who may even try to return the funds.

Weather

Like most of Southeast Asia, Singapore is generally hot and humid. Average temperatures hover around 86 F/30 C and seldom dip below 75 F/22 C.

November and December is the rainy season. June-August is considered to be the best time to visit, but even then it rains often. Don't let the climate stop you from visiting, however. Most

buildings are air-conditioned (to the point that you may want to take a sweater), and pains have been taken to make everything as comfortable as can be, all things considered. When it does rain, it's generally only for a short period.

What to Wear

In such a cosmopolitan and multicultural city, diversity is the operative word when it comes to styles of dress. Wearing outfits common to any of the four main cultural groups is acceptable almost any time of the day, anywhere and for whatever occasion. However, as the weather in Singapore is warm and humid most of the time, light summer clothing (especially natural fibers) is recommended. The sunlight can be harsh, so wearing a cap or hat will help to prevent sunburn.

People in Singapore generally dress casually if they're not at work. Wearing a

T-shirt with jeans or Bermuda shorts is common, and most people are open to wearing sandals or slippers on their days off. For sightseeing, it's best to avoid wearing shorts, short skirts and tops that reveal the shoulders and upper arms. Temples, mosques and churches require modest attire to enter. Slip-on shoes are also a good idea, as it is customary to remove shoes in many of these places.

For work, smart casual is standard, which for men means shirts (long- or short-sleeve, but not T-shirts), trousers and shoes (not athletic shoes). For women, slacks and pantsuits are suitable, along with pumps or strappy heels. Smart casual is acceptable everywhere except for formal business dining or when other dress is specified in an invitation.

Singaporeans love their interiors to feel like an igloo, so it's a good idea to pack

a cardigan or light jacket you can throw on indoors. This will lower the risk of catching a cold, even though the outdoor temperatures will likely feel high. Unexpected rain in Singapore is to be expected, so a collapsible umbrella is a useful item to carry along.

WELCOME HOME!