



# Singapore Travel Guide

*Robert Norman*

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Singapore is a small country on a small island, but with just over five million people it is a fairly crowded city and in fact second only to Monaco as the world's most densely populated country. However, unlike many other densely populated countries, Singapore has over 50% of its area covered by greenery and with over 50 major parks and 4 nature reserves, it is an enchanting garden city. Large self-contained residential towns mushroomed all over the island, around the clean and modern city centre. The centre of the city is located in the south and consists roughly of the Orchard Road shopping area, the Riverside, the new Marina Bay area and also the skyscraper-filled Shenton Way financial district. All of this is known in acronym-loving Singapore as the CBD (Central Business District) or, more simply, just town. There's more to see outside the main city centre of Singapore, from the HDB heartlands where hawker food is king, to the Singapore Zoo. Or chill out in the parks and beaches of the East Coast and Sentosa. Singapore is a microcosm of Asia, populated by Chinese, Malays, Indians and a large group of workers and expatriates from all across the globe, in a country that can be crossed in barely an hour. Having recently celebrated its 50th birthday, Singapore has more often than not chosen economic practicality over social concerns, encouraging constant reuse and redevelopment of land with huge projects like the Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa integrated resorts as well as becoming a significant Asian financial hub, but there has also been a growing push back to preserve local heritage in Balestier and elsewhere; just one of the many decisions to balance for the country's future. As Singapore is located a mere 1.5 degrees north of the Equator, its weather is usually sunny with no distinct seasons. Rain falls almost daily throughout the year, usually in sudden, heavy showers that rarely last longer than an hour. However, most rainfall occurs during the northeast monsoon (November to January), occasionally featuring lengthy spells of continuous rain. Spectacular thunderstorms can occur throughout the year, any time during the day, so it's wise to carry an umbrella at all times, both as a shade from the sun or cover from the rain. Getting around Singapore is easy: the public transportation system is extremely easy to use and taxis are reasonably priced - when you can get one. Very few visitors rent cars. Gothere.sg does a pretty good job of figuring out the fastest route by MRT and bus and even estimating taxi fares between any two points. Malay may be enshrined in the constitution as the "national" language, but in practice the most common language is English, spoken by almost every Singaporean under the age of 50 with varying degrees of fluency. English is spoken much better here than in most Asian neighbours. Singapore has two massive casinos, always referred to with the euphemism "integrated resort", which pull in nearly as much revenue as the entirety of Las Vegas. Marina Bay Sands at Marina Bay is the larger and swankier of the two, while Resorts World Sentosa at Sentosa aims for a more family-friendly experience (but offers No Limit Holdem from \$5/\$10). While locals (citizens and permanent residents) have to pay \$100/day to get in, foreign visitors can enter for free after presenting their passport. Besides the casino, there are other forms of legalised betting which are more accessible to the locals. This includes horse racing, which is run by the Singapore Turf Club on weekends, as well as football (soccer) betting and several lotteries run by the Singapore Pools. Mahjong is also a popular pastime in Singapore. singapore travel guide 2016 singapore travel guide travel guide singapore singapore travel book singapore guide

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