



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

Singapore



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Southeast Asia.

Time: GMT + 8.

Singapore Tourism Board in the UK

1st Floor, Carrington House, 126-130 Regent Street, London W1B 5JX, UK Tel: (020) 7437 0033 or (08080) 656 565 (toll-free in the UK). Website: www.visitsingapore.com

High Commission for the Republic of Singapore in the UK

9 Wilton Crescent Belgravia, London SW1X 8SP, UK Tel: (020) 7235 8315. Website: www.mfa.gov.sg/london Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700; 1000-1230 and 1400-1600 (visa section).

Embassy of the Republic of Singapore in the USA

3501 International Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 537 3100. Website: www.mfa.gov.sg/washington

Singapore Tourism Board in the USA

1156 Avenue of the Americas Suite 702 New York NY 10036 USA Tel: (212) 302 4861. Website: www.visitsingapore.com

2 OVERVIEW

'The East's great cultural melting pot'

Singapore, the stunning centrepiece of southeast Asia, is a cultural pot pourri that leaves the unsuspecting visitor dazzled by the containment of so many influences upon one small island. Sir Stamford Raffles, a 19th-century British civil servant, brought the 'Lion City' to world prominence after searching for a trading station to counter the Dutch influence in the Straits of Malacca, and trade has remained the island's mainstay. Singapore is a happy collision of opposites – grand and expensive at the famed Raffles Hotel, but low-key and cheap in the food markets of Bugis Junction and Clarke Quay. City attractions include unrivalled shopping in Orchard Road, the cultural quarters of Chinatown, Geylang Serai and Little India with the world's first night safari. An incredibly clean city, nothing is allowed to dull the shine – even down to the banning of chewing gum. Yet the natural world is never far away, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve has a significant area of primary rainforest within its boundaries, while for the adventurous Sungei Buluh Nature Park offers the chance for trekking. Check out Pulau Ubin's mangrove forest, a bumboat's ride from Changi jetty, or Kusu site of Taoists' annual pilgrimage. Culture lovers can enjoy the fusion of Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures, the main ethnic groups, with museums, gardens, parks, mosques, temples and synagogues testimony to the island's rich national heritage.

Simon Evans



3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 659.9 sq km (254.8 sq miles).

Population: 4.4 million (UN, 2005).

Population Density: 6,667.7 per sq km.

Capital: Singapore City. Population: 4.2 million (2005).

GEOGRAPHY: The island of Singapore is situated off the southern extremity of the Malay Peninsula, to which it is joined by a causeway carrying a road, railway and waterpipe. The Johor Strait between the island and the mainland is about 1km (0.8 miles) wide. The Republic of Singapore includes some 64 islets. It is a mainly flat country with low hills, the highest being Bukit Timah at 163m (545ft). In the northeast of the island, large areas have been reclaimed, and much of the original jungle and swamp covering the low-lying areas has been cleared.

Government: Republic. Gained full independence from the UK in 1965. Head of State: President Sellapan Ramanathan since 1999, re-elected in 2005. Head of Government: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong since 2004. Recent history: In both January 1997 and September 2001, opposition parties decided to contest only a small proportion (about one-third) of the 83 seats. Not surprisingly, the People's Action Party (PAP) won both polls comfortably. Goh was widely expected to stand down in favour of Lee Junior and, indeed, finally did so in August 2004. In September 2005, Sellapan Ramanathan began his second six-year term as President of Singapore. He won the election after the other contenders were disqualified for not meeting the strict selection criteria. The Parliament is unicameral; executive power nominally rests with the President, but is effectively wielded by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet: the Presidency is a largely ceremonial post whose incumbent is elected by Parliament to serve a six-year term. The 93-member Parliament is elected for a five-year term; apart from nine Presidential appointees, its members are elected under a constituency system.

Language: Mandarin Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil. Most Singaporeans are bilingual and speak English, which is used as the main language of communication.

Religion: Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim.

Electricity: 220/240 volts AC, 50Hz. Plug fittings of the three-pin square type are in use. Many hotels have 110-volt outlets.

Social Conventions: Handshaking is the usual form of greeting, regardless of race. Social courtesies are often fairly formal. When invited to a private home or entering a temple or mosque, remove your shoes. For private visits, a gift is appreciated and, if on business, a company souvenir is appropriate. Dress is informal. Most first-class restaurants and some hotel dining rooms expect men to wear a jacket and tie in the evenings; a smart appearance is expected for business meetings. Evening dress for local men and women is unusual. Each of the diverse racial groups in Singapore has retained its own cultural and religious identity while developing as an integral part of the Singapore community. Over 50 per cent of the population is under 20 years of age. Laws relating to jaywalking, littering and chewing gum are strictly enforced in urban areas. Smoking is widely discouraged and illegal in enclosed public places (including restaurants). Dropping a cigarette end in the street or smoking illegally can lead to an immediate fine of up to S\$500.



Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	1	Yes
Australian	Yes	1	Yes
Canadian	Yes	1	Yes
USA	Yes	1	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	1	Yes
Japanese	Yes	1	Yes

Note: (a) Women more than 24 weeks pregnant or more must obtain a letter from a doctor confirming that it is safe for them to travel and a Social Visit Pass For Expectant Mothers prior to arrival; apply at the High Commission or Embassy. (b) Severe penalties are imposed on those found in possession of narcotics; the death penalty is in force for those convicted of trafficking in heroin or morphine.

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least six months beyond date of departure required by all.

VISAS: Required only by the following: (a) nationals of China (PR), CIS, Hong Kong (SAR), India, Macau (SAR) and Myanmar;(b) nationals of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (temporary passport only) and Yemen.

Note: 1. All other nationals require a Social Visit Pass, which is issued on arrival, provided the traveller holds a valid passport, sufficient funds to cover stay in Singapore, confirmed onward/return tickets and entry documentation for further destinations. For nationals holding British and Irish passports, the maximum length of stay is 30 days, for other nationals, the maximum length of stay is 14 days. Visitors on a Social Visit Pass are not permitted to work in Singapore. Extensions of up to 90 days can be applied for at the time.

Types of visa and cost: Entry Visa, Social Visit (short- or long-term; S\$20), Business Visit (£6.70), Student's Pass and Transit. For any extension of pass accumulating to a period of three months or more from the date of entry/issue and for every subsequent extension accumulating to three months or more, the cost is usually S\$40. Payment by NETS or CashCard is preferable. Application packs with instructions and prevailing visa costs at the time of application are obtainable from the High Commission (see Passport Visa Information).

Validity: At the discretion of the ICA.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at High Commission or Embassy); see Passport Visa Information.

Application requirements: (a) Completed application form(s). (b) Two recent passport size photos. (c) Photocopies of valid passport. (d) Visa fee (payable by cash or postal order only). (e) Self-addressed, special delivery envelope if applicant wishes documents to be returned. (f) Letter of introduction form with signature of local sponsor (required by all except nationals of India and China (PR). Business: (a)-(f) and, (g) Printout of Singapore registered company's detailed



business profile from ACRA. Social Visit: (a)-(f) and, (g) Local contact's Singapore identity card and photocopy. (h) Letter from the applicant's employer or unemployment booklet. Student Pass: (a)-(g) and (h) Applicant's birth certificate. (i) Applicant's highest education certificates. (j) Proof of financial means if applicant is from a country that always requires a visa.

Working days required: From two to four weeks for Level 2 nationals. Four working days for Level 1 nationals. However, it is still advisable to allow plenty of time. For those applying for student visas, allow two to six months.

Temporary residence: Apply to Consulate (or Consular section of High Commission or Embassy), who will forward application to the authorities in Singapore.

Passport/Visa Information: High Commission for the Republic of Singapore in the UK9 Wilton Crescent Belgravia, London SW1X 8SP, UK Tel: (020) 7235 8315. Website: www.mfa.gov.sg/london Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700; 1000-1230 and 1400-1600 (visa section). Embassy of the Republic of Singapore in the USA3501 International Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 537 3100. Website: www.mfa.gov.sg/washington

4 MONEY

Currency: Singapore Dollar (SGD; symbol S\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of S\$10,000, 1000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 2. Coins are in denominations of S\$1, and 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 cents. The currency of Brunei is also legal tender; 1 Brunei Dollar = 1 Singapore Dollar. US Dollars, Australian Dollars, Yen and Pounds Sterling are also accepted at most major shopping centres in Singapore.

Currency exchange: Foreign currencies, traveller's cheques and cheques can be changed at most banks and licensed money changers; however, some do not offer this service on Saturday. ATMs are widespread.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other facilities which may be available.

Traveller's cheques: To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Pounds Sterling. A passport is required when cashing traveller's cheques.

Currency restrictions: There is no restriction on the import and export of local or foreign currency.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=SGD2.89 \$1.00=SGD1.63

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1500, Sat 0930-1300 (some are open until 1500). Branches of certain major banks on Orchard Road open Sun 0930-1500.



5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Singapore by persons aged 18 years and older without **incurring customs duty**: 1l of spirits, 1l of wine and 1l of beer.

Note: These allowances do not apply if arriving from Malaysia.

Restricted items: Fruit, vegetables, fish, arms, toy guns and weapons. Chewing gum and tobacco products must be declared upon arrival.

Prohibited items: Liquor or cigarettes with "Singapore duty not paid" on the label, carton or packet, cigarettes with the prefix 'E' printed on the packet, cigarette lighters of revolver or pistol shape, controlled drugs or psychotropic substances, firecrackers, endangered species of wildlife and their byproducts, all pornographic films and literature, reproduction of copyright publications, videotapes, video compact discs, laser discs, records or cassettes. Export permits are required for arms, ammunition, explosives, animals, telecommunications equipment, film and videotapes and discs, precious metals and stones, drugs and poisons. The penalties for possession of narcotics are severe and visitors not complying with drug regulations do so at the risk of death.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 10 Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 29-31 Chinese New Year. Apr 14 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. May 13 Vesak (Birth of Buddha). Aug 9 National Day. Oct 21 Diwali. Oct 22-24 Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadan). Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 31 Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Feb 18-20 Chinese New Year. Apr 6 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. May 2 Vesak (Birth of Buddha).

Note: (a) Not all Muslim festivals listed above are national holidays, but all will affect Muslim businesses. Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Hari Raya Puasa (Eid al-Fitr), Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Hari Raya Puasa itself. Hari Raya Puasa and Hari Raya Haji (Eid al-Adha) may last anything from two to 10 days, depending on the town. For more information, see the World of Islam appendix. (b) Hindu festivals are declared according to local astronomical observations and it is only possible to forecast the month of their occurrence.

7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	No	1
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A



1: A yellow fever certificate of vaccination is required from persons over one year of age who have been in or passed through any country classified either partly or wholly as a yellow fever endemic zone within the previous six days. The countries formerly classified as endemic zones are considered by the Singapore authorities to be still infected.

Other risks: Hepatitis A and E are widespread; hepatitis B is hyperendemic. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix. HIV testing is required for workers who earn less than S\$1250 per month and for applicants for permanent resident status. Foreign test results are not accepted.

Health care: Singapore General Hospital receives emergency cases and health care is exceptionally good. There is a large private sector. Health insurance is recommended, as there is no reciprocal health agreement with the UK.

Travel - International

AIR: Singapore's national airline is Singapore Airlines (SQ) (website: www.singaporeair.com). Singapore is a major travel destination served by most major international airlines. There are direct flights to Singapore from a number of cities in Canada, the UK and USA.

Approximate flight times: From Singapore to London is 14 hours, to Los Angeles is 17 hours 25 minutes, to New York is 24 hours five minutes and to Sydney is nine hours 15 minutes.

Main airports: Changi (SIN) (website: www.changi.airport.com.sg) is 20km (12 miles) east of the city (travel time 30 minutes). To/from the airport: Public transport is readily available to the city centre which is about 16km (10 miles) from the airport. Taxi fare is S\$16-24 (there is a surcharge of S\$3 for all fares from the airport, increasing to S\$5 for fares between 1700-0000, Fri-Sat. The midnight surcharge, 0000-0600, is 50 per cent of the metered fare). There is a regular bus route between the airport and the train station. The Mass Rapid Transit train system now operates from the airport to the city centre and trains depart every 12 minutes. The Maxicab, a six-seater taxi shuttle, operates daily 0900-2300 and tickets cost S\$7 (children: S\$5); tickets must be bought in advance from the shuttle service counter in the arrivals hall. Free New Asia Singapore Tours are available at no charge for transit passengers with a minimum layover of four hours. Passengers can sign up for a tour at a Free New Asia Singapore Tour counter located in the airport's transit areas. Facilities: Fitness centre, swimming pool, supermarket, medical clinics and full banking services (including money changing) to business centres and transit hotels with private bathrooms (advance booking is recommended for the hotels). There are left luggage facilities, post offices, bars and restaurants, extensive duty free shops and car hire operators.

Departure tax: None.

SEA: Main ports: Singapore. The world's busiest in terms of tonnage, it is served by a growing number of international passenger cruise lines. Cruising is one of the fastest-growing tourist development areas in Singapore and there are plans to considerably expand the already extensive port facilities. There is now also a number of international operators using Singapore as a base for cruises throughout South-East Asia. For further details, contact the Singapore Tourism Board (see Top Things To Do).



RAIL: Trains run to Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Malacca (Malaysia) on a route which extends to Bangkok (Thailand). Services operate daily between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur; some offer air conditioning and dining cars. There are also overnight trains with sleepers. For more information on the railway between Thailand and Singapore, see online (website: www.ktmb.com.my). The Eastern and Oriental Express is a luxurious train travelling from Thailand and Malaysia to Singapore.

ROAD: Singapore is connected to Malaysia and the mainland of Asia by two causeways: one which crosses the Johor Strait; the other linking Tuas in Singapore. Foreign motorists are required to pay a Vehicle Entry Permit (VEP) and a toll charge at the checkpoint upon entry into Singapore. Payment is to be paid using an electronic smartcard called an Autopass Card (sold at booths or VEP/toll offices at the checkpoint). Motorists need to show a valid road tax disc and an insurance certificate for the vehicle when buying the Autopass Card. A VEP costs S\$20 per day, Mon-Fri, 0200-1700. Toll charges are payable upon arrival and departure from Singapore using the Tuas checkpoint (S\$3.20 per trip) and on departure from Singapore at the Woodlands checkpoint (S\$1.20). Bus and coach services operate to the Malaysian town of Johor Bahru and beyond. For required documentation, see Travel Internal section. Buses arriving from Malaysia and Thailand terminate at the Lavender Street terminal.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Sightseeing flights can be arranged locally through the Republic of Singapore Flying Club (Building 140-B, Piccadilly, Seletar Airbase, Eastcamp, Singapore 797754; tel: (065) 6481 0200; website: www.singaporeflyingclub.com).

SEA: The Singapore Cruise Centre is located at the World Trade Centre, about 10 minutes' drive from the city centre. Harbour cruises and ferry services to Singapore's islands, Malaysia and the Indonesian Riau islands may be boarded at the ferry terminals located at the World Trade Centre and Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal at Changi. A ferry for Sentosa, the most popular offshore island, leaves every 20 minutes starting at 0730.

RAIL: There are regular and well-maintained train services between all major cities and towns.

ROAD: Bus: There is a well-developed system of local services run by two main companies. The service is cheap and efficient and operates 0600-0000 daily. Three City Buzz services loop the city 1000-2200 daily. Fares are priced at S\$1 per trip or a City Buzz Pass Pack costs S\$5 for a day's unlimited travel. A SIA hop-on, hop-off service operates daily 0900-1800. There are additional peak-hours-only shuttle and minibus services. A flat fare system operates on the one-man routes. A timetable and route map are available from bookstores. Car hire: There are several car hire/self-drive firms with offices at the airport and in hotels. Traffic drives on the left. All motorists driving into the city or travelling on some major roads are required to pay the ERP (Electronic Road Pricing). The cost is S\$5 per day (some vehicles have a device fitted which means that payment is automatic). Documentation: A national driving licence is sufficient for stays up to one month. For visits beyond one month, an International Driving Permit is required.

URBAN: Trishaws: This traditional form of chauffeur-pedalled transport is a fun and exciting way to tour the streets of Singapore. Taxi: These are numerous and relatively cheap. They can be picked up from outside hotels and official ranks or flagged down in the streets. Taxis are metered. Some surcharges not shown on the metre include: S\$1 for all luggage placed in the boot; 50 per cent of the metered fare for journeys between 0000 and 0600; S\$3 for all journeys starting at the airport; S\$1 for all trips starting in the Central Business District, Mon-Fri 1630-1900 and Sat 1130-1400. It is possible to negotiate hourly rates for round-island tours. Metro:



Singapore has one of the most advanced metro systems in the world. The trains operate 0530-0300 (0600-0000 on Sundays and public holidays) with stations being served on average every six minutes. Fares range from 70 cents to S\$1.60. The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a modern, comfortable, efficient and cheap way to explore Singapore. Operation hours are 0530-0000 and the train timetables are posted at each station. Over 40 stations link the city centre and suburbs, thus providing an opportunity to visit some of Singapore's attractions along the three main routes. The MRT system also extends out to Changi Airport (travel time from city centre - 27 minutes). 'A Quick Guide to the MRT Travel' is available from MRT stations.

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There is a wide variety of accommodation, ranging from budget to modern high-class hotels. These have extensive facilities, including swimming pools, health clubs, several restaurants, full business services and shopping arcades. It is advisable to make advance reservations. All rooms are subject to 4 per cent tax and 10 per cent service charge. For further information on accommodation in Singapore, contact the Singapore Tourism Board (see Top Things To Do) who can supply the Singapore Hotels Directory. Some hotels are designated as being 'International Standard' with all modern conveniences such as swimming pools and air conditioning, and prices range from S\$100 a night. However, there is no formal star system of grading.

GUEST HOUSES: The majority of the guest houses are situated along Bencoolen Street and Beach Road. Although considerably cheaper than the main hotels, guest houses tend not to be good value for money; the price per night is usually between S\$20 and S\$30 for a small, ill-equipped room. Discounts are sometimes available when staying a few days.

YOUTH HOSTELS: There are at least a dozen hostel-style establishments offering communal dormitory accommodation; the average price for a night's accommodation is S\$10 or less. There is one YMCA International hostel in Singapore.

CAMPING: The few campsites there are in Singapore are inconveniently located, making camping a difficult option. Campsites are: Changi Beach Park, East Coast Park, Pasir Ris Park, Sembawang Park and West Coast Park; permits are required to camp on a week-night. Tents can be rented from the Universal Adventure shop on Pulau Ubin, and can be pitched on open land on the island, the official campsite is called Jelutong, no permit is required.

ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION: Singapore Hotel Association 21 Bukit Batok Street 22, Singapore 659589 Tel: 6415 3588. Website: www.sha.org.sg

Introduction

Singapore is truly cosmopolitan, a fascinating mixture of people and culture: officially Chinese, Indian and Malay, but also with a huge foreign resident and transit population of Americans, Burmese, Europeans, Indonesians, Japanese and fellow Asians, making it one of the most diverse centres in Asia. The Singapore Tourism Board publishes a wide range of brochures and booklets giving information on every aspect of the country. This guide lists some of the main attractions in Singapore City itself, including several parks and gardens, and descriptions of the most popular outlying islands.

Singapore City



Singapore City was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India Company, who recommended that different areas of the town be set aside for the various ethnic groups. There are still fascinating pockets where more traditionally exclusive enclaves exist, principally in Chinatown, Arab Street, Serangoon Road (focus of the Indian community) and Padang Square with its very strong colonial associations. The best way to experience the remarkable diversity of **the city is on foot**: the traditional architecture, customs and cuisine of the various ethnic areas are in fascinating contrast to the lavish luxury shopping arcades of Orchard Road and Raffles City. Orchard Road is the 'Fifth Avenue' or 'Oxford Street' of Singapore, and just as bustling, with its vast luxury malls, shops ranging from megastores to vendors of souvenir tat, as well as cafes and restaurants. The corner bar of the Singapore Marriott Hotel, itself a landmark, is the prime spot to watch the world go by. Arab Street is the centre of the Arabian quarter of Singapore, and a great place for shopping. Other streets with excellent shopping opportunities are Baghdad Street and Bussorah Street, while Sultan Plaza is a centre for cloth traders. The golden domes of the Sultan Mosque, Singapore's chief Muslim place of worship, dominate the area; nearby are two historic Muslim burial grounds. Chinatown, though somewhat overwhelmed by the growth of the Financial District, is a bustling and colourful area with shops, teahouses and restaurants, and also several temples such as the Fuk Tak Ch'i in Telok Ayer Street and the Temple of the Calm Sea. Ancient crafts of calligraphy, papermaking and fortune-telling are practised, and traditional goods and foodstuffs can be bought. The characteristic domestic architecture of Singapore the shop-house with a moulded front, shuttered upper floor and an arcaded street front is much in evidence. Serangoon Road is the centre of Little India, the Indian quarter stretching from Rochar Canal to Lavender Street. The Zhu Jiao Centre, at the southern end of Serangoon Road, is a particularly vibrant example of Little India. Other attractions in the area include the Sri Veeramakalimman Temple, the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hall in Race Course Lane and Farrer Park. No trip to Singapore would be complete without a visit to the Raffles Hotel, one of the most famous hotels in the world. A 'Singapore Sling' in the Long Bar is almost de rigueur; alternatively, drop into the Writers' Bar which provided inspiration for, amongst others, Noel Coward, Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad. The CHIJMES complex near the Raffles Hotel was developed out of the former Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, whose Gothic shell is the basis for a series of plazas housing chic shops, restaurants and bars. A statue of Sir Stamford Raffles has been erected on the banks of the Singapore River on the spot where he is believed to have first set foot in Singapore. Nearby is Parliament House, the oldest government building in the country, the core of which dates back to the 1820s. Boat Quay and North Boat Quay, flanking the river on both banks near the Raffles statue, has now become one of Singapore's most popular bar and recreation areas, with traditional shop-houses converted into restaurants and clubs. Clarke Quay forms a triangle defined by a bend in the Singapore River. It is a complex of colonial 'godowns' (eastern term for warehouses) converted into a maze of bars, outdoor eating places, clubs, souvenir shops and mobile stalls that present the 'Old Singapore' tourist experience at its most concentrated, if occasionally tacky. Riverside Walk, on the opposite riverbank, extends the zone further, and the whole area is a must-see for visitors. Mohammed Sultan Road, west of Clarke Quay, is Singapore's classiest bar and club strip.

PARKS & GARDENS: The Botanic Gardens, over 52 hectares (128 acres) of landscaped parkland and primary jungle, are situated to the west of the city (Napier/Cluny roads), and are home to a wide range of animal and plant life. Within the gardens you will find the National Orchid Garden which has the largest collection in the world. Opening hours are Mon-Fri 0500-2300 and until 0000 at weekends and public holidays. Admission is free. The Bukit Timah Reserve, established in 1883 and located northwest of the Botanic Gardens on Bukit Timah Road, contains Singapore's last stretches of original and immaculately manicured rain forest. The nature reserve also consists of tropical vegetation with clearly marked trails which lead up to Bukit Timah, the highest hill in Singapore. Admission is free. Fort Canning Park, on Fort Canning Rise,



was once an ancient fort of the Malay kings covering 2.8 hectares (7 acres). Colonial ruins of the British citadel can still be viewed, as can a 19th-century Christian cemetery. The Battle Box in the park is the old command bunker of the World War II defence of Singapore, now a museum open Tues-Sun 1000-1800, with a small admission fee charged. The Mandai Orchid Garden is a commercial orchid farm enshrining Singapore's characteristic horticultural export, with a hillside of exotic orchid species and a spectacular water garden. Opening hours: daily 0900-1730. An admission fee is charged. The Kranji War Cemetery and Memorial, northwest of the Mandai Orchid Garden, commemorates the death of all those who fell in the catastrophic campaigns in the defence of Singapore during World War II. The cemetery and landscaped grounds are open daily; no flowers are allowed on the graves. The Singapore Zoological Gardens, towards the north of the island of Singapore, are largely an open zoo, using natural barriers rather than iron bars. Over 170 animals live here, including many rare or endangered species, such as orangutans, Sumatran tigers, Komodo dragons and clouded leopards. Daily attractions include 'wild breakfast' or 'afternoon tea' and 'Animal Showtime'. One special and much publicised attraction is the Night Safari; a combination walking and tram tour of predominantly nocturnal species. The zoo is open daily 0830-1800 and the Night Safari daily 1930-2400.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques and Anglican and Catholic cathedrals are all likely to be encountered during a comparatively brief walk around some of the central areas of Singapore. St Andrew's Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, the Al-Abrar Mosque, the vast and florid Kong Meng Sang Phor Kark See Temple Complex, the Chettiar Hindu Temple and the Sri Mariamman Temple are only a few of these. Other interesting attractions in Singapore City include the Singapore Art Museum, the Asian Civilisation Museum; the National Museum & Art Gallery; Merlion Park; the Thong Chai Medical Institution; the Singapore Mint Coin Gallery; the Singapore Crocodile House (feeding time at 1100, crocodile wrestling at 1315 and 1615); and the Fort Cannings Aquarium in River Valley Road, with over 6000 species of freshwater and marine animals. Also not to be missed is Singapore's performing arts centre.

Jurong

Jurong Town is the economic and industrial hub of Singapore, but offers visitors some unusual yet fascinating attractions. The Singapore Science Centre, open Tue-Sun 1000-1800, is a remarkable complex which includes hundreds of interactive exhibits, the Aviation Gallery which traces the history of flight, and the Omnitheatre, a cinema with a planetarium-like screen. Snow City is located next door to the Singapore Science Centre and is the country's first indoor snow centre, open Tue-Sun 1030-1830. Haw Par Villa (formerly The Tiger Balm Gardens) in Pasir Panjang Road is a surreal 'Disneyesque' statue park of Chinese mythological and historical figures, created by the Tiger Balm ointment dynasty. The Gardens are open daily 0800-1800. The Chinese and Japanese Gardens are west of the centre by Jurong Lake. The two are linked by a 65m (200ft) ornamental bridge, and are fine examples of the skills of oriental landscape gardeners. The gardens are open daily 0900-1800. An admission fee is charged. The Jurong Bird Park on Jurong Hill (near the Chinese and Japanese Gardens) covers more than 49.4 acres (20 hectares) and is home to South-East Asia's largest collection of birds. There is also the world's largest walk-in aviary, a nocturnal house and several spectacular bird shows. The park is open Mon-Fri 0900-1800, Sat-Sun 0800-1800. An admission fee is charged.

The Islands

SENTOSA: The largest and best known of Singapore's offshore islands is also one of the closest to the mainland. Sentosa is a multi-million dollar pleasure resort girdled by a monorail and offering a wide range of activities and attractions. These include the Underwater World and



Dolphin Lagoon, Images of Singapore, the recently upgraded Musical Fountain Show, The Merlion, the Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom Museum, Sijori WonderGolf and the Carlsberg Sky Tower. Lovely gardens, beautiful beaches and a plethora of restaurants and eating places all contribute to the island's popularity with tourists and locals alike. Many prefer to skip the theme park attractions and head straight for Sentosa's beaches Palawan, Siloso and Tanjong where a wide range of watersports is available. These were built with imported white sand and are often crowded, especially at weekends. There are bus, monorail and tram services linking Sentosa to the city centre, and the causeway bridge is open to foot traffic. An admission fee for entry to the island is charged and composite tickets can also be bought which give admission to some of the attractions; enquire locally for details. Resort hotels, camping and other accommodation are available on the island.

OTHER ISLANDS: St John's Island is large, hilly and tree-shaded with several excellent beaches. There are also several walking trails. There is a regular ferry service from the HarbourFront Centre that takes about 40 minutes. Kusu Island is noted for two landmarks: the Keramat (a Malay shrine) and the Chinese Tua Pekong Temple. There is a regular ferry service from the World Trade Centre that takes about 30 minutes. Pulau Hantu, Lazarus Island and the Sisters Islands (the latter being part of the group of Southern Islands) are ideal for fishing, snorkelling and swimming enthusiasts. There are no regular ferry services but boats can be chartered; enquire locally for information.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Golf: Some of the best courses are at the Raffles Country Club (which has two 18-hole courses); the Sentosa Golf & Country Club (two 18-hole championship courses); and the Tanal Merah Country Club (two 18-hole championship courses). Operating hours vary (some clubs offering night golfing until 2300). In most clubs, non-members are allowed to play for a special fee ranging from S\$50-200. Weekends, however, are often strictly reserved for members. Many clubs also require visitors to hold a handicap or proficiency certificate from a recognised club.

Watersports: One of the most popular watersports is canoeing round the island and there are a number of operators hiring out canoes at Changi point, East Coast and Sentosa Island. There are also numerous scuba-diving schools offering PADI or NAUI recognised courses. Day and night diving in local waters and nearby Malaysia are also available. Sailing and windsurfing is generally popular on the eastern coast, where most facilities are located. For water-skiing, the best locations are Sembawang and Kallang River (a venue for previous world championships). Fishing is a year-round sport. Boats and equipment, inexpensive to hire, are available at the Jardine Steps, Changi Park. Singapore offers easy access to numerous offshore islands and Singaporeans drive over to Malaysia to enjoy the watersports off the East coast (see the Malaysia section).

Cycling: The cycle paths link many parts of the island and bikes can be rented in many public parks, notably those at Bishan, East Coast Park, Pasir Ris and Sentosa. Mountain- or dirt-biking is particularly popular in Pulau Ubin.

Horse racing: The Singapore Turf Club (website: www.turfclub.com.sg) is responsible for all horse racing meetings. Visitors must observe a strict dress code. Races take place at weekends only; the first race is at 1330, the last race at 1800. Polo matches are played regularly at the Singapore Polo Club.



Other: Many sports associations and clubs welcome visitors. Badminton is almost a national sport, played all year round. Cricket is also played in Singapore, the Singapore Cricket Club being one of the oldest sporting associations in the world. It has a sports ground where cricket, soccer, tennis, hockey and rugby are played. 10-pin bowling is also very popular, with over 20 centres (each offering more than 20 lanes) catering for the enthusiast. In the Marina South area, some bowling centres are open 24 hours; otherwise, they are generally open 0900-0200.

Entertainment

Food & Drink: Singapore is a gourmet's paradise, ranging from humble street stalls to 5-star restaurants. There are over 30 different cooking styles, including various regional styles of Chinese cuisine, American, English, French, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Russian and Swiss. Malay cuisine is a favourite, famed for its use of spices and coconut milk. Things to know: One of the best ways to eat in Singapore is in the open at one of the ubiquitous street foodstalls. Some are quiet and casual while others are in areas bustling with activity. All have a vast selection of cheap, mouthwatering food. Newton Circus and La Pau Sat are food centres where all types of Asian food can be sampled cheaply. Although there are many self-service establishments, waiter service is more common in restaurants. Bars/cocktail lounges often have table and counter service. There are no licensing hours. 'Happy hours' are usually from 1700-1900. National specialities: Beef rendang (coconut milk beef curry). Chicken sambal. Gado gado (a fruit and vegetable salad in peanut sauce). Satay (skewers of marinated meat cooked over charcoal) served with peanut sauce, cucumber, onion and rice. National drinks: Singapore Sling (cocktail containing gin, cherry liquor, contreau, benedictine, pineapple juice, lime juice, grenadine and angostura bitters). It was founded in the early 20th century for the Raffles Hotel in Singapore. Teh arak tarik (ginger tea with milk). Soya bean milk. Sugar cane juice. Tipping: Officially discouraged in restaurants, hotels and the airport. A 10 per cent service charge is included in restaurant bills.

Nightlife: Singapore has a vibrant and exciting nightlife. Entertainment ranges from bars, clubs, discos, karaoke pubs, street opera, night markets, river cruises, multiplex cinemas to theatre productions and international stage shows. Boat Quay and Clarke Quay are popular riverside landmarks that offer exclusive restaurants, alfresco dining and lively bars. Moored Chinese junks have been refurbished into floating bars and restaurants. Bugis Street, Changi Village and Holland Village, known as Holland V, are popular areas for food, drink and entertainment. Muhammad Sultan Road is one of the latest entertainment hubs in Singapore with a wide variety of pubs, nightclubs and wine bars, as is Club Street.

Shopping: The vast range of available goods and competitive prices have led to Singapore rightly being known as a shopper's paradise. Special purchases include Balinese, Chinese, Filipino, Indian and Malay antiques; batiks; cameras; Chinese, Indian and Persian carpets; imported or tailored clothing; jewellery and specialised items made of reptile and snake skins, including shoes, briefcases, handbags and wallets. Silks, perfumes, silverware and wigs are other favourite buys. The herding of shop owners from 'Chinatown' into multi-storey complexes lost some of the exciting shopping atmosphere, although these huge centres do provide an air-conditioned environment. Orchard Road is the main shopping street, although many of the large hotel complexes, such as Marina Square, have shopping centres attached. Although most outlets operate Western-style fixed pricing, bargains can still be made in some places but generally only after good research and shrewd negotiating. Electrical equipment of all types can be bought at Sungei Road, but caution is advised as there are many imitation products around. For more information on shopping in Singapore, see the Singapore Shopping brochure published by the Singapore Tourism Board. Shopping hours: Mon-Fri 1000-2100, Sat 1000-2200. The Mustafa Centre in Little India is open 24-hours. Note: A 5 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) is levied



on most goods and services purchased from taxable retailers. Tourists whose purchases total S\$100 or more from a single retailer participating in the Tourist Refund Scheme are eligible for a refund of the GST paid on goods not consumed in Singapore. Refunds may be received at the airport, prior to departure flights

Business

Statistics: GDP: US\$110 billion. Main imports: Machines and equipment, mineral fuels, chemicals and foodstuffs. Main exports: Machinery and equipment, consumer goods, chemicals and mineral fuels. Main trade partners: China (PR), Hong Kong (SAR), Japan, Korea (Rep), Malaysia, Taiwan (China), Thailand and the USA.

Economy: Singapore's economy relies on entrepôt trade, shipbuilding and repairing, oil refining, electronics and information technology, banking and finance and, to a lesser extent, tourism. From the late 1970s, the Government promoted export-oriented and service industries with the intention of making Singapore a regional economic hub. Singapore also derived some benefit from the decision of some companies to relocate following the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese administration in 1997. High-technology manufacturing, particularly computer and telecommunications equipment, and financial services, mainly banking and insurance, form the kernel of the economy. There is also an important oil-refining industry. The newest addition to the economic portfolio is pharmaceuticals: on top of that, the government is promoting Singapore as a centre for biotechnology, especially for stem cell research which has proved so controversial elsewhere. The importance of trade to the economy cannot be overstated: the total value of Singapore's trade is almost three times its GDP (compared with 17 per cent of GDP in the case of Japan). Vibrant economic activity more than compensates for Singapore's lack of natural resources. There is a little agriculture, with the cultivation of plants and vegetables, and some fishing; however, most foodstuffs and raw materials have to be imported. Singapore's only significant natural resource is its superb natural harbour, which is the busiest in the world after Rotterdam. This accounts in part for the high level of Singapore's re-export trade, which accounts for almost half of all trade. Singapore was less affected than many of its neighbours by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, owing to sound financial management, high savings and investment rates, and massive foreign exchange reserves. However, shortly afterwards the territory was plunged into its worst economic recession for 30 years, largely because of a sudden collapse of international demand in key industries, especially electronics. At the lowest point, Singapore's economy was contracting at an unprecedented rate of 6 per cent per annum. Industrial production fell by over 20 per cent during 2001. GDP growth was a paltry 0.8 per cent in 2003, but that figure rose to a robust 8.4 per cent in 2004. Current inflation is 1.7 per cent. Singapore is a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and of the Asian Pacific Economic Forum (APEC).

Business Etiquette: English is widely spoken in business circles. Appointments should be made and punctuality is important. Chinese people should be addressed with their surnames first, while Malays do not have surnames but use the initial of their father's name before their own. Visiting cards are essential, although it is policy for government officials not to use them. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1300 and 1400-1700, Sat 0900-1300.

Conferences/Conventions: Singapore is the top convention city in Asia and ranks among the top 10 meetings destinations in the world. There are many hotels with extensive conference facilities, including the latest audio-visual equipment, secretarial services, translation and simultaneous interpretation systems, whilst Raffles City, a self-contained convention city, can accommodate up to 6000 delegates under one roof. Other popular venues for larger conventions and exhibitions include Suntec Singapore and Singapore Expo, the country's latest addition to



conference venues. Full information on Singapore as a conference destination can be obtained from the Exhibition & Convention Bureau within the Singapore Tourism Board (see Top Things To Do). The Bureau is a non-profitmaking organisation with the dual objectives of marketing Singapore as an international exhibition and convention city and of assisting with the planning and staging of individual events.

Commercial Information: Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 101 Cecil Street, Tong Eng Building, Unit 23-01/04, Singapore 069533 Tel: 6224 2505 or 2855. Website: www.sicci.com Singapore International Chamber of Commerce 10-01 John Hancock Tower, 6 Raffles Quay, Singapore 048580 Tel: 6224 1255. Website: www.sicc.com.sg

10 CLIMATE

Warm and fairly humid summer temperatures throughout the year (approximately 30°C/86°F during the day and 23°C/74°F in the evening). There is no distinct wet/dry season. Most rain falls during the northeast monsoon (November to January) and showers are usually sudden and heavy.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens.

11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: For centuries before Sir Stamford Raffles acquired it from the Sultan of Johor in 1819, Singapore had been virtually abandoned. However, within decades of the change of ownership, in a historical echo of its role today, Singapore had become the main commercial and strategic centre for the region. In 1867, it became a British Crown Colony and housed one of the UK's most important naval bases. This status remained unchanged until 1942 when the Japanese army swept down through Malaya and occupied the colony. Three-and-a-half years later the Japanese surrendered in Singapore and the colony assumed its previous status. With the dissolution of the British Empire, Singapore was granted internal self-government in 1959. In 1963, Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia, but broke away in 1965 from the collapsing federation to become fully independent. Two years later, Singapore was expelled when Lee Kuan Yew, first elected Prime Minister in 1959 and re-elected eight times thereafter, refused to implement a federal edict granting Malays a privileged economic position (to the disadvantage of the ethnic Chinese population). The initial outlook was unpromising: Singapore is tiny and has no natural resources apart from a good harbour. However, Lee managed to galvanise the population into building a strong, export-led manufacturing and service economy. Lee Kuan Yew and his political vehicle, the People's Action Party (PAP), enjoyed a virtual monopoly of political power from 1972 until Lee's announcement in 1988 that he would not complete his eighth term nor seek subsequent office. In October 1990, he formally handed over the Premiership to a long-standing colleague, Goh Chok Tong, remaining as Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's office and Secretary-General of the PAP. Some Singaporeans believed that Goh was merely a transitional figure between Lee Kuan Yew and his son Lee Hsien Loong, who entered politics after a glittering academic and military career before taking up the post of Deputy Prime Minister. In November 1992, Goh was proposed and endorsed to take over the PAP Secretary-General's post. In both January 1997 and September 2001, opposition parties decided to contest only a small proportion (about one-third) of the 83 seats. Not surprisingly, the PAP won both polls comfortably. Goh was widely expected to stand down in favour of Lee Junior and, indeed, finally



did so in August 2004. In September 2005, Sellapan Ramanathan began his second six-year term as President of Singapore. He won the election after the other contenders were disqualified for not meeting the strict selection criteria. In the last few years there has been some pressure, to which the Government has responded in part, for a relaxation of Singapore's numerous laws which have given it a reputation as a prosperous but rather antiseptic and pettily repressive city-state. More seriously, Singapore has the highest per capita rate of judicial execution in the world, and the Government is still highly intolerant of internal dissent. Abroad, Singapore has taken a more active role in regional affairs, mainly through the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN), the former anti-Communist bloc which is now adopting a more wide-ranging role in diplomatic, economic and since the Bali bomb attacks security affairs. There has been some improvement in relations between Singapore and Malaysia, between whom there are myriad disputes about matters such as access to air space, water resources and territorial boundaries.

Government: The Parliament is unicameral; executive power nominally rests with the President, but is effectively wielded by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet: the Presidency is a largely ceremonial post whose incumbent is elected by Parliament to serve a six-year term. The 93-member Parliament is elected for a five-year term; apart from nine Presidential appointees, its members are elected under a constituency system.

Travel Advice

Most visits to Singapore are trouble-free, but travellers should be aware that Singapore shares with the rest of South-East Asia a threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate and against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. Travellers should not become **involved with drugs of any kind**: possession of even very small quantities can lead to imprisonment or the death penalty. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice: British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fco.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See & Do

Shop in Singapore City's Orchard Road - the 'Fifth Avenue' or 'Oxford Street' of Singapore, and just as bustling, with its vast luxury malls, shops ranging from megastores to vendors of souvenir tat, as well as cafes and restaurants. Arab Street is the centre of the Arabian quarter of Singapore, and is also a great place for shopping. Other streets with excellent shopping opportunities are Baghdad Street and Bussorah Street, while Sultan Plaza is a centre for cloth traders. The golden domes of the Sultan Mosque, Singapore's chief Muslim place of worship, dominate the area; nearby are two historic Muslim burial grounds. Chinatown, though somewhat overwhelmed by the growth of the Financial District, is another bustling and colourful area with shops, teahouses and restaurants, and also several temples such as the Fuk Tak Ch'i in Telok Ayer Street and the Temple of the Calm Sea. Ancient crafts of calligraphy, papermaking and fortune-telling are practised, and traditional goods and foodstuffs can be bought. The characteristic domestic architecture of Singapore the shop-house with a moulded front, shuttered upper floor and an arcaded street front is much in evidence. Prop up the bar at the Raffles Hotel, one of the most famous hotels in the world. A 'Singapore Sling' (a head-spinningly good cocktail of gin, cherry brandy, Cointreau, Benedictine, grenadine, pineapple and lime juice) in the Long Bar is almost de rigueur; to sober up, drop into the Writers' Bar, which provided inspiration for, amongst others, Noel Coward, Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad. Near the Singapore River, wander towards the Parliament House, the oldest Government building in the country, the core of which dates back to the 1820s. Explore the National Orchid Garden in



Singapore's Botanic Gardens, which has the largest collection of orchids in the world. The Botanic Gardens have over 52 hectares (128 acres) of landscaped parkland and primary jungle and are situated to the west of the city (Napier/Cluny Roads), home to a wide range of animal and plant life. For more exotic treats of nature, venture into the Bukit Timah Reserve, established in 1883 and located northwest of the Botanic Gardens on Bukit Timah Road; it contains Singapore's last stretches of original and immaculately manicured rain forest. The nature reserve also consists of tropical vegetation with clearly marked trails which lead up to Bukit Timah, the highest hill in Singapore. View what was once an ancient fort of the **Malay kings, covering 2.8 hectares (7 acres)**: Fort Canning Park, on Fort Canning Rise. The Colonial ruins of the British citadel can still be viewed, as can a 19th-century Christian cemetery. The Battle Box in the park is the old command bunker of the World War II defence of Singapore, now a museum open Tues-Sun 1000-1800, with a small admission fee charged. Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques and Anglican and Catholic cathedrals are all likely to be encountered during a comparatively brief walk around some of the central areas of Singapore, such is its splendid diversity. St Andrew's Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, the Al-Abrar Mosque, the vast and florid Kong Meng Sang Phor Kark See Temple Complex, the Chettiar Hindu Temple and the Sri Mariamman Temple are only a few of these. The Jurong Bird Park on Jurong Hill is home to South-East Asia's largest collection of birds. There is also the world's largest walk-in aviary, a nocturnal house and several spectacular bird shows. The largest and best-known of Singapore's offshore islands is also one of the closest to the mainland. Sentosa is a multi-million dollar pleasure resort girdled by a monorail and offering a wide range of activities and attractions. These include the Underwater World and Dolphin Lagoon, Images of Singapore, the recently upgraded Musical Fountain Show, The Merlion, the Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom Museum, Sijori WonderGolf and the Carlsberg Sky Tower. Lovely gardens, beautiful beaches and a plethora of restaurants and eating places all contribute to the island's popularity with tourists and locals alike. Many prefer to skip the theme park attractions and head straight for Sentosa's beaches Palawan, Siloso and Tanjong where a wide range of watersports is available. These were built with imported white sand and are often crowded, especially at weekends. There are bus, monorail and tram services linking Sentosa to the city centre, and the causeway bridge is open to foot traffic. An admission fee for entry to the island is charged and composite tickets can also be bought which give admission to some of the attractions; enquire locally for details. Resort hotels, camping and other accommodation are available on the island. Canoe around the island - there are a number of operators hiring out canoes at Changi point, East Coast and Sentosa Island.

Tourist Information: Singapore Tourism Board in the UK 1st Floor, Carrington House, 126-130 Regent Street, London W1B 5JX, UK Tel: (020) 7437 0033 or (08080) 656 565 (toll-free in the UK). Website: www.visitsingapore.com Singapore Tourism Board in the USA 1156 Avenue of the Americas Suite 702 New York NY 10036 USATel: (212) 302 4861. Website: www.visitsingapore.com

Overview II

Singapore is the East's great melting pot, a cultural pot pourri that leaves the unsuspecting visitor dazzled. Sir Stamford Raffles, a British civil servant, brought the 'Lion City' to world prominence after searching for a trading station to counter the Dutch influence in the Straits of Malacca, and trade has remained the island's mainstay. Centuries before Sir Stamford Raffles acquired it from the Sultan of Johor in 1819, Singapore had been virtually abandoned. However, within decades Singapore had become the main commercial and strategic centre for the region. In 1867, it became a British Crown Colony and housed one of the UK's most important naval bases. This status remained unchanged until 1942 when the Japanese army swept down through Malaya and occupied the colony. Three-and-a-half years later the Japanese surrendered in Singapore and the colony assumed its previous status. And with the dissolution of the British Empire came internal



self-government (1959). In 1963, Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia, but later broke away in 1965 to become fully **Independent. The initial outlook was unpromising:** Singapore is tiny and has no natural resources apart from a good harbour. However, Lee Kuan Yew (first elected Prime Minister in 1959 and re-elected eight times thereafter) managed to galvanise the population into building a strong, export-led manufacturing and service economy. Tourism for Singapore has also proven to be of good economic benefit. Culture lovers thrive in this fusion of Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures - the main ethnic groups - with its assortment of mosques, temples and synagogues. Singapore presents a happy collision of opposites grand and expensive at the famed Raffles Hotel, but low-key and cheap in the food markets of Bugis Junction and Clarke Quay. But even in the low-key and cheap areas, Singapore remains an incredibly clean city where nothing is allowed to dull the shine even down to the banning of chewing gum. In the last few years there has been some pressure to relax the numerous laws that have given Singapore a reputation as a prosperous but rather antiseptic and pettily repressive city-state. More seriously, Singapore has the highest per capita rate of judicial execution in the world, and the Government is still highly intolerant of internal dissent. Abroad, Singapore has taken a more active role in regional affairs, mainly through the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN). There have also been improvements in relations between Singapore and Malaysia, between whom there are myriad disputes over access to air space, water resources and territorial boundaries. In addition, Singapore City's exciting riverside parade of bars and restaurants reveals that Singaporeans actually do know how to have fun and plenty of it. The natural world is never far away in Singapore, either: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve has a significant area of primary rainforest within its boundaries, while, for the adventurous, Sungei Buluh Nature Park offers the chance for trekking. Check out Pulau Ubin's mangrove forest, a bumboat's ride from Changi jetty, or Kusu site of Taoists' annual pilgrimage.

Communications

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 65. IDD calls made from hotels are free of surcharge.

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist with international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good.

Internet: Internet cafes throughout Singapore provide public access to Internet and e-mail services.

Post: Airmail to Europe takes up to one week. There are limited postal facilities at many hotels. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1700, Sat 0830-1300. The airport and Orchard Point branches are open daily 0700-1900. The General Post Office on Fullerton Road (near the river) and the Comcentre near Orchard Road are open 24 hours.

MEDIA: Singapore's media environment has the shadow of Singaporean Government cast over it. Censorship is common; Internet access is regulated; and private ownership of satellite dishes is not allowed. Press: Singapore Press Holdings, which has close links to the ruling party, has a virtual monopoly of the newspaper industry. The English-language dailies are The Business Times (website: <http://business-times.asia1.com.sg>), The New Paper, The Straits Times (website: <http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg>) and Today (website: www.todayonline.com). TV: MediaCorp, owned by a state investment agency, operates TV and radio stations. MediaCorp operates Channel 5 and Channel 8, which are entertainment-based channels, as well as the Malay-language channel, Channel Suria, Mandarin-language Channel U and Channel NewsAsia. Radio: MediaCorp operates more than 12 stations in Singapore. Unionworks operates WKRZ, an English



language station, and Mandarin station, UFM. Radio Singapore International operates broadcasts in four languages, including English.