

Singapore... smiles with miles

Country name: Republic of Singapore

Capital: Singapore

Location: An island and islets in the heart of Southeast Asia, between Malaysia and Indonesia

Area: 710.3 sq km

Highest point: Bukit Timah Hill at 163.36m

Climate: Tropical. It's hot and sunny all year, with two monsoon seasons (December to March and June to September) bringing heavy rains

Government: Parliamentary republic

Gross Domestic Product: S\$265,057.9 million (Statistics Singapore, 2009)

Major industries: Electronics, chemicals, financial services, oil drilling equipment, petroleum refining, rubber processing and products, processed food and beverages, ship repair, offshore platform construction, life sciences, entrepot trade

Currency: Singapore Dollar

Population: 5,076,700 (Statistics Singapore, 2010)

Median age: 37.4 years

Life expectancy: 81.4 years

Population growth rate: 3.1%

Ethnic groups: Chinese 74.1%, Malay 13.4%, Indian 9.2%, Other races 3.3%

Language: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English are the 4 official languages in Singapore. The national language shall be the Malay language and shall be in the Roman script.

Religions: Buddhism 42.5%, Islam 14.9%, Christianity 9.8%, Taoism 8.5%, Catholicism 4.8%, Hinduism 4%, other religions 0.7%, none 14.8% (Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2000)

Literacy: 95.9% of the population above 15 years of age can read and write

Communications: Excellent facilities and services, including 3G wireless service launched in 2005, and a 193.4% household broadband penetration rate (Infocomm Development Authority, January 2011)

Mobile phone penetration: 143.9% (January 2011)

International country code: +65

Internet country code: .sg

Early names of Singapore

Across the history of the Southeast Asian region, Singapore has been referred to by a variety of names, such as "Puluozhong", "Temasek" and "Singapura". The last of these is the Malay origins for the modern name of Singapore.

Puluozhong- A Chinese historical account of Singapore in the 3rd century refers to the island as Puluozhong. It is derived from the Malay words "pulau ujong", which means "island at the end of the peninsula".

Temasek- In 1365, Singapore was called Temasek in the epic poem "Javanese Nagarakretagama". Temasek means "sea town" in Malay. The poem is recognised today as the most important piece of literature ever written during the Majapahit era. Chinese trader Wang Dayuan, who visited Singapore around 1330, wrote the earliest first-hand account of the island's history, referring to Singapore as "Danmaxi", a Mandarin version of "Temasek".

Singapura- Of all the historical accounts, the "Sejarah Melayu" or "Malay Annals" paints the most captivating picture of how Singapore came to have its present name. Legend has it that Sang Nila Utama, then the ruler of Palembang (the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Srivijaya, a large part of which is presently known as Malaysia and Indonesia), made an unexpected landing in Temasek. While seeking shelter from the storm, he sighted an animal on the island that appeared to be a lion. He declared the island's new name to be "Singapura", which means "lion city" in Malay. It replaced Temasek as the common name for the island by the end of the 14th century. It was because of this ruler's keen foresight that Singapore was later established as a trading post and settlement, due to its naturally strategic location along the Malacca Straits.

Early immigrants of Singapore

Singapore's early immigrants came mainly from the Malay Peninsula, China, the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka.

The Malays- The original people of Singapore were made up mostly of Malays from the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago, and included the Bugis. The Malays were largely involved in agriculture or, before Raffles, were camp followers of the Temenggong (Defence Minister) of the Sultan of Johor.

The Chinese- The first Chinese immigrants came from Riau and Melaka (Malacca), many belonging to the distinct Baba community (also known as Straits-born Chinese). In February 1821, the first junk from Amoy, China, arrived and others soon followed. The Hokkiens from Fujian province formed the largest group. Others included the Cantonese from Guangdong; the nomadic Hakkas or Khehs from northern Guangdong; the Teochews from Shantou; the Kwongsais from Guangxi; the Hokchius from Fuzhou and the Hainanese from Hainan Island. Most of these Chinese immigrants were poor farmers, labourers or craftsmen.

The Indians- The first Indians came from Penang and Malacca. Others migrated from the Coromandel and Malabar coasts of Southern India (mainly from today's states of Madras and Kerala). They also came from Gujarat, Punjab, Sind, Bengal and Sri Lanka. The early Indians were mostly soldiers or camp followers; a few were merchants. Labourers were brought in later by the British for construction work. Others worked as clerks, teachers, traders and money-lenders.

The Europeans- Apart from the British, most Europeans came as professionals. They brought their families with them and while many left for home eventually, others settled down and became citizens.

Other Ethnic Groups- These include the Eurasians, who are descendants of Europeans (mainly the Portuguese) who had married Asians. There were also a few Arab families who came as traders and eventually married Malays.

Pre- Colonial History

Singapore's early history centred on several struggles for power in the region.

During the 14th century, the kingdoms of Siam (now Thailand) and the Java-based Majapahit empire jostled for control over the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore.

One account in the Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals) cited Singapore as having been lost in a Majapahit attack. Later, a prince of Palembang, Parameswara (also known as Iskandar Shah), killed the local chief and made himself the new ruler. His reign was short-lived though; soon after, he was driven out (it is unclear if it was by the Siamese or the Javanese forces of the Majapahit empire).

Parameswara then fled north to Muar in the Malay Peninsula, and later founded the Malacca Sultanate. Singapore was to become an important part of the Sultanate, important enough to be the fief of the admirals (laksamanas), including the famous Hang Tuah. By the early 19th century, Singapore had come under the rule of the Sultan of Johor, who was based in the Riau-Lingga archipelago. One of the Sultan's senior ministers, the Temenggong, was put in charge of the administration of Johor and Singapore. Following that, Singapore faced a major historical transformation. In early 1819, the British East India Company founded modern Singapore through an agreement with Sultan Hussein Shah and the Temenggong. Singapore's population at that time consisted of around 1,000 indigenous people. These comprised mainly Malays and Orang Laut (sea nomads) who clustered around the Singapore River, Kallang River, Telok Blangah and along the Johor Straits. There were also some Chinese traders and gambier planters. The history of modern Singapore began with the British colonisation of what had become an up-and-coming trading post along the Malacca Straits.

The British needed a port of call in this region to refit, revitalise and protect their merchant fleet, as well as to prevent any advance by the Dutch in the East Indies. Hence

they chose to establish trading posts in Penang (1786) and Singapore (1819), and captured Malacca from the Dutch (1795).

Singapore as a British trading post- In late 1818, Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, gave tacit approval to Sir Stamford Raffles, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, to establish Singapore as a trading post. On 29 January 1819, Raffles landed on the shores of Singapore. The next day, he concluded a preliminary treaty with Temenggong Abdul Rahman to set up a trading post in Singapore. The formal treaty was then signed on 6 February 1819 with Sultan Hussein of Johor and the Temenggong, the de jure and de facto rulers of Singapore respectively. Singapore proved to be a prized settlement. By 1820, it was earning revenue, and three years later, its trade surpassed that of Penang's. In 1824, Singapore's status as a British possession was formalised by two new treaties. The first was the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of March 1824, by which the Dutch withdrew all objections to the British occupation of Singapore. The second treaty was made with Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman in August of the same year. The two rulers handed the island over to the British in return for more cash payments and pensions.

Singapore in the Straits Settlements- In 1826, Singapore, Malacca, and Penang were grouped to form the Straits Settlements, under the administration of British India. By 1832, Singapore had become the centre of government for the Straits Settlements. And on 1 April 1867, the Straits Settlements became a Crown Colony under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office in London. Singapore became a major port of call for ships plying between Europe and East Asia in 1869. With the development of rubber planting, especially after the 1870s, it also became the main sorting and export centre of the world for rubber. Singapore's trade expanded eightfold between 1873 and 1913, and its prosperity attracted immigrants from areas around the region. By 1860, the population had grown to 80,792; this comprised the Chinese, who accounted for 61.9% of the total population, the Malays, 13.5%, the Indians, 16.05%, and other races (including the Europeans), 8.5%.

The Japanese Occupation

The decades of peace and prosperity that colonial Singapore had built ended when bombs rained down on the island in the wee hours of 8 December 1941. It was World War II, and the Japanese were in the thick of invading Asia. Despite a brave struggle against the larger Japanese forces, the city fell on 15 February 1942. Singapore was renamed Syonan (Japanese for "Light of the South") and remained under Japanese occupation for three and a half years. When World War II ended in August 1945, British forces returned a month later to govern Singapore under the British Military Administration. However, in March 1946, the British Military Administration ceased and the Straits Settlement was dissolved. Following that, Singapore became a Crown Colony on 1 April. Penang and Malacca became part of the Malayan Union, and later the Federation of Malaya in 1948.

Singapore attractions

The Merlion- The Merlion was designed as an emblem for the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) in 1964. The designer was Mr Fraser Brunner, a member of the souvenir committee and a curator of the Van Kleef Aquarium. The Merlion has a lion head and a fish body resting on a crest of waves. The lion head symbolises the legend of the rediscovery of Singapura, as recorded in the "Malay Annals". In ancient times, Singapore was known as Temasek, a Javanese word for sea. In the 11th century A.D, Prince Sang Nila Utama of the Sri Vijaya Empire rediscovered the island. When the Prince first landed on Singapore's shores, he sighted a mystical beast which he later learnt was a lion. The Prince then decided to name the island "Singapura" which in Sanskrit means Lion (Singa) City (Pura). The fish tail of the Merlion symbolises the ancient city of Temasek and represents Singapore's humble beginnings as a fishing

village. The Merlion statue, measuring 8.6 metres high and weighing 70 tonnes, was built by the late Singapore craftsman, Mr Lim Nang Seng. It is made of cement fondue. A

smaller Merlion statue, measuring two metres high and weighing three tonnes was also built by Mr Lim. The body is made of cement fondue, the skin from porcelain plates and eyes from small red teacups. The Merlion and the Cub were originally located by the Esplanade Bridge, just 120 metres from their present location. Also called the Merlion Park, the area soon became a popular tourist attraction and took its place among the famous landmarks of great cities of the world. Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the then Prime Minister of Singapore, officiated the installation ceremony of the Merlion on 15 September 1972. A bronze plaque commemorated the auspicious occasion with the inscription, "The Merlion has been erected as a symbol to welcome all visitors to Singapore". Today, the Merlion attracts more than one million visitors a year who make the trip to the Merlion Park to photograph this world famous icon at her new home, at the adjacent to One Fullerton.

Singapore Zoo- The Singapore Zoo (Former Singapore Zoological Gardens) is acclaimed as one of the world's most spectacular zoos. The use of natural barriers like streams, rock walls and vegetation to separate animals from visitors enhances the "open" zoo concept. Spreading over 28 hectares, it is home to over 3,600 mammals, birds and reptiles, including rare and endangered species. The Zoo's orang utan breeding programme has created a large community of these gentle, endangered species. The breeding programme has also witnessed the first tropical birth of a polar bear. Other endangered species like the Malayan tiger, the white rhino, proboscis monkey, komodo dragon and the sealion have also found a haven in the zoo. A highlight is the Fragile Forest - an exciting and educational display of ecosystems and rainforest culture.

The Hamadryas Baboons- The Great Rift Valley: Ethiopia showcases the ecosystem typical of the savanna climatic zone in Ethiopia. The area is landscaped to include a multitude of habitats for a wide range of animals, rock formations and tribal villages. The exhibit is home to the rock hyrax, the banded mongoose, the black backed jackal and 50 hamadryas baboons. A regular tram service that covers the entire Zoo offers an excellent overview of the attractions. The commentary provides useful information. However, to fully appreciate the zoo, the tram introduction should be complemented by a walking tour.

Guests can also enjoy breakfast with some of the animals from the zoo such as the Oriental small-clawed otter, the reticulated python and the highly-endangered Orang Utan in close proximity. Termed as Wild Breakfast, this dining-in-the-wild experience promises to be a hit. Make a date with our friends at the zoo over breakfast at 9am.

Singapore Night Safari- Singapore Night Safari is a world-class attraction that not only provide entertainment and wonder for visitors, but are dedicated to conservation, rescue and research to help improve the lives of animals both in captivity and in the wild. Thousands of animals from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas can be seen in the spacious natural environments of Night Safari. These attraction alone help Singapore earn its well-deserved reputation as one of the most family-friendly destinations in Asia. Singapore's nightlife is truly wild! The Singapore Night Safari offers an unusual glimpse into the nocturnal animal kingdom, with more than 59 exhibits and 1,000 animals to be seen. Take a trip around the world via walking trails and trams that connect eight geographical regions. See exotic and often endangered species such as the Himalayan griffon vulture, greater one-horned rhinoceros, wildebeests, gazelles, giant anteater and the gaur (wild cattle) of Burma. Start with the Creatures of the Night Show for a good 20-minute overview of the animals to be seen here (show times 19:30, 20:30, 21:30 and, on weekends and holidays, 22:30), then move on to the Himalayan Foothills via tram to see bharal, Himalayan tahr, mouflon and markhor traversing the rugged terrain. Next, the

tram heads to the Neplaese River Valley, featuring a large sambar (deer) habitat as well as golden jackals, pelicans and the greater one-horned rhino. Going across the Indian Subcontinent, look for the sloth bear, striped hyena, barasingha and Gir lion. Further along is Equatorial Africa with its giraffes, lions, servals and bongals in a landscape resembling the great savannah grasslands. The diverse habitat of the Indo-Malayan Region has Malayan tigers and babirusas, while the Asian Reverine Forest features tapirs and elephants. Next, see the giant anteater and the capybara, or water hog, the largest living rodent, in the South American Pampas area, followed by a trip to the Burmese Hillside for glimpses of big wild gaurs and thaminis, or Burmese Eld's deer.

Santosa island- Fun island ... themed entertainment ... tropical resort ... nature park ... Singapore's Island Resort. A former fishing village turned British military base, Sentosa was transformed into an idyllic island resort in 1972 for the enjoyment and recreation of everyone. To describe Sentosa as merely one thing or another would do no justice to the multiple facets of this island jewel half a kilometre south of Singapore. Afterall, it is the variety and versatility that make Sentosa (meaning peace and tranquillity) different and special for millions of visitors from all around the world. And unlike any other vacation destination, you are right on the fringe of the city's buzz, which is just minutes away by cable car, ferry or via a 710-metre road link. Once you step afoot the island, you can find your own slice of paradise among the many exciting attractions - history and culture come alive, entertainment by day and night, lush green surroundings to explore, manicured gardens, dancing fountains and two challenging international 18-hole golf courses with scenic undulating views. Today, Sentosa is a 390-hectare recreational haven boasting a kaleidoscopic range of attractions and activities which cater to a wide audience. Start your morning amidst colourful, tropical orchids at Sentosa's Orchid Gardens. Located next to the Food Centre and the Fountain Gardens, the Orchid Gardens are just a short walk away from the bus-stop. Rock yourself on the swing in the Gardens and enjoy the fresh air. There's a koi pond within the Gardens. Toss some bread into the pond (or koi food which you can purchase at the souvenir store) and watch the feeding frenzy. After visiting the Orchid Gardens, walk to the **Ferry Terminal**. Where the music blasts, you'll see several parrots with their bright feathers perched on some branches. The parrots are free to roam, but oddly enough, they choose to stay perched on the branches. Perhaps they like the music...There's a free bird show at 12.30p.m., 2.00p.m. (the 2.00p.m. show is only for weekends and public holidays) and 3.00p.m. The show which features colourful parrots performing incredible tricks lasts 20 minutes. The **Images of Singapore museum** is one of the oldest colonial-style building on Sentosa. Inside, the museum features Singapore's history with life-sized wax figures, dioramas and archival materials, presented with the latest exhibition techniques. Outside, the grounds can be transformed into the perfect setting for a classic gala affair or fun themed party. Along the tree-lined courtyard leading to the museum's forecourt, greet guests with cool tropical cocktails as the opening to a gala affair, or reenact an entire bazaar with handicrafts and entertainment for period themed events. A marquee can be set up in the spacious forecourt to accommodate comfortable seating, with soft lighting against the majestic building to add to the ambience. Events at the forecourt enjoys vista of the busiest port in the World and the Indonesian Riau Archipelago. For a panoramic view 131m above sea-level, guests can take a spectacular ride up the Sky Tower. A private tour of the museum can also be arranged.

Underwater World- From the second floor of the Ferry Terminal, catch the monorail to the Underwater World. You can ride the monorail for free throughout the day. The Underwater World is just 1 stop away from the Ferry Terminal. You can also get there by Bus A / Bus No. 2, which is also free. The Underwater World is a world-class aquarium. Through its submerged glass tunnel, you get a fish-eye view of more than 2,500 marine creatures from 250 species. There's also a touch pool for visitors to pet different marine creatures like starfish and sea cucumbers. The Underwater World is open from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. daily. The S\$17 ticket to the Underwater World also includes admission to the Dolphin Lagoon.

Singapore River- The Singapore River was the lifeline of Singapore where our first immigrants eked out a meagre living and saw Singapore transform from an obscure little fishing village to a great seaport. The history of the Singapore River can be divided into three distinct periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. Colourful tales permeate the pre-colonial history of Singapore River. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) undertook the planning of the Singapore River. New developments have become a palimpsest over old histories. When Singapore was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles, the river was home to the many merchants, businessmen and coolies, who were the forefathers of Singapore.

This is the very origin of Singapore's prosperity, with the Merlion (the city's tourism icon) steadfastly standing guard at the mouth of the river. Quaint bridges span the river, ranging from the elegant Anderson Bridge to the simple Ord Bridge. Heading upriver, you will see the historic Anderson and Cavenagh Bridges. Cavenagh Bridge, built in 1869 and now for pedestrians only, leads to Empress Place, which was named in honour of Queen Victoria. At Empress Place, you will find the elegant Victoria Concert Hall, where classical concerts by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra are held regularly.

Chinese Temple- Covering 12 hectares, this is the largest temple in Singapore. A modern construction, this impressive edifice features many fine Chinese statues, shrines and decorations. There is also a large turtle pool and a serene garden and the temple grounds also house a crematorium.

Universal Studio- The latest addition to Singapore's attractions is Universal Studios. Opened in March 2010, it has seven themed sections with countless rides and shows, all related to major hit movies. Start off in **Hollywood**. Strolling down Hollywood Boulevard will make you think that you're in the States, not in a tropical Asian country. This is the main shopping area of the park. **New York** is based of course on the city of New York and here you can have your photo snapped with 'movie stars' such as Charlie Chaplin and Marilyn Monroe. Continue on to **Sci-Fi city** featuring a pair of the world's tallest intertwining roller coasters among other things and then to Ancient Egypt where you will be faced with two massive guard statues. The atmosphere is truly that of ancient Egypt so get in to experience the '**Revenge of the Mummy**' ride, a must for adults but not quite the best thing for young kids. Next comes **The Lost World** which is based on the two popular films *Jurassic Park* and *Waterworld*; lots of excitement and a huge T-Rex. A must-visit for Shrek fans is the **Far, Far Away** section, featuring a beautiful castle and Shrek's swamp. Don't worry – you'll get plenty of chances to have your photo taken with Shrek and Fiona. The last stop is at **Madagascar** (everyone knows and loves it!) This is a real winner and is guaranteed to bring a smile to people of all ages with its well-known characters, indoor boat rides and special effects and sounds.

Orchard Road- You haven't shopped in Singapore unless you've been to Orchard Road. This world-famous stretch is a favourite shopping area in the city. Whatever your budget, you can almost always find something to buy. Most shopping centres have an anchor tenant (usually a major department store) and other smaller retailers. Gems for the picking range from designer labels, mid-range goods and budget items. Some popular department stores to check out are Robinsons, Tangs, Ngee Ann City, Wisma Atria, Centrepoint, Scotts and Plaza Singapura.

Little India- Best seen on foot, Little India, located along Serangoon Road, is awash with the scents and sights of the subcontinent. Stroll along this road and the neighbouring alleyways to take in the quaint, old-fashioned shops selling spices, sarees, trinkets, Indian jewellery and daily products used by the average Indian household.