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Singapore

Singapore (/ˈsɪŋ(g)əpɔːr/ (listen)), officially the **Republic of Singapore**, is a sovereign island city-state in Southeast Asia. The country is situated one degree (137 kilometres or 85 miles) north of the equator, at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, with Indonesia's Riau Islands to the south and Peninsular Malaysia to the north. Singapore's territory consists of one main island along with 62 other islets. Since independence, extensive land reclamation has increased its total size by 23% (130 square kilometres or 50 square miles).

Although its history stretches back millennia, modern Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles as a trading post of the British East India Company. After the Company's collapse in 1858, the islands came under direct British control as a crown colony known as the Straits Settlements. During the Second World War, Singapore was occupied by Japan, after which Britain occupied it again. Singapore gained independence from the British Empire in 1963 by joining Malaysia along with Sabah and Sarawak, but separated two years later over ideological differences, becoming a fully sovereign state in 1965. After early years of turbulence and despite lacking natural resources and a hinterland, the nation developed rapidly as an Asian Tiger economy, based on external trade and its workforce.

The city-state is classified as an Alpha+ global city, indicating its influence on the global economy. Singapore is the only country in Asia with an AAA sovereign rating from all major rating agencies, and one of 11 worldwide. Singapore is a highly developed country and is ranked 9th on the UN Human Development Index, the highest in Asia for a sovereign state, with the 7th highest GDP per capita in the world.[8][9] It was ranked the most expensive city to live in from 2013 to 2019 by the Economist.[10] It is identified as a tax haven.[11] Singapore is placed highly in key social indicators: education, healthcare, quality of life, personal safety and housing, with a home-ownership rate of 90%. Singaporeans enjoy one of the world's longest life expectancy and one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world.[12] As of 2019, Singaporean citizens had visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 189 countries and territories, ranking the Singaporean passport 1st in the world, tied with Japan.[13]

The city-state is home to 5.6 million residents, 39% of whom are foreign nationals, including permanent residents. There are four official languages of Singapore: English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil; most Singaporeans are bilingual, with English serving as the nation's lingua franca, while Malay is the national language. Nonetheless, only about 10% of the population speaks Malay, with the most commonly spoken language at home being English.[14] Its cultural diversity is reflected in its extensive ethnic cuisine and major festivals. A 2014 study by Pew Research Center found that Singapore has the highest religious diversity of any country.[15] Multiracialism has been enshrined in its constitution since independence, and continues to shape national policies in education, housing and politics. The city-state's historical district features dozens of landmarks such as The Esplanade, Fort Canning Hill, the National Gallery Singapore, Raffles Hotel and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple. There are also numerous famous attractions within the city-state, notably Gardens by the Bay, Marina Bay Sands, Sentosa Island, Orchard Road, Jewel Changi Airport and the Singapore Zoo, which was ranked the best zoo in Asia.[16] The Singapore Botanic Gardens is the only tropical garden in the world to be honoured as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.[17]

Singapore is a unitary parliamentary republic with a Westminster system of unicameral parliamentary government. According to the Democracy Index in 2018, the country is described as a "flawed democracy".[18] As one of the five founding members of ASEAN, Singapore is the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Secretariat and Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) Secretariat,[19] as well as many international conferences and events. It is also a member of the East Asia Summit, Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth of Nations.[20]

Republic of Singapore	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: *Majulah Singapura* (Malay) (English: "Onward, Singapore")	
Anthem: *Majulah Singapura* (English: "Onward, Singapore")	
Capital	Singapore[1] (city-state) 1°17′N 103°50′E
Official languages	English · Malay · Mandarin · Tamil
National language	Malay
Ethnic groups (2015)[2]	List of ethnicities
Religion (2015)[2]	List of religions
Demonym(s)	Singaporean
Government	Unitary dominant-party parliamentary constitutional republic
• President	Halimah Yacob
• Prime Minister	Lee Hsien Loong
• Parliament Speaker	Tan Chuan-Jin
• Chief Justice	Sundaresh Menon
Legislature	Parliament
Independence from the United Kingdom	
• Self-governance	3 June 1959
• Malaysia Agreement	16 September 1963
• Proclamation of Singapore	9 August 1965
• ASEAN Declaration	8 August 1967
Area	
• Total	725.1 km² (280.0 sq mi)[3] (176th)
Population	
• 2018 estimate	▲ 5,638,700[4][Note 1] (113th)

Contents

• Density		7,804/km^2 (20,212.3/sq mi) (2nd)
GDP (PPP)		2019 estimate
• Total		▲ $589.187 billion[5] (36th)
• Per capita		▲ $103,717[5] (3rd)
GDP (nominal)		2019 estimate
• Total		▲ $372.807 billion[5] (31st)
• Per capita		▲ $65,627[5] (7th)
Gini (2017)		▬ 45.9[6] medium
HDI (2018)		▲ 0.935[7] very high · 9th
Currency		Singapore dollar (S$) (SGD)
Time zone		UTC+8 (Singapore Standard Time)
Date format		dd/mm/yyyy
Mains electricity		230 V–50 Hz
Driving side		left
Calling code		+65
ISO 3166 code		SG
Internet TLD		.sg

Etymology

The English name of Singapore is an anglicisation of the native Malay name for the country, *Singapura*, which was in turn derived from Sanskrit[21] (சிங்கப்பூர், IAST: *Siṃhapura*; *siha* meaning "lion", and *pura* meaning "town" or "city"), hence the customary reference to the nation as the *Lion City*, and its inclusion in many of the nation's symbols (e.g., its coat of arms, and the Merlion emblem). However, it is unlikely that lions ever lived on the island——Sang Nila Utama, the Srivijayan prince said to have founded and named the island *Singapura*, perhaps saw a Malayan tiger. There are, however, other suggestions for the origin of the name, and scholars do not believe that the origin of the name is firmly established.[22][23] The central island has also been called *Pulau Ujong*, literally "island at the end" (of the Malay Peninsula) in Malay, as far back as the third century CE.[24][25]

Singapore is also referred to as the *Garden City* for its tree-lined streets and greening efforts since independence,[26][27] and the *Little Red Dot* for how the island-nation is depicted on many maps of the world and Asia, as a red dot.[28][29][30]

History

Ancient Singapore

The Greco-Roman astronomer Ptolemy (90—168) identified a place called *Sabana* in the general area in the second century,[31] and the earliest written record of Singapore occurs in a Chinese account from the third century, describing the island of *Pú Luō Chūng* (蒲 羅 中). This was itself a transliteration from the Malay name *"Pulau Ujong"*, or "island at the end" (of the Malay Peninsula).[32]

The Nagarakretagama, a Javanese epic poem written in 1365, referred to a settlement on the island called *Tumasik* (possibly meaning "Sea Town").[33] In 1299, according to the *Malay Annals*, the Kingdom of Singapura was founded on the island by Sang Nila Utama.[34] Although the historicity of the accounts as given in the *Malay Annals* is the subject of academic debates,[35] it is nevertheless known from various documents that Singapore in the 14th century, then known as Temasek, was a trading port under the influence of both the Majapahit Empire and the Siamese kingdoms[36] and was a part of the Indosphere[37][38][39][40] of Greater India.[41][42][43][42] These Indianized Kingdoms, a term coined by George Cœdès were characterised by surprising resilience, political integrity and administrative stability.[44] Historical sources also indicate that around the end of the 14th century, its ruler Parameswara was attacked by either the Majapahit or the Siamese, forcing him to move on to Melaka where he founded the Sultanate of Malacca.[45] Archaeological evidence suggests that the main settlement on Fort Canning was abandoned around this time, although a small trading settlement continued in Singapore for some time afterwards.[22] In 1613, Portuguese raiders burned down the settlement, and the island faded into obscurity for the next two centuries.[46] By then Singapore was nominally part of the Johor Sultanate.[47] The wider maritime region and much trade was under Dutch control for the following period after the Dutch's conquest of Malacca.[48]

Srivijaya	650–1377
Kingdom of Singapura	1299–1398
Malacca Sultanate	1400–1511
Johor Sultanate	1528–1819
Straits Settlements	1826–1942
Empire of Japan	1942–1945
British Military Administration	1945–1946
Colony of Singapore	1946–1963
State of Singapore	1963–1965
Republic of Singapore	1965–present

British colonisation

The British governor Stamford Raffles arrived in Singapore on 28 January 1819 and soon recognised the island as a natural choice for the new port.[49] The island was then nominally ruled by Tengku Abdul Rahman, the Sultan of Johor, who was controlled by the Dutch and the Bugis.[50] However, the Sultanate was weakened by factional division: the Temenggong (Chief Minister) of Tengku Abdul Rahman, as well as his officials, were loyal to the Sultan's elder brother Tengku Long, who was living in exile in Riau. With the Temenggong's help, Raffles managed to smuggle Tengku Long back into Singapore. Raffles offered to recognise Tengku Long as the rightful Sultan of Johor, under the title of Sultan Hussein, as well as provide him with a yearly payment of $5000 and another $3000 to the Temenggong; in return, Sultan Hussein would grant the British the right to establish a trading post on Singapore.[51] A formal treaty was signed on 6 February 1819 and modern Singapore was born.[52][53]

1825 survey map. Singapore's free port trade was at Singapore River for 150 years. Fort Canning hill (centre) was home to its ancient and early colonial rulers.

In 1824, the entire island as well as the Temenggong became a British possession after a further treaty with the Sultan.[54] In 1826, Singapore became part of the Straits Settlements, under the jurisdiction of British India, becoming the regional capital in 1836.[55] Prior to Raffles' arrival, there were only about a thousand people living on the island, mostly indigenous Malays along with a handful of Chinese.[56] By 1860 the population had swelled to over 80,000, more than half being Chinese.[54] Many of these early immigrants came to work on the pepper and gambier plantations.[57] Later, in the 1890s, when the rubber industry also became established in Malaya and Singapore,[58] the island became a global centre for rubber sorting and export.[54]

Singapore was not greatly affected by the First World War (1914—18), as the conflict did not spread to Southeast Asia. The only significant event during the war was the 1915 Singapore Mutiny by Muslim sepoys from British India, who were garrisoned in Singapore.[59] After hearing rumours that they were to be sent to fight the Ottoman Empire, a Muslim state, the soldiers rebelled, killing their officers and several British civilians before the mutiny was suppressed by non-Muslim troops arriving from Johore and Burma.[60]

After the First World War, the British built the large Singapore Naval Base as part of the defensive Singapore strategy.[61] Originally announced in 1921, the construction of the base was gradual until the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Although not fully completed in 1938, and at the large cost of $60 million, it was nonetheless the largest dry dock in the world, the third-largest floating dock, and had enough fuel tanks to support the entire British navy for six months.[61][62][63] The base was defended by heavy 15-inch naval guns stationed at Fort Siloso, Fort Canning and Labrador, as well as a Royal Air Force airfield at Tengah Air Base. Winston Churchill touted it as the "Gibraltar of the East", and military discussions often referred to the base as simply "East of Suez". However, the British Home Fleet was stationed in Europe, and the British could not afford to build a second fleet to protect their interests in Asia. The plan was for the Home Fleet to sail quickly to Singapore in the event of an emergency. As a consequence, after World War II broke out in 1939, the fleet was fully occupied with defending Britain, leaving Singapore vulnerable to Japanese invasion.[64][65]

Sir Stamford Raffles's statue at the Singapore River spot where he first landed

World War II

During the Second World War, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded British Malaya, culminating in the Battle of Singapore. When the British force of 60,000 troops surrendered on 15 February 1942, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the defeat "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history.[66] British losses during the fighting for Singapore were heavy, with a total of nearly 85,000 personnel captured, in addition to losses during the earlier fighting in Malaya.[67] About 5,000 were killed or wounded,[68] of which Australians made up

the majority.[69][70][71] Japanese casualties during the fighting in Singapore amounted to 1,714 killed and 3,378 wounded.[67][Note 2] The occupation was to become a major turning point in the histories of several nations, including those of Japan, Britain, and the then-colonial state of Singapore. Japanese newspapers triumphantly declared the victory as deciding the general situation of the war.[72][73] Singapore was renamed **Syonan-to** (昭南島 *Shōnan-tō*), meaning "Light of the South".[74][75] Between 5,000 and 25,000 ethnic Chinese people were killed in the subsequent Sook Ching massacre.[76]

British forces had planned to liberate Singapore in 1945; however, the war ended before these operations could be carried out. It was subsequently re-occupied by British, Indian and Australian forces following the Japanese surrender in September.[77][78][79] Meanwhile, Tomoyuki Yamashita was tried by a US military commission for war crimes, but not for crimes committed by his troops in Malaya or Singapore. He was convicted and hanged in the Philippines on 23 February 1946.[80][81]

Post-war period

After the Japanese surrender to the Allies on 15 August 1945, Singapore fell into a brief state of violence and disorder; looting and revenge-killing were widespread. British troops led by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander for Southeast Asia Command, returned to Singapore to receive formal surrender of the Japanese forces in the region from General Itagaki Seishiro on behalf of General Hisaichi Terauchi on 12 September 1945, and a British Military Administration was formed to govern the island until March 1946. Much of the infrastructure had been destroyed during the war, including harbour facilities at the Port of Singapore. There was also a shortage of food leading to malnutrition, disease, and rampant crime and violence. High food prices, unemployment, and workers' discontent culminated into a series of strikes in 1947 causing massive stoppages in public transport and other services. By late 1947, the economy began to recover, facilitated by a growing demand for tin and rubber around the world, but it would take several more years before the economy returned to pre-war levels.[82]

The failure of Britain to successfully defend Singapore had destroyed its credibility as an infallible ruler in the eyes of Singaporeans. The decades after the war saw a political awakening amongst the local populace and the rise of anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments, epitomised by the slogan *Merdeka*, or "independence" in the Malay language. The British were prepared to gradually increase self-governance for Singapore and Malaya, and on 1 April 1946, the Straits Settlements was dissolved and Singapore became a separate Crown Colony with a civil administration headed by a Governor.[82] In July 1947, separate Executive and Legislative Councils were established and the election of six members of the Legislative Council was scheduled in the following year.[83]

British evacuation in 1945 after the Japanese surrender. Kallang Airport's control tower near the city has been conserved.

During the 1950s, Chinese communists with strong ties to the trade unions and Chinese schools waged a guerrilla war against the government, leading to the Malayan Emergency. The 1954 National Service riots, Hock Lee bus riots, and Chinese middle schools riots in Singapore were all linked to these events.[84] David Marshall, pro-independence leader of the Labour Front, won Singapore's first general election in 1955. He led a delegation to London, but Britain rejected his demand for complete self-rule. He resigned and was replaced by Lim Yew Hock in 1956, whose policies convinced Britain to grant Singapore full internal self-government for all matters except defence and foreign affairs.[85]

During the May 1959 elections, the People's Action Party (PAP) won a landslide victory. Singapore became an internally self-governing state within the Commonwealth, with Lee Kuan Yew as its first Prime Minister.[86] As a result, the 1959 general elections were the first after full internal self-government was granted by the British authorities. Singapore was not yet fully independent, as the British still controlled external affairs such as the military and foreign relations. However, Singapore was now a recognised state. Governor Sir William Allmond Codrington Goode served as the first Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), and was succeeded by Yusof bin Ishak.[87]

Singapore thrived as an entrepôt. In the 1960s, bumboats were used to transport cargoes and supplies between nearshore ships and Singapore River.

Merger with Malaysia

Despite their successes in governing Singapore, the PAP leaders believed that Singapore's future lay with Malaya due to strong ties between the two nations. It was thought that the merger would benefit the economy by creating a common market which will support new industries, solving the ongoing unemployment woes in Singapore. However, a sizeable pro-communist wing of the PAP was strongly opposed to the merger, fearing a loss of influence, and hence formed the Barisan Sosialis, splitting from the PAP.[88][89] This was because the ruling party of Malaya, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), was staunchly anti-communist and would support the non-communist faction of PAP against them. UMNO, who was initially sceptical of the idea of a merger as they distrust the PAP government and were concerned that the large Chinese population in Singapore would alter the racial balance on which their political power base depended, changed their minds about the merger after being afraid of being taken over by pro-communists. On 27 May 1961, Malaya's Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, made a surprise proposal of a Federation of Malaysia, comprising existing Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Brunei and the British Borneo territories of North Borneo and Sarawak.[90] The UMNO leaders believed that the additional Malay population in the Borneo territories would offset Singapore's Chinese population.[85] The British government, for its part, believed that the merger would prevent Singapore from becoming a haven for communism.[91] To secure the mandate of the people, the PAP called for the 1962 Merger Referendum, which provided different terms for merger with Malaysia, but no options for avoiding it. As a result, on 16 September 1963, Singapore joined with the Federation of Malaya, the Crown Colony of Sarawak and the Crown Colony of North Borneo to form the new federation of Malaysia under the terms of the Malaysia Agreement, with Singapore being granted a high level of autonomy compared to other states in Malaysia.[92]

Indonesia, however, opposed the formation of Malaysia over its own claims of Borneo and launched *konfrontasi* (Confrontation in Indonesian).[93] On 10 March 1965, a bomb planted by Indonesian saboteurs on a mezzanine floor of MacDonald House exploded, killing three people and injuring 33 others. It was the deadliest of at least 42 bomb incidents which occurred during the confrontation.[94] Two members of the Indonesian Marine Corps, Osman bin Haji Mohamed Ali and Harun bin Said, were eventually convicted and executed for the crime.[95] The explosion caused $250,000 in damages to MacDonald House.[96][97]

Even after the merger, the Singapore state government and the Malaysian central government disagreed on many political and economic issues. Despite an earlier agreement to establish a common market, Singapore continued to face restrictions when trading with the rest of Malaysia. In retaliation, Singapore did not extend to Sabah and Sarawak the full extent of the loans agreed to for economic development of the two eastern states. The situation escalated to such an intensity that talks soon broke down and abusive speeches and writing became rife on both sides. This led to communal strife in Singapore, accumulating to the 1964 race riots in Singapore.[98] Because of this, on 7 August 1965, the then Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, seeing no alternative to avoid further bloodshed, advised the Parliament of Malaysia that it should vote to expel Singapore from Malaysia.[99] On 9 August 1965, the Malaysian Parliament voted 126 to 0 (with Singaporean delegates not present) to move a bill to amend the constitution providing for Singapore to separate from the Federation of Malaysia. This gave Singapore independence, unusually against its own will.[100][101][85][102]

A symbol of Singapore, the Merlion was erected in 1964

Republic of Singapore

Singapore gained independence as the Republic of Singapore (remaining within the Commonwealth of Nations) on 9 August 1965 with Lee Kuan Yew and Yusof bin Ishak as the first prime minister and president respectively. In 1967, the country co-founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[103] Race riots broke out once more in 1969.[104] Lee Kuan Yew's emphasis on rapid economic growth, support for business entrepreneurship, and limitations on internal democracy shaped Singapore's policies for the next half-century and the country progressed to a First World country.[105][106] Further economic success continued through the 1980s, with the unemployment rate falling to 3% and real GDP growth averaging at about 8% up until 1999. During the 1980s, Singapore began to upgrade to higher-technological industries, such as the wafer fabrication sector, in order to compete with its neighbours which now had cheaper labour. Singapore Changi Airport was opened in 1981 and Singapore Airlines was formed.[107] The Port of Singapore became one of the world's busiest ports and the service and tourism industries also grew immensely during this period. Singapore emerged as an important transportation and logistics hub and a major tourist destination.[108][109]

Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister, is also recognised as Singapore's founding father.

The PAP rule is termed authoritarian by some activists and opposition politicians who see the strict regulation of political and media activities by the government as an infringement on political rights.[110] In response, the government of Singapore underwent several significant political changes, by introducing the Non-Constituency members of parliament in 1984 to allow up to three losing candidates from opposition parties to be appointed as MPs. Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) were introduced in 1988 to create multi-seat electoral divisions, intended to ensure minority representation in parliament.[111] Nominated members of parliament were introduced in 1990 to allow non-elected non-partisan MPs.[112] The Constitution was amended in 1991 to provide for an Elected President who has veto power in the use of national reserves and appointments to public office.[113]

In 1990, Goh Chok Tong succeeded Lee and became Singapore's second Prime Minister.[114] During Goh's tenure, the country went through some post-independence crises, such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2003 SARS outbreak.[115][116]

In 2004, Lee Hsien Loong, the eldest son of Lee Kuan Yew, became the country's third Prime Minister.[116] Lee Hsien Loong's tenure included the 2008 global financial crisis, the resolution of a dispute over Malayan railways land, and the introduction of integrated resorts.[117] Despite the economy's exceptional growth, the People's Action Party (PAP) suffered its worst election results in 2011, winning 60% of votes, amidst hot-button issues of high influx of foreign workers and cost of living.[118] On 23 March 2015 Lee Kuan Yew died,[106] during the 50th year of independence, declaring a one-week period of public mourning. Subsequently, the PAP maintained its dominance in Parliament in the September general election, receiving 69.9% of the popular vote, behind the 2001 tally of 75.3%[119] and the 1968 tally of 86.7%.

> "Singapore shall forever be a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society."
>
> — Proclamation of Singapore by Lee Kuan Yew on 9 August 1965

Government and politics

Singapore is a parliamentary republic based on the Westminster system. The Constitution of Singapore is the supreme law of the country, establishing the structure and responsibility of government. The president is head of state and exercises executive power on the advice of her ministers. The prime minister is head of government and is appointed by the president as the person most likely to command the confidence of a majority of Parliament. Cabinet is chosen by the prime minister and formally appointed by the president.[120]

The government is separated into three branches:

- Executive: The president is commander-in-chief of the military,[121] can veto laws before they become effective (subject to parliamentary override), and holds limited discretionary powers of oversight over the government.[122] The prime minister and Cabinet are responsible for administering and enforcing laws and policies.[87]

- **Legislative:** The unicameral Parliament enacts national law, approves budgets, and provides a check on government policy.[123]
- **Judiciary:** The Supreme Court and State Courts, whose judges are appointed by the president, interpret laws and overturn those they find unconstitutional.[124]

The president is directly elected by popular vote for a renewable six-year term. Requirements for this position are extremely stringent, such that no more than several thousand people qualify for candidacy.[125] Presidential elections may be declared "reserved" for a racial community if no one from that ethnic group has been elected to the presidency in the five most recent terms. Only members of that community may qualify as candidates in a reserved presidential election.[126]

The Istana is the official residence and office of the President, as well as the working office of the Prime Minister.

Members of Parliament (MPs) are chosen to serve for a term lasting up to five years. The current Parliament has 100 members; 88 were directly elected from the 29 constituencies, nine are nonpartisan nominated members appointed by the president, and three are non-constituency members from opposition parties who were not elected in the last general election but appointed to the legislature to increase opposition party representation. In group representation constituencies (GRCs), political parties assemble teams of candidates (rather than nominate individuals) to contest elections. At least one MP in a GRC must be of an ethnic minority background. All elections are held using first-past-the-post voting.[127] The People's Action Party (PAP) and Workers' Party were the only two political parties to have representatives elected to Parliament in the 2015 election. The PAP occupies a dominant position in Singaporean politics, having won large parliamentary majorities in every election since self-governance was granted in 1959.[128]

The judicial system is based on English common law, continuing the legal tradition established during British rule but with substantial local differences. Criminal law is based on the Indian Penal Code.[129] Trial by jury was abolished in 1970,[130] and both caning[131][132] and capital punishment continue to be administered as penalties for severe offences.[133]

Foreign relations

Singapore's foreign policy is aimed at maintaining security in Southeast Asia and surrounding territories. An underlying principle is political and economic stability in the region.[134] It has diplomatic relations with more than 180 sovereign states.[135]

As one of the five founding members of ASEAN,[136] it is a strong supporter of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the ASEAN Investment Area as Singapore's economy is closely linked to that of the region as a whole. Former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has proposed the formation of an ASEAN Economic Community, a step beyond the current AFTA, bringing it closer to a common market. This was agreed to in 2007 for implementation by 2015. Other regional organisations are important to Singapore, and it is the host of the APEC Secretariat.[137] Singapore maintains membership in other regional organisations, such as Asia–Europe Meeting, the Forum for East Asia-Latin American Cooperation, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and the East Asia Summit.[134] It is also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement[138], the United Nations and the Commonwealth.[139][140] While Singapore is not a formal member of the G20, it has been invited to participate in G20 processes in most years since 2010.[141]

Then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Ambassador to the US Chan Heng Chee meeting with US Secretary of Defense William Cohen in 2000.

In general, bilateral relations with other ASEAN members are strong; however, disagreements have arisen,[142] and relations with neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia have sometimes been strained.[143] Malaysia and Singapore have clashed over the delivery of fresh water to Singapore,[144] and access by the Singapore Armed Forces to Malaysian airspace.[143] Border issues exist with Malaysia and Indonesia, and both have banned the sale of marine sand to Singapore over disputes about Singapore's land reclamation.[145] Some previous disputes, such as the Pedra Branca dispute, have been resolved by the International Court of Justice.[146] Piracy in the Strait of Malacca has been a cause of concern for all three countries.[144] Close economic ties exist with Brunei, and the two share a pegged currency value, through a Currency Interchangeability Agreement between the two countries which makes both Brunei dollar and Singapore dollar banknotes and coins legal tender in either country.[147][148]

Prime Minister Lee meeting U.S. President Donald Trump a day before the historic 2018 North Korea–United States summit in Singapore.

The first diplomatic contact with China was made in the 1970s, with full diplomatic relations established in the 1990s. Since then the two countries have been major players in strengthening the ASEAN–China relationship, and has maintained a long-standing and greatly prioritised close relationship partly due to China's growing influence and essentiality in the Asia-Pacific region, specifying that "its common interest with China is far greater than any differences". Furthermore, Singapore has positioned itself as a strong supporter of China's constructive engagement and peaceful development in the region. In addition, China has been Singapore's largest trading partner since 2013, after surpassing Malaysia.[149][150][151][152][153] Singapore and the United States share a long-standing close relationship, in particular in defence, the economy, health, and education. Singapore has also pushed regional counter-terrorism initiatives, with a strong resolve to deal with terrorists inside its borders. To this end, the country has stepped up co-operation with ASEAN members and China to strengthen regional security and fight terrorism, as well as participating in the organisation's first joint maritime exercise with the latter.[154] It has also given support to the US-led coalition to fight terrorism, with bilateral co-operation in counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation initiatives, and joint military exercises.[142]

Prime Minister Lee at the 2017 G20 meeting in Germany. Singapore has often been invited to participate in G20 processes since 2010.

As Singapore has diplomatic relations with both United States and North Korea, and was one of the few countries that have relationships with both countries,[155] on 12 June 2018, Singapore hosted a historic summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, the first-ever meeting between the sitting leaders of the two nations.[156][157] It has also hosted the Ma–Xi meeting on 7 November 2015, the first meeting between the political leaders of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1950,[158] [159][160]

Military

The Singaporean military, arguably the most technologically advanced in Southeast Asia[161], consists of the army, navy, and the air force. It is seen as the guarantor of the country's independence,[162] translating into Singapore culture, involving all citizens in the country's defence.[163] The government spends 4.9% of the country's GDP on the military——high by regional standards[161]——and one out of every four dollars of government spending is spent on defence.[164]

Singapore Air Force's F-15SG are *Strike Eagle* variants.

After its independence, Singapore had only two infantry regiments commanded by British officers. Considered too small to provide effective security for the new country, the development of its military forces became a priority.[165] In addition, in October 1971, Britain pulled its military out of Singapore, leaving behind only a small British, Australian and New Zealand force as a token military presence.[166] A great deal of initial support came from Israel,[165] a country unrecognised by its neighbouring Muslim-majority nations of Malaysia and Indonesia.[167][168][169] Fearing an invasion from Malaysia, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) commanders were tasked by the Singapore government to create the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) from scratch, and Israeli instructors were brought in to train Singaporean soldiers. Military courses were conducted according to the IDF's format, and Singapore adopted a system of conscription and reserve service based on the Israeli model,[165] Singapore still maintains strong security ties with Israel and is one of the biggest buyers of Israeli arms and weapons systems.[170] with one recent example being the MATADOR anti-tank weapon.[171]

The SAF is being developed to respond to a wide range of issues in both conventional and unconventional warfare. The Defence Science and Technology Agency is responsible for procuring resources for the military.[172] The geographic restrictions of Singapore mean that the SAF must plan to fully repulse an attack, as they cannot fall back and re-group. The small size of the population has also affected the way the SAF has been designed, with a small active force but a large number of reserves.[163]

Singapore has conscription for all able-bodied males at age 18, except those with a criminal record or who can prove that their loss would bring hardship to their families. Males who have yet to complete pre-university education or are awarded the Public Service Commission scholarship can opt to defer their draft.[173] Though not required to perform military service, the number of women in the SAF has been increasing: since 1989 they have been allowed to fill military vocations formerly reserved for men. Before induction into a specific branch of the armed forces, recruits undergo at least 9 weeks of basic military training.[174]

The Officer Cadet School building within the SAFTI Military Institute

Because of the scarcity of open land on the main island, training involving activities such as live firing and amphibious warfare are often carried out on smaller islands, typically barred to civilian access. However, large-scale drills, considered too dangerous to be performed in the country, have been performed in Taiwan since 1975[174] and in about a dozen other countries. In general, military exercises are held with foreign forces once or twice per week.[163] Due to airspace and land constraints, the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) maintains a number of overseas bases in Australia, the United States, and France. The RSAF's 130 Squadron is based in RAAF Base Pearce, Western Australia,[175] and its 126 Squadron is based in the Oakey Army Aviation Centre, Queensland.[176] The RSAF has one squadron——the 150 Squadron——based in Cazaux Air Base in southern France.[177][178] The RSAF also has a few overseas detachments in the United States, in San Diego, California, Marana, Arizona, Grand Prairie, Texas and Luke Air Force Base, among others.[179][180]

The SAF has sent forces to assist in operations outside the country, in areas such as Iraq[181] and Afghanistan,[182][183] in both military and civilian roles. In the region, they have helped to stabilise East Timor and have provided aid to Aceh in Indonesia following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. In 2014, the RSN deployed two ships, the RSS *Resolute* and the *Tenacious* to the Gulf of Aden to aid in counter piracy efforts as part of Task Force 151. The SAF also helped in relief efforts during Hurricane Katrina and Typhoon Haiyan.[184] Singapore is part of the Five Power Defence Arrangements, a military alliance with Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.[163] In 2019, the nation was placed 7th most peaceful country on the Global Peace Index.[185]

In 2007, Singapore troopers were deployed in Afghanistan as part of a multinational coalition.

Human rights

In 2018, Singapore was ranked 151st out of 180 nations by Reporters Without Borders in the Worldwide Press Freedom Index.[186] Historically, the government has restricted freedom of speech and freedom of the press and has limited some civil and political rights.[187] The right to freedom of speech and association guaranteed by Article 14(1) of the Constitution of Singapore is restricted by the subsequent subsection (2) of the same Article.

A law dating back from 1938 (Penal Code, s. 377A) bans sexual relations between men. However, the law is rarely enforced and sexual relations between women are legal.[188]

Freedom House ranks Singapore as "partly free" in its *Freedom in the World* report,[128] and *The Economist* ranks Singapore as a "flawed democracy", the second best rank of four, in its "Democracy Index".[189][190] The latest elections were in September 2015, with the People's Action Party (PAP) winning 83 of 89 seats contested with 70% of the popular vote.[191]

Amnesty International has said that some legal provisions of the Singapore system conflict with the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty".[192] The government has disputed Amnesty's claims, stating that their "position on abolition of the death penalty is by no means uncontested internationally" and that the Report contains "grave errors of facts and misrepresentations".[193] Singapore's judicial system is considered one of the most reliable in Asia.[194]

Speakers' Corner in Chinatown provides a public demonstration and "free speech" area usually restricted in other parts of the island.

Singapore has been consistently rated among the least corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International.[195] Singapore's unique combination of a strong almost authoritarian government with an emphasis on meritocracy and good governance is known as the "Singapore model", and is regarded as a key factor behind Singapore's political stability, economic growth, and harmonious social order.[196][197]

In 2019, the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index ranked Singapore as 13th overall among the world's 126 countries for adherence to the rule of law. Singapore ranked high on the factors of order and security (#1), absence of corruption (#3), regulatory enforcement (#3), civil justice (#5), and criminal justice (#6), but ranked significantly lower on factors of open government (#25), constraints on government powers (#27), and fundamental rights (#30).[198] All public gatherings of five or more people require police permits, and protests may legally be held only at the Speakers' Corner.[199]

Geography

Singapore consists of 63 islands, including the main island, Pulau Ujong.[200] There are two-man-made connections to Johor, Malaysia: the Woodlands 1st Link in the north and the Tuas 2nd Link in the west. Jurong Island, Pulau Tekong, Pulau Ubin and Sentosa are the largest of Singapore's smaller islands. The highest natural point is Bukit Timah Hill at 163.63 m (537 ft).[201] Under British rule, Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands were part of Singapore, but were later transferred over to Australia in 1957.[202][203][204] Pedra Branca, an outlying island which now belongs to Singapore after the dispute, is the nation's easternmost point.

An outline of Singapore and the surrounding islands and waterways

Ongoing land reclamation projects have increased Singapore's land area from 581.5 km^2 (224.5 sq mi) in the 1960s to 721.5 km^2 (278.6 sq mi) in 2018, an increase of some 23% (130 km^2).[205] The country is projected to grow to 766 km^2 (300 sq mi) by 2030.[206] Some projects involve merging smaller islands through land reclamation to form larger, more functional islands, as has been done with Jurong Island.[207] The type of sand used in reclamation is found in rivers and beaches, rather than deserts, and is in great demand worldwide. In 2010 Singapore imported almost 15 million tons of sand for its projects, the demand being such that Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam have all restricted or barred the export of sand to Singapore in recent years. As a result, in 2016 Singapore switched to using polders — a Netherlands solution — to reclamation, in which an area is enclosed and then pumped dry.[208]

Nature

Singapore's urbanisation means that it has lost 95% of its historical forests,[209] and now over half of the naturally occurring fauna and flora in Singapore is present in nature reserves, such as the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, which comprise only 0.25% of Singapore's land area.[209] To combat this decline, in 1967 the government introduced the vision of making Singapore a "garden city"[210] aiming to soften the harshness of urbanisation and improve the quality of life.[211] Since then, nearly 10% of Singapore's land has been set aside for parks and nature reserves.[212] The government also has plans to preserve the remaining wildlife.[213]

Singapore Botanic Gardens is a UNESCO World Heritage Site – one of three gardens in the world, and the only tropical garden to be recognised.

Singapore's well known gardens include the Singapore Botanic Gardens, a 150-year-old tropical garden and Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site,[214] and Gardens by the Bay, a popular tourist attraction.

Climate

Singapore has a tropical rainforest climate (Köppen: *Af*) with no distinctive seasons, uniform temperature and pressure, high humidity, and abundant rainfall. Since this tropical rainforest climate is more subject to the Intertropical Convergence Zone than the trade winds and cyclones are very rare, it is equatorial. Temperatures usually range from 25 to 35 °C (77 to 95 °F). While temperature does not vary greatly throughout the year, there is a wetter monsoon season from November to January.[215]

From July to October, there is often haze caused by bush fires in neighbouring Indonesia, usually from the island of Sumatra.[216] Although Singapore does not observe daylight saving time (DST), it follows the GMT+8 time zone, one hour ahead of the typical zone for its geographical location.[217] This has caused the sun to rise and set particularly late during January and February periods, where the sun rises at 7:20 am and sets around 7:25 pm. During July, the sun sets at around 7:15 pm, similar to other cities at much higher latitudes such as Taipei and Tokyo. The earliest the sun sets and rises is in October and November when the sun rises at 6:45 am and sets at 6:50 pm. Singapore remains highly vulnerable to the risk of climate change especially with regards to the rising sea level.[218]

Climate data for Singapore													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °C (°F)	35.2 (95.4)	35.2 (95.4)	36.0 (96.8)	35.8 (96.4)	35.4 (95.7)	35.0 (95.0)	34.0 (93.2)	34.2 (93.6)	34.4 (93.9)	34.6 (94.3)	34.2 (93.6)	33.8 (92.8)	36.0 (96.8)
Average high °C (°F)	30.4 (86.7)	31.7 (89.1)	32.0 (89.6)	32.3 (90.1)	32.2 (90.0)	32.0 (89.6)	31.3 (88.3)	31.4 (88.5)	31.4 (88.5)	31.7 (89.1)	31.1 (88.0)	30.2 (86.4)	31.5 (88.7)
Daily mean °C (°F)	26.5 (79.7)	27.1 (80.8)	27.5 (81.5)	28.0 (82.4)	28.3 (82.9)	28.3 (82.9)	27.9 (82.2)	27.9 (82.2)	27.6 (81.7)	27.6 (81.7)	27.0 (80.6)	26.4 (79.5)	27.5 (81.5)
Average low °C (°F)	23.9 (75.0)	24.3 (75.7)	24.6 (76.3)	25.0 (77.0)	25.4 (77.7)	25.4 (77.7)	25.0 (77.0)	25.0 (77.0)	24.8 (76.6)	24.7 (76.5)	24.3 (75.7)	24.0 (75.2)	24.7 (76.5)
Record low °C (°F)	19.4 (66.9)	19.7 (67.5)	20.2 (68.4)	20.7 (69.3)	21.2 (70.2)	20.8 (69.4)	19.7 (67.5)	20.2 (68.4)	20.7 (69.3)	20.6 (69.1)	21.1 (70.0)	20.6 (69.1)	19.4 (66.9)
Average rainfall mm (inches)	234.6 (9.24)	112.8 (4.44)	170.3 (6.70)	154.8 (6.09)	171.2 (6.74)	130.7 (5.15)	154.4 (6.08)	148.9 (5.86)	156.5 (6.16)	154.6 (6.09)	258.5 (10.18)	318.6 (12.54)	2,165.9 (85.27)
Average rainy days	13	8	13	14	14	12	14	14	13	15	18	18	166
Average relative humidity (%)	84.4	82.0	83.4	84.1	83.5	81.9	82.3	82.2	82.7	83.1	85.7	86.5	83.5
Mean monthly sunshine hours	172.4	183.2	192.7	173.6	179.8	177.7	187.9	180.6	156.2	155.2	129.6	133.5	2,022.4
Source #1: National Environment Agency (climatological reference period: 1981–2010; records: temp. 1929–2017, rainfall 1869–2017, humidity 1929–2017, rain days 1891–2017)[219]													
Source #2: NOAA (sun only, 1961–1990)[220]													

Economy

Singapore has a highly developed market economy, based historically on extended entrepôt trade. Along with Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, Singapore is one of the original Four Asian Tigers, but has surpassed its peers in terms of GDP per capita. Between 1965 and 1995, growth rates averaged around 6 per cent per annum, transforming the living standards of the population.[221]

The Singaporean economy is known as one of the freest,[222] most innovative,[223] most competitive,[224] most dynamic[225] and most business-friendly.[226] The 2015 Index of Economic Freedom ranks Singapore as the second freest economy in the world and the Ease of doing business index has also ranked Singapore as the easiest place to do business for the past decade.[227] According to the Corruption Perceptions Index, Singapore is consistently perceived as one of the least corrupt countries in the world, along with New Zealand and the Scandinavian countries.[228] In 2016, Singapore is rated the world's most expensive city for the third consecutive year by the Economist Intelligence Unit.[229][230]

For several years, Singapore has been one of the few[231] countries with an AAA credit rating from the big three, and the only Asian country to achieve this rating.[232] Singapore attracts a large amount of foreign investment as a result of its location, skilled workforce, low tax rates, advanced infrastructure and zero-tolerance against corruption.[233] Singapore has the world's eleventh largest foreign reserves,[234] and one of the highest net international investment position per capita.[235][236] There are more than 7,000 multinational corporations from the United States, Japan, and Europe in Singapore. There are also approximately 1,500 companies from China and a similar number from India. Roughly 44 percent of the Singaporean workforce is made up of non-Singaporeans.[237] Over ten free-trade agreements have been signed with other countries and regions.[142] Despite market freedom, Singapore's government operations have a significant stake in the economy, contributing 22% of the GDP.[238]

Singapore is the second-largest foreign investor in India.[239] It is the 14th largest exporter and the 15th largest importer in the world.[240][241]

Economy Statistics (Recent Years) : Year 2014 To Year 2018
Sources:[242][243][244][245][246][247][248][249][250]

Year	GDP Nominal (Billion)	GDP Nominal Per Capita	GDP Real (Billion)	GNI Nominal (Billion)	GNI Nominal Per Capita	Foreign Reserves (Billion)	Avg. Exchange Rate (1US$ to S$)
2014	S$398.987	S$72,937	S$411.540	S$385,070	S$70,400	S$340.438	S$1.2671
2015	S$423.444	S$76,502	S$423.444	S$394.551	S$71,283	S$350.991	S$1.3748
2016	S$439.412	S$78,364	S$435.988	S$408.820	S$72,909	S$356.254	S$1.3815
2017	S$467.306	S$83,265	S$452.119	S$434.806	S$77,474	S$373.994	S$1.3807
2018	S$491.174	S$87,108	S$466.313	S$457.983	S$81,222	S$392.096	S$1.3491

The currency of Singapore is the Singapore dollar (SGD or S$), issued by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).[251] It is interchangeable with the Brunei dollar at par value since 1967, owing to their historically close relations.[252] MAS manages its monetary policy by allowing the Singapore dollar exchange rate to rise or fall within an undisclosed trading band. This is different from most central banks, which use interest rates to manage policy.[253]

Singapore Airlines celebrated the nation's 2015 Golden Jubilee with a flag livery on its Airbus A380

In recent years, the country has been identified as an increasingly popular tax haven for the wealthy due to the low tax rate on personal income and tax exemptions on foreign-based income and capital gains. Australian millionaire retailer Brett Blundy and multi-billionaire Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin are two examples of wealthy individuals who have settled in Singapore (Blundy in 2013 and Saverin in 2012).[254] In 2009, Singapore was removed from the OCDE "liste grise" of tax havens,[255] but ranked fourth on the Tax Justice Network's 2015 Financial Secrecy Index of the world's off-shore financial service providers, banking one-eighth of the world's offshore capital, while "providing numerous tax avoidance and evasion opportunities".[256] In August 2016, *The Straits Times* reported that Indonesia had decided to create tax havens on two islands near Singapore to bring Indonesian capital back into the tax base.[257] In October 2016, the Monetary Authority of Singapore admonished and fined UBS and DBS and withdrew Falcon Private Bank's banking licence for their alleged role in the Malaysian Sovereign Fund scandal.[258][259]

Singapore has the world's highest percentage of millionaires, with one out of every six households having at least one million US dollars in disposable wealth. This excludes property, businesses, and luxury goods, which if included would increase the number of millionaires, especially as property in Singapore is among the world's most expensive.[260] Singapore does not have a minimum wage, believing that it would lower its competitiveness. It also has one of the highest income inequalities among developed countries.[261][262]

Employment

Singapore traditionally has one of the lowest unemployment rates among developed countries. The unemployment rate did not exceed 4% from 2005 to 2014, hitting highs of 3.1% in 2005 and 3% during the 2009 global financial crisis; it fell to 1.8% in the first quarter of 2015.[263]

The government provides numerous assistance programmes to the homeless and needy through the Ministry of Social and Family Development, so acute poverty is rare. Some of the programmes include providing between SGD400 and SGD1000 per month to needy households, providing free medical care at government hospitals, and paying for children's school fees.[264][265][266] The Singapore government also provides numerous benefits to its citizenry, including free money to encourage residents to exercise in public gyms,[267] up to $166,000 worth of baby bonus benefits for each baby born to a citizen,[268] heavily subsidised healthcare, money to help the disabled, cheap laptops for poor students,[269] rebates for numerous areas such as public transport,[270] utility bills and more.[271][272]

Although it has been recognised that foreign workers are crucial to the country's economy, the government is considering capping these workers,[273] as foreign workers make up 80% of the construction industry and up to 50% of the service industry.[274][275] The Immigrations and Checkpoints authority publishes a number of criteria for eligibility for permanent residence.[276]


A view of the cityscape and anchored ships from Singapore's Eastern Anchorage off the East Coast Park

Industry sectors

Globally, Singapore is a leader in several economic sectors, including being 3rd-largest foreign exchange centre, 3rd-leading financial centre,[277][278] 2nd-largest casino gambling market,[279] 3rd-largest oil-refining and trading centre, world's largest oil-rig producer and major hub for ship repair services,[280][281][282] world's top logistics hub.[283]

The economy is diversified, with its top contributors——financial services, manufacturing, oil-refining. Its main exports are refined petroleum, integrated circuits and computers[285] which constituted 27% of the country's GDP in 2010, and includes significant electronics, petroleum refining, chemicals, mechanical engineering and biomedical sciences sectors. In 2019, there are more than 60 semiconductor companies in Singapore, which together comprise 11 per cent of global market share. The semiconductor industry contributes around 7 per cent of Singapore's economy.[286]

Singapore's largest companies are in the telecoms, banking, transportation and manufacturing sectors, many of which started as state-run enterprises, and has since been listed on the Singapore Exchange, including Singapore Telecommunications (Singtel), Singapore Technologies Engineering, Keppel Corporation, Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC), Development Bank of Singapore (DBS), United Overseas Bank (UOB). In 2011, amidst the global financial crisis, OCBC, DBS and UOB were ranked as the world's 1st, 5th, 6th "strongest banks in the world" respectively by Bloomberg surveys.[287]
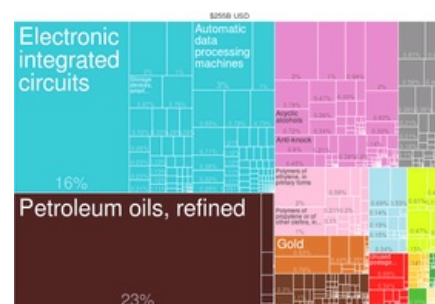
Singapore Exports by Product (2014)[284]

The nation's best known global brands include Singapore Airlines, Changi Airport and Port of Singapore, all three are among the most-awarded in their respective industry sectors. Singapore Airlines is ranked as Asia's most-admired company, and world's 19th most-admired in 2015, by Fortune's annual "50 most admired companies in the world" industry surveys. It is also the world's most awarded airline, including Best International Airline by US-based Travel + Leisure reader surveys, for 20 consecutive years.[288][289] Changi Airport connects over 100 airlines to more than 300 cities. The strategic international air hub has more than 480 World's Best Airport awards as of 2015, and is known as the most-awarded airport in the world.[290]

Tourism

Tourism in Singapore is a major industry and contributor to the Singaporean economy, attracting 18.5 million international tourists in 2018, more than 3 times of Singapore's total population.[291] Singapore is the 5th most visited city in the world, and 2nd in the Asia-Pacific.[292]

Currently, tourism contributes directly to about 4% of Singapore's GDP [293] and in 2016, tourism contributed, directly and indirectly, to around 9.9% of Singapore's GDP.[294] Additionally, it also generated approximately 8.6% of Singapore's employment in 2016.[294]

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is the statutory board, under the Ministry of Trade and Industry which is tasked with the promotion of the country's tourism industry. On 24 August 2017, the STB and Economic Development Board (EDB) unveiled a unified brand, Singapore — Passion Made Possible, to market Singapore internationally for tourism and business purposes.[295]

Jewel at Changi Airport features the world's largest indoor waterfall, named the Rain Vortex

Singapore's tourism also aims to be environmentally friendly, maintaining natural and heritage conservation programs.[296] Along with this, it also has one of the world's lowest crime rates. Transport in Singapore is quite extensive, and is regarded as one of the best overall,[297] making most areas on the island easily accessible. The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system is one such example of transport infrastructure.

The Orchard Road district, which is contains multi-storey shopping centres and hotels, can be considered the center of shopping and tourism in Singapore.[298] Other popular tourist attractions include the Singapore Zoo, River Safari and Night Safari. The Singapore Zoo has embraced the open zoo concept whereby animals are kept in enclosures, separated from visitors by hidden dry or wet moats, instead of caging the animals, and the River Safari has 300 species of animals, including numerous endangered species.[299]

Jurong Bird Park is another zoological garden centred on birds, which is dedicated towards exposing the public to as much species and varieties of birds from around the world as possible, including a flock of one thousand flamingos. The tourist island of Sentosa, which attracts 19 million visitors in 2011, is located in the south of Singapore, consisting of about 20—30 landmarks, such as Fort Siloso, which was built as a fortress to defend against the Japanese during World War II.

Other notable tourists attractions in Singapore includes the two integrated resorts which houses casinos, namely Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa; Gardens by the Bay and Jewel Changi Airport.

A night view of the Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay

Singapore promotes itself as a medical tourism hub, with about 200,000 foreigners seeking medical care there each year. Singapore medical services aim to serve at least one million foreign patients annually and generate US$3 billion in revenue.[300] In 2015, Lonely Planet and The New York Times listed Singapore as their top and 6th best world destination to visit respectively.[301]

Infrastructure

Information and communications

Information and communications technologies (ICT) is one of the pillars of Singapore's economic success. However, Singapore's mass communications networks, including television and phone networks, have long been operated by the government. When Singapore first came online, Singaporeans could use Teleview to communicate with one another, but not with those outside of their sovereign city-state. Publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* were censored.[302] The phrase *Intelligent Island* arose in the 1990s in reference to the island nation's early adaptive relationship with the internet.[302][303]

The Ministry of Communications and Information oversees the development of Infocomm, Media and the arts.

The World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Technology Report placed Singapore as the most "Tech-Ready Nation". It is the most comprehensive survey of the pervasiveness and network-readiness of a country, in terms of market, political and regulatory infrastructure for connectivity. Singapore has also topped Waseda University's International e-Government rankings from 2009 to 2013, and 2015.[304] Singapore has the world's highest smartphone penetration rates, in surveys by Deloitte[305][306] and Google Consumer Barometer — at 89% and 85% of the population respectively in 2014.[307] Overall mobile phone penetration rate is at 148 mobile phone subscribers per 100 people.[308]

Internet in Singapore is provided by state owned Singtel, partially state owned Starhub and M1 Limited as well as some other business internet service providers (ISPs) that offer residential service plans of speeds up to 2 Gbit/s as of spring 2015.[309] Equinix (332 participants) and also its smaller brother Singapore Internet Exchange (70 participants) are Internet exchange points where Internet service providers and Content delivery networks exchange Internet traffic between their networks (autonomous systems) in various locations in Singapore.[310][311]

Transport

As Singapore is a small island with a high population density, the number of private cars on the road is restricted to curb pollution and congestion. Car buyers must pay for duties one-and-a-half times the vehicle's market value, and bid for a Singaporean Certificate of Entitlement (COE), which allows the car to run on the road for a decade. Car prices are generally significantly higher in Singapore than in other English-speaking countries.[312] As with most Commonwealth countries, vehicles on the road and people walking on the streets keep to the left.[313]

Changi Airport continues to expand with a 5th Terminal by 2030.

Singapore has a road system covering 3,356 kilometres (2,085 mi), which includes 161 kilometres (100 mi) of expressways.[314][315] The Singapore Area Licensing Scheme, implemented in 1975, became the world's first congestion pricing scheme, and included other complementary measures such as stringent car ownership quotas and improvements in mass transit.[316][317] Upgraded in 1998 and renamed Electronic Road Pricing, the system introduced electronic toll collection, electronic detection, and video surveillance technology.[318] A Global Navigation Satellite System will replace the physical gantries by 2020.[319]

Singaporean residents also travel by e-scooters,[320] bicycles, bus, taxis and train (MRT or LRT). Two companies run the train transport system——SBS Transit and SMRT Corporation. Four companies, Go-Ahead, Tower-Transit, SBS Transit and SMRT Corporation run the public buses under a 'Bus Contracting Model' where operators bid for routes. There are six taxi companies, who together put out over 28,000 taxis on the road.[321] Taxis are a popular form of public transport as the fares are relatively cheap compared to many other developed countries.[322]

The world's first urban congestion-pricing scheme started in the city centre in 1975. Fully automated by Electronic Road Pricing in 1998.

Singapore is a major international transport hub in Asia, serving some of the busiest sea and air trade routes. Changi Airport is an aviation centre for Southeast Asia and a stopover on the Kangaroo Route between Sydney and London.[323] There are three civilian airports in Singapore, Singapore Changi Airport, Seletar Airport[324][325] and Kallang Airport (which is not open to public). Singapore Changi Airport hosts a network of over 100 airlines connecting Singapore to some 300 cities in about 70 countries and territories worldwide.[326] It has been rated one of the best international airports by international travel magazines, including being rated as the world's best airport for the first time in 2006 by Skytrax.[327] The national airline is Singapore Airlines.[328]

The Port of Singapore, managed by port operators PSA International and Jurong Port, was the world's second-busiest port in 2005 in terms of shipping tonnage handled, at 1.15 billion gross tons, and in terms of containerised traffic, at 23.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). It is also the world's second-busiest, behind Shanghai, in terms of cargo tonnage with 423 million tons handled. In addition, the port is the world's busiest for transshipment traffic and the world's biggest ship refuelling centre.[329]
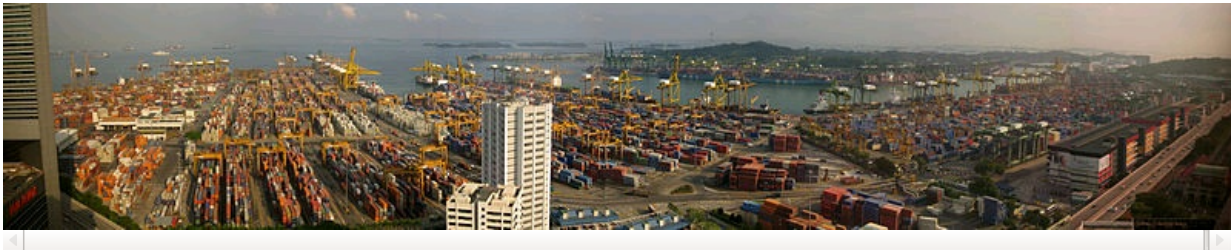
The Port of Singapore, one of the top two busiest container ports in the world since the 1990s.

Water supply and sanitation

Access to water is universal, affordable, efficient and of high quality. Singapore relies on four main water sources, or "four national taps" - water imported from neighbouring Malaysia, urban rainwater catchments, reclaimed water (NEWater) and seawater desalination.[330] Singapore's approach does not rely only on physical infrastructure, but it also emphasises proper legislation and enforcement, water pricing, public education as well as research and development.[331]

Singapore has declared that it will be water self-sufficient by the time its 1961 long-term water supply agreement with Malaysia expires in 2061. However, according to official forecasts, water demand in Singapore is expected to double from 380 to 760 million gallons per day between 2010 and 2060. The increase is expected to come primarily from non-domestic water use, which accounted for 55% of water demand in 2010 and is expected to account for 70% of demand in 2060. By that time, water demand is expected to be met by reclaimed water at the tune of 50% and by desalination accounting for 30%, compared to only 20% supplied by internal catchments.[332][333]

Due to the need to invest in and upgrade the water system to address concerns such as climate change and increasing costs of producing water and maintaining water infrastructure, water prices in Singapore was revised in 2017 and 2018,[334] its first revision since 2000. The prices generally increased by 30% in two phases from 1 July 2017, with 75% of households facing an increase of less than $18 in their monthly water bills. To help households manage the higher water prices, the Government provided eligible HDB households with additional U-Save rebates, ranging from $40 to $120 per annum depending on the type of the HDB flat.[335]

Demographics

As of mid-2018, the estimated population of Singapore was 5,638,700 people, 3,471,900 (61.6%) of whom were citizens, while the remaining 2,166,800 (38.4%) were permanent residents (522,300) or international students/foreign workers/dependants (1,644,500).[4] According to the country's most recent census in 2010, nearly 23% of Singaporean residents (i.e. citizens and permanent residents) were foreign born (which means about 10% of Singapore citizens were foreign-born naturalised citizens); if non-residents were counted, nearly 43% of the total population were foreign born.[338][339]

The same census also reports that about 74.1% of residents were of Chinese descent, 13.4% of Malay descent, 9.2% of Indian descent, and 3.3% of other (including Eurasian) descent.[338] Prior to 2010, each person could register as a member of only one race, by default that of his or her father, therefore mixed-race persons were solely grouped under their father's race in government censuses. From 2010 onward, people may register using a multi-racial classification, in which they may choose one primary race and one secondary race, but no more than two.[340]

Year	Pop.	±%
1950	1,022,000	—
1960	1,633,000	+59.8%
1970	2,072,000	+26.9%
1980	2,412,000	+16.4%
1990	3,013,000	+24.9%
2000	4,029,000	+33.7%
2010	5,131,000	+27.4%
2019	5,804,000	+13.1%

source:[336][337]

90.3% of resident households (i.e. households headed by a Singapore citizen or permanent resident) own the homes they live in, and the average household size is 3.43 persons (which include dependants who are neither citizens nor permanent residents).[341] However, due to scarcity of land, 80.4% of resident households live in subsidised, high-rise, public housing apartments known as "HDB flats" because of the government board (Housing and Development Board) responsible for public housing in the country. Also, 75.9% of resident households live in properties that are equal to, or larger than, a four-room (i.e. three bedrooms plus one living room) HDB flat or in private housing.[341][342] Live-in foreign domestic workers are quite common in Singapore, with about 224,500 foreign domestic workers there, as of December 2013.[343]

The median age of Singaporean residents was 40.5 in 2017,[344] and the total fertility rate is estimated to be 0.80 children per woman in 2014, the lowest in the world and well below the 2.1 needed to replace the population.[345] To overcome this problem, the Singapore government has been encouraging foreigners to immigrate to Singapore for the past few decades. The large number of immigrants has kept Singapore's population from declining.[346]

Chinese and Malay women in Singapore, circa 1890. To promote social cohesion between races, a unique Racial Harmony Day is celebrated on 21 July every year

Religion

Buddhism is the most widely practised religion in Singapore, with 33% of the resident population declaring themselves adherents at the most recent census. The next-most practised religion is Christianity, followed by Islam, Taoism, and Hinduism. 17% of the population did not have a religious affiliation. The proportion of Christians, Taoists, and non-religious people increased between 2000 and 2010 by about 3 percentage points each, whilst the proportion of Buddhists decreased. Other faiths remained largely stable in their share of the population.[347] An analysis by the Pew Research Center found Singapore to be the world's most religiously diverse nation.[15][348]
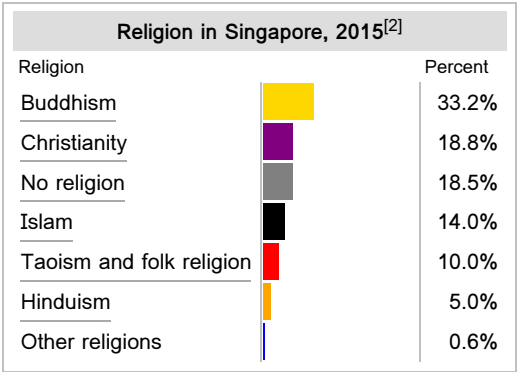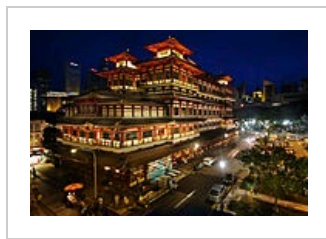
There are monasteries and Dharma centres from all three major traditions of Buddhism in Singapore: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Most Buddhists in Singapore are Chinese and are of the Mahayana tradition,[349] with missionaries having come into the country from China for several decades. However, Thailand's Theravada Buddhism has seen growing popularity among the populace (not only the Chinese) during the past decade. The religion of Soka Gakkai International, a Japanese Buddhist organisation, is practised by many people in Singapore, but mostly by those of Chinese descent. Tibetan Buddhism has also made slow inroads into the country in recent years.[350]

Religion in Singapore, 2015[2]		
Religion		Percent
Buddhism		33.2%
Christianity		18.8%
No religion		18.5%
Islam		14.0%
Taoism and folk religion		10.0%
Hinduism		5.0%
Other religions		0.6%

Sultan Mosque, a historic mosque in Kampong Glam

Saint Andrew's Cathedral in the Civic District has existed since 1836

The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum in the heart of Chinatown

Maghain Aboth Synagogue on Waterloo Street

Languages

Singapore has four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil.[351] English is the common language, and is the language of business and government, and the medium of instruction in schools.[352][353] Public bodies in Singapore, such as the Singapore Public Service, (which includes the Singapore Civil Service and other agencies), conduct their business in English, and official documents written in a non-English official language such as Malay, Chinese or Tamil typically have to be translated into English to be accepted for submission.[354]

English is the main language of instruction in all school subjects in the Singaporean education system.[355] It is also the common language of the administration, and is promoted as an important language for international business.[356] Spelling in Singapore largely follows British conventions, owing to the country's status as a former crown colony.[357] English is the country's default *lingua franca* despite the fact that four languages have official status.[358]

Malay was chosen as a national language by the Singaporean government after independence from Britain in the 1960s to avoid friction with Singapore's Malay-speaking neighbours Malaysia and Indonesia.[361] It has a symbolic, rather than functional purpose.[351][362][363] It is used in the national anthem "Majulah Singapura",[364] in citations of Singaporean orders and decorations, and in military commands. In general, Malay is spoken mainly within the Singaporean Malay community, with only 17% of all Singaporeans literate in it[365] and only 12% using it as their native language.[359] While Singaporean Malay is officially written in the Latin-based Rumi script, some Singaporean Malays still learn the Arabic-based Jawi script as children alongside Rumi,[366] and Jawi is considered an ethnic script for use on Singaporean Identity Cards.[367]

Language used most frequently at home[359][360]	
Language	Percent
English	36.9%
Mandarin	34.9%
Malay	10.7%
Tamil	3.3%
Others	14.2%

The Constitution of Singapore and all laws are written in English,[368] and interpreters are required if one wishes to address the Singaporean Courts in a language other than English.[369] English is the native tongue for only one-third of all Singaporeans, with roughly a quarter of all Singaporean Malays, a third of all Singaporean Chinese, and half of all Singaporean Indians speaking it as their native tongue. Twenty percent of Singaporeans cannot read or write in English.[347][370]

Singaporeans are mostly bilingual, with English as their common language and usually the mother-tongue as a second language taught in schools, in order to preserve each individual's ethnic identity and values. The official languages amongst Singaporeans are English (80% literacy), Mandarin (65% literacy), Malay (17% literacy), and Tamil (4% literacy).[347][371] Singaporean English is based on British English,[372] and forms of English spoken in Singapore range from Standard Singapore English to a colloquial form known as "Singlish". Singlish is discouraged by the government.[373]

English is the language spoken by most Singaporeans at home, 36.9% of the population, just ahead of Mandarin.[359][374] Nearly half a million speak other varieties of Chinese, mainly Hokkien, Teochew, and Cantonese, as their home language, although the use of these is declining in favour of Mandarin and English.[375] Singapore Chinese characters are written using simplified Chinese characters.[376]

Around 100,000 Singaporeans, or 3% of the population, speak Tamil as their native language.[359] Tamil has official status in Singapore and there have been no attempts to discourage the use of other Indian languages.[377]

Education

Education for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels is mostly supported by the state. All institutions, private and public, must be registered with the Ministry of Education.[378] English is the language of instruction in all public schools,[379] and all subjects are taught and examined in English except for the "mother tongue" language paper.[380] While the term "mother tongue" in general refers to the first language internationally, in Singapore's education system, it is used to refer to the second language, as English is the first language.[381][382] Students who have been abroad for a while, or who struggle with their "Mother Tongue" language, are allowed to take a simpler syllabus or drop the subject.[383][384]

Education takes place in three stages: primary, secondary, and pre-university education. Only the primary level is compulsory. Students begin with six years of primary school, which is made up of a four-year foundation course and a two-year orientation stage. The curriculum is focused on the development of English, the mother tongue, mathematics, and science.[385][386] Secondary school lasts from four to five years, and is divided between Special, Express, Normal (Academic), and Normal (Technical) streams in

Singapore Management University is one of six autonomous universities in the city-state

each school, depending on a student's ability level.[387] The basic coursework breakdown is the same as in the primary level, although classes are much more specialised.[388] Pre-university education takes place over two to three years at senior schools, mostly called Junior Colleges.[389] As alternatives to Pre-U education, however, courses are offered in other post-secondary education institutions, including 5 polytechnics and the Institutes of Technical Education (ITEs). Singapore has six public universities[390] of which the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University are among the top 20 universities in the world.[391]

National examinations are standardised across all schools, with a test taken after each stage. After the first six years of education, students take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE),[385] which determines their placement at secondary school. At the end of the secondary stage, GCE O-Level or N-level exams are taken;[392] at the end of the following pre-university stage, the GCE A-Level exams are taken.[393] Some schools have a degree of freedom in their curriculum and are known as autonomous schools, for secondary education level and above.[387]

Singapore is also an education hub, with more than 80,000 international students in 2006.[394] 5,000 Malaysian students cross the Johor—Singapore Causeway daily to attend schools in Singapore.[395] In 2009, 20% of all students in Singaporean universities were international students——the maximum cap allowed, a majority from ASEAN, China and India.[396]

Singapore students have excelled in many of the world education benchmarks in maths, science and reading. In 2015, both its primary and secondary students rank first in OECD's global school performance rankings across 76 countries——described as the most comprehensive map of education standards.[397][398] In 2016, Singapore students topped both the Program International Student Assessment (PISA)[399][400][401][402] and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).[403][404][405] In the 2016 EF English Proficiency Index taken in 72 countries, Singapore place 6th and has been the only Asian country in the top ten.[406][407][408][409]

Healthcare

National University Hospital is the second largest hospital in the city, serving one million patients yearly.

Singapore has a generally efficient healthcare system, even though health expenditures are relatively low for developed countries.[410] The World Health Organisation ranks Singapore's healthcare system as 6th overall in the world in its World Health Report.[411] In general, Singapore has had the lowest infant mortality rates in the world for the past two decades.[412] Life expectancy in Singapore is 80 for males and 85 for females, placing the country 4th in the world for life expectancy, as almost the whole population has access to improved water and sanitation facilities.[413]

As of December 2011 and January 2013, 8,800 foreigners and 5,400 Singaporeans were respectively diagnosed with HIV,[414] but there are fewer than 10 annual deaths from HIV per 100,000 people. There is a high level of immunisation.[415] Adult obesity is below 10%.[416] The Economist Intelligence Unit, in its 2013 Where-to-be-born Index, ranked Singapore as having the best quality of life in Asia and sixth overall in the world.[417]

The government's healthcare system is based upon the "3M" framework. This has three components: Medifund, which provides a safety net for those not able to otherwise afford healthcare, Medisave, a compulsory national medical savings account system covering about 85% of the population, and Medishield, a government-funded health insurance program. Public hospitals in Singapore have a considerable autonomy in their management decisions, and notionally compete for patients, however they remain in government ownership and government appoints their boards and Chief Executive Officers and management reports and is responsible to these boards.[418] A subsidy scheme exists for those on low income.[419] In 2008, 32% of healthcare was funded by the government. It accounts for approximately 3.5% of Singapore's GDP.[420]

In 2019, Singaporeans have the longest life expectancy of any country at 84.8 years. Females can expect to live an average of 87.6 years with 75.8 years in good health. The averages are lower for men.[12] Singapore is ranked 1st on the Global Food Security Index.[421]

Culture

Despite its small size, Singapore has a diversity of languages, religions, and cultures.[422] Former Prime Ministers of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong, have stated that Singapore does not fit the traditional description of a nation, calling it a society-in-transition, pointing out the fact that Singaporeans do not all speak the same language, share the same religion, or have the same customs.[422][423]

From 1819, it served as a trading port for British ships on their way to India. Being a major trading hub and its close proximity to its neighbour Malaysia, Singapore was prone to many foreign influences, both from Britain and from other Asian countries. Chinese and Indian workers moved to Singapore to work at the harbour. The country remained a British colony until 1942.[424]

When Singapore became independent from the United Kingdom in 1963, most Singaporean citizens were transient labourers, seeking to make some money in Singapore, with no intention of staying permanently.[425] There was also a sizeable minority of middle-class, locally born people ——known as Peranakans or Baba-Nyonya——descendants of 15th- and 16th-century Chinese immigrants. With the exception of the Peranakans who pledged their loyalties to Singapore, most of the labourers' loyalties lay with their respective homelands of Malaysia, China and India. After independence, the government began a deliberate process of crafting a Singaporean identity and culture.[425]

Each Singaporean's behaviours and attitudes are influenced by, among other things, his or her home language and his religion. Singaporeans who speak English as their native language tend to lean toward Western culture, while those who speak Chinese as their native language tend to lean toward Chinese culture and Confucianism. Malay-speaking Singaporeans tend to lean toward Malay culture, which itself is closely linked to Islamic culture.[426][427]

Racial and religious harmony is regarded by Singaporeans as a crucial part of Singapore's success, and played a part in building a Singaporean identity.[428][429]

The national flower of Singapore is the hybrid orchid, Vanda 'Miss Joaquim', named in memory of a Singapore-born Armenian woman, who crossbred the flower in her garden at Tanjong Pagar in 1893.[430] Many national symbols such as the Coat of arms of Singapore and the Lion head symbol of Singapore make use of the lion, as Singapore is known as the *Lion City*. Major religious festivals are public holidays.[431]

Singapore has a reputation as a nanny state.[432][433] The government also places heavy emphasis on meritocracy, where one is judged based on one's ability.[434]

Arts

Since the 1990s when the National Arts Council was created to spearhead the development of performing arts, visual and literary art forms, to hasten a vibrant cosmopolitan "gateway between the East and West".[435]

The National Gallery Singapore is the nation's flagship museum with some 8,000 works of Singapore and South East Asian artists. The Singapore Art Museum focuses on contemporary art. The Red Dot Design Museum celebrates exceptional art and design of objects for everyday life, from more than 1,000 items from 50 countries. The lotus-shaped ArtScience Museum host touring exhibitions that combine art with the sciences. Other major museums include the Asian Civilisations Museum, Peranakan Museum, The Arts House.[436]

The National Gallery Singapore oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian art

The Esplanade is Singapore's largest performing arts centre with many performances throughout the year, including 5,900 free arts and culture events in 2016.[437][438] Some of the major music and dance groups include the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, and the Singapore Dance Theatre.

Literature of Singapore, or *SingLit*, comprises a collection of literary works by Singaporeans written chiefly in the country's four official languages: English, Malay, Standard Mandarin and Tamil. It is increasingly regarded as having four sub-literatures instead of one. Many significant works has been translated and showcased in publications such as the literary journal *Singa*, published in the 1980s and 1990s with editors including Edwin Thumboo and Koh Buck Song, as well as in multilingual anthologies such as *Rhythms: A Singaporean Millennial Anthology Of Poetry* (2000), in which the poems were all translated three times each into the three languages. A number of Singaporean writers such as Tan Swie Hian and Kuo Pao Kun have contributed work in more than one language.[439][440]

Ornate details on top of Sri Mariamman Temple in Chinatown district, Singapore's oldest Hindu temple since 1827

Music

Singapore has a diverse music culture that ranges from pop and rock, to folk and classical. Western classical music plays a significant role in the cultural life in Singapore, with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) instituted in 1979. Other notable western orchestras in Singapore include Singapore National Youth Orchestra which is funded by the Ministry of Education[441] and the community-based Braddell Heights Symphony Orchestra.[442] Many orchestras and ensembles are also found in secondary schools and junior colleges. Various communities have their own distinct ethnic musical traditions: Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Eurasians. With their traditional forms of music and various modern musical styles, the fusion of different forms account for the musical diversity in the country.[443] The nation's lively urban musical scene has made it a centre for international performances and festivals in the region. Some of Singapore's best known pop singers includes Stefanie Sun, JJ Lin, Liang Wern Fook, Taufik Batisah and Dick Lee, who is famous for composing National Day theme songs, including *Home*.[444][445]

JJ Lin, award-winning singer, songwriter, record producer, and actor also famous in the sinosphere such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China.

Cuisine

Dining is said to be Singaporeans' national pastime,[446] and even an obsession for many.[438] Singapore's diversity of cuisine is touted as a reason to visit the country, one of the best locations when it comes to a combination of convenience, variety, quality and price.[447] Hainanese chicken rice (海南; *Hǎinán jī fàn*), based on the Hainanese dish Wenchang chicken, is considered Singapore's national dish.[448][449]

The city-state has a burgeoning food scene ranging from hawker centres (open-air), food courts (air-conditioned), coffee shops (open-air with up to a dozen hawker stalls), cafes, fast food, simple kitchens, casual, celebrity and high-end restaurants.[450] Cloud kitchens and food delivery are also on the rise, with 70% of residents ordering from delivery apps at least once a month.[451][452] Many international celebrity chef restaurants are located within the integrated resorts.[453] Religious dietary strictures exist — Muslims do not eat pork and Hindus do not eat beef, and there is also a significant group of vegetarians. The Singapore Food Festival which celebrates Singapore's cuisine is held in July annually.

Hawker Centres

Prior to the 1980s, street food were mainly sold by immigrants from China, India and Malaysia to other immigrants seeking a familiar taste. In Singapore, street food has long migrated into hawker centres with communal seating areas. Typically, these centres have a few dozen to hundreds of food stalls, with each specialising in a single or a number of related dishes. The choices are almost overwhelming even for locals.[454][450]

Although cooked food that originates from or still sold on streets can be found in many countries, the variety and reach of centralised hawker centres that serve heritage street food in Singapore is unmatched elsewhere.[455]

In 2018, there are 114 hawker centres spread across the city centre and heartland housing estates. They are maintained by the National Environment Agency, which also grade each food stall for hygiene. The largest hawker centre is located on the second floor of Chinatown Complex with over 200 stalls.[455] The complex is also home to the cheapest Michelin-starred meal in the world — a plate of soya-sauce chicken rice or noodles for S$2 (US$1.50). Two street food stalls in the city are the first in the world to be awarded a Michelin star each.[456]

Local food items generally belong to a particular ethnicity — Chinese, Malay and Indian; but diversity of cuisine has increased further by the "hybridisation" of different styles (e.g., the Peranakan cuisine, a mix of Chinese and Malay cuisine). In hawker centres, cultural diffusion can also be noted when traditionally Malay hawker stalls also sells Tamil food. Chinese stalls may introduce Malay ingredients, cooking techniques or entire dishes into their range of catering. This continues to make the cuisine of Singapore significantly rich and a cultural attraction.[447]

Lau Pa Sat hawker centre in the midst of the financial district. Satay cart-stalls rolls in after dusk, on a side street

Sport and recreation

The development of private sports and recreation clubs began in the 19th century colonial Singapore, such as the Cricket Club, Singapore Recreation Club, Singapore Swimming Club, Hollandse Club and others.[457]

Water sports are some of the most popular in Singapore. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, Joseph Schooling won Singapore's first Olympic gold medal, claiming the 100-metre butterfly in a new Olympic record time of 50.39 seconds. Three swimmers including Michael Phelps, were in an unprecedented three-way tie for silver.[458] Singapore sailors have had success on the international stage, with their Optimist team being considered among the best in the world.[459][460] Despite its size, the country has dominated swim meets in the Southeast Asia Games (SEA). Its men water polo team has won the SEA Games gold medal for the 27th time in 2017, continuing Singapore sport's longest winning streak.[461]

Singapore's table tennis women team reached their peak as silver medalists at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.[462][463] They were also world champions in 2010 when they beat China at the World Team Table Tennis Championships in Russia, breaking the latter's 19-year winning streak.[464] Weightlifter Tan Howe Liang was Singapore's first Olympic medalist, winning a silver at the 1960 Rome Games.[465]

Singapore's football league, the Singapore Premier League, was launched in 1996 as the S.League and currently comprises nine clubs, including two foreign teams.[466][467] The Singapore Slingers, formerly the Hunter Pirates in the Australian National Basketball League, is one of the inaugural teams in the ASEAN Basketball League which was founded in October 2009.[468] Kranji Racecourse is run by the Singapore Turf Club and hosts several meetings per week, including international races——notably the Singapore Airlines International Cup.[469]

Joseph Schooling is a gold medalist and Olympic record holder at the Rio 2016 Games – 100 m butterfly.[458]

Singapore began hosting a round of the Formula One World Championship, the Singapore Grand Prix at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in 2008. It was the inaugural F1 night race,[470] and the first F1 street race in Asia.[471] It is considered a signature event on the F1 calendar.[472]

Singapore hosted the inaugural 2010 Summer Youth Olympics, in which 3,600 athletes from 204 nations competed in 26 sports.[473] The island is home to ONE Championship, the biggest Mixed Martial Arts promotion in Asia.[474]

Media

Companies linked to the government control much of the domestic media in Singapore.[475] MediaCorp operates most free-to-air television channels and free-to-air radio stations in Singapore. There are a total of seven free-to-air TV channels offered by Mediacorp.[476][477] Starhub Cable Vision (SCV) also offers cable television with channels from all around the world,[478] and Singtel's Mio TV provides an IPTV service.[479] Singapore Press Holdings, a body with close links to the government, controls most of the newspaper industry in Singapore.[480]

Singapore's media industry has sometimes been criticised for being overly regulated and lacking in freedom by human rights groups such as Freedom House.[475] Self-censorship among journalists is said to be common.[480] In 2014, Singapore dipped to its lowest ranking ever (153rd of 180 nations) on the Press Freedom Index published by the French Reporters Without Borders.[481] The Media Development Authority regulates Singaporean media, claiming to balance the demand for choice and protection against offensive and harmful material.[482]

Private ownership of TV satellite dishes is banned.[480] In 2016, there were an estimated 4.7 million internet users in Singapore, representing 82.5% of the population.[483] The Singapore government does not engage in widespread censoring of the internet,[484] but it maintains a list of one hundred websites——mostly pornographic——that it blocks as a "symbolic statement of the Singaporean community's stand on harmful and undesirable content on the Internet".[485] As the block covers only home internet access, users may still visit the blocked websites from their office computers.[486]

See also

- Index of Singapore-related articles
- Outline of Singapore

References

Notes

1. Of which 3,471,900 are citizens.[4]
2. The break down of British Empire losses included 38,496 United Kingdom, 18,490 Australian, 67,340 Indian and 14,382 local volunteer troops. Total Australian casualties included 1,789 killed and 1,306 wounded.[67]

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