

Singapore...Where Culture, Cuisine and Charm All Meet

By Jill and Jordan Perlin, Simply Smart Travel Correspondents

Located approximately 85 miles from the Equator is one of the most vibrant, diverse and exciting places...Singapore. It is a city, state and country all in one. Once you arrive at Singapore's Changi Airport, you may actually not want to leave the airport. Singaporeans describe it as a destination unto itself. It has a butterfly sanctuary, cactus garden and canopy bridge. Don't worry, though. You can enjoy these attractions when you return for your outbound flight.

The first time we visited Singapore, a friend described it as "Asia for Beginners." Almost everyone speaks English. It is, however, a cultural melting pot. People from all over the world have made Singapore their home. Many religions are practiced, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. There are many temples and churches you can visit, and they are quite beautiful, such as the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, located in China Town.

Singapore is very easy to navigate, and it's extremely safe. The public transportation system (SMRT) is excellent, and taxis are plentiful. You will not need to rent a car. Once you step outside, you will instantly feel the weather. It rarely changes; it is hazy, hot and humid every day. During Monsoon season, it can rain heavily in the afternoon.



Satay is a staple of Singaporean cuisine. All Photos by Jordan Perlin.

Singapore abounds with many sites and attractions, Two iconic structures are the Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Hotel and Raffles Hotel. If you've seen the movie, "Crazy Rich Asians", you will instantly recognize MBS. In addition to its guest rooms, it has a casino, restaurants and shops. You can take the elevator to the top floor and take advantage of the beautiful views during the day and at night. Adjacent to MBS is Gardens by the Bay. If you are a nature lover, you will appreciate the Flower Dome and Cloud

Forest, both of which are indoors. The Merlion is Singapore's official mascot and symbolizes Singapore's origin as a fishing village. It is depicted a mythical creature, with the head of a lion and the body of a fish. It is just across the river from MBS. The other iconic structure, the Raffles Hotel, is famous for the Singapore Sling drink, which was created in 1915.



The Marina Bay Sands Hotel offers spectacular views of Singapore.

If animals are your thing, you can see all kinds of species. There are two zoos – a day zoo and a night zoo (known as the Night Safari). If you have to choose one, we suggest choosing the Night Safari, as seeing animals that are active at night is a generally rare opportunity. The Jurong Bird Park has

over 5,000 birds from 400 species. Throughout Singapore, you will also notice a great deal of construction. Many Singaporeans joke that the “crane is the national bird”.

Singapore is also known for its flowers. The Botanic Garden is a must-see. It is the country's first UNESCO heritage site and spans over 60 acres. A major section of the overall Garden is the National Orchid Garden, which boasts the world's largest orchid display.

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Orchids are all over Singapore. They come in many different colors, sizes and shapes.

For excitement and entertainment, head to Sentosa. It is an island off the southern coast, and is accessible by road, cable car, pedestrian boardwalk and monorail. It has over 50 individual attractions, including beaches, a water park, Universal Studios, an aquarium and indoor skydiving. It also has numerous hotels and restaurants. You can easily spend more than one day here.

To say that the food in Singapore is among the best in the world is an understatement in our opinion. Choices range from Michelin star restaurants to local food courts, known as “hawker centers.” Seafood is everywhere, and it is extremely fresh. Jumbo's is a favorite restaurant of ours;

the Chili Crab is like nothing else. The Lau Pa Sat Market contains over 200 food stalls. Adjacent to the Market is Boon Tat Street. It becomes “Satay Street” at night and offers some of the best Satay and barbequed seafood. The Maxwell Food Center is well known for its Hainanese Chicken Rice, another local favorite. For a completely different dining experience, visit Tippling Club, where the menu is known as molecular gastronomy. The prix fixe menu has over 10 tastings which can be paired with various drinks or cocktails. : Jurong Bird Park has an amazing array of birds on display.



Jurong Bird Park is Amazing

Shopping can almost be considered a national pastime in Singapore. There are many malls; those with higher end stores are along Orchard Road. Many neighborhoods also have good shopping, including Little India and Chinatown.

People often discover Singapore when they are connecting through it en route to somewhere else. They appreciate it so much that they return. Whatever the reason for your visit...the sights, sounds, and smells will stay with you.

Getting Around:

- By air – Singapore is the hub for Singapore Airlines. There have flights from all over the world. Many other airlines also fly to Singapore.
- By cruise – Several cruise lines offer sailings Singapore.
- Within Singapore – The public transportation system (SMRT) is excellent, and taxis are plentiful.

Must-Sees and Dos For A Short Trip of a Week or Less:

- Day Zoo or Night Safari
- Gardens by the Bay



to

The Stunning architecture of the Buddhist Temple

Botanic Gardens

- Cloud Forest

If You Have At Least Ten Days, Some of Your Best Options Are: (as many as you like)

In addition to the above:

- 2 to 3 days in Sentosa
- Jurong Bird Park
- Some churches/temples/mosques

Sidebar: This Destination At A Glance

Over 50 Advantage: It can be expensive to get to Singapore, as it's so far from North America. Fortunately, as of the writing of this article, the exchange rate from the U.S. dollar to the Singapore dollar is favorable.

Mobility Level: Generally low to moderate. Some activities require a lot of walking. The heat and humidity can be difficult for individuals with breathing issues to handle.

When To Go: Check out: [Best Times to Visit Singapore | U.S. News Travel \(usnews.com\)](#)

Where To Stay:

- Regent Hotel
- Raffles Hotel
- Swissotel Merchant Court

Special Travel Interests:

- Dining, animals and architecture

Jill and Jordan Perlin are Simply Smart Travel Correspondents. They are avid travelers who have been to almost every state in the U.S. and over 40 countries around the world. They enjoy everything about travel – getting to the destination, meeting the locals, learning new cultures, and seeking out places to eat and drink off the beaten path.