# Singapore Guide: Planning Your Trip

You’d think a tiny nation the size of an average American city would be easy to know at a glance, but Singapore specializes in defying expectations. Home to the [world’s best airport](https://www.tripsavvy.com/guide-to-changi-airport-singapore-1629779), some of Asia’s most stunning architecture and a delicious [food scene](https://www.tripsavvy.com/dishes-you-should-try-in-singapore-4064526) that borrows from its neighbors’ top culinary traditions, Singapore offers a complete travel experience disproportionate to its size.

Yes, Singapore can be pricey if you’re an expatriate, but transportation, accommodation, and dining can be cheap for savvy travelers. There are plenty of modern skyscrapers but parks and nature reserves make up over 4.7 percent of Singapore’s land area and Singapore is a creative center where the laws actually give local artists freer rein to express themselves.

First-time visitors to Singapore have a lot of expectations to unpack: Start the process with the information provided below.

## Planning Your Trip

* [Best Time to Visit](https://www.tripsavvy.com/weather-and-climate-in-singapore-4769717): June and August, when the heat has moderated somewhat, but the pleasant (if humid) year-round weather makes any time a good time to visit.
* Language: The vast majority of Singaporeans speak English as a first language, while also speaking their respective mother tongues (Hokkien or Mandarin Chinese, Tamil Indian, and Malay as the case may be) and the [delightful creole known as Singlish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singlish).
* [Currency](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapore-guide-to-public-transportation-4768408): The Singapore Dollar (SGD). The currency of Brunei is also legal tender, with a 1:1 exchange rate1﻿﻿.
* [Getting Around](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapore-guide-to-public-transportation-4768408): Singapore’s ultra-efficient transportation system includes the MRT rail system, buses, taxis and the ride-hailing system Grab.
* Travel Tip: Consider the humidity and the [occasional monsoon rains](https://www.tripsavvy.com/traveling-in-southeast-asias-monsoon-season-1629898) when you [pack clothes for your Singapore trip](https://www.tripsavvy.com/southeast-asia-packing-tips-1629899). Wear loose and light summer clothing when in town. If you’re traveling on business, smart casual is often accepted, unless you’re attending a formal business dinner. Jackets and ties are still expected for business meetings, with the odd exception here and there.

## Things to Do

The territory around Singapore offers a diverse variety of activities that belies the nation’s small size. Singapore’s different, distinct neighborhoods represent various aspects of the national experience: ancient shops rubbing elbows with hipster outlets (Joo Chiat and [Tiong Bahru](https://www.tripsavvy.com/dining-at-tiong-bahru-food-market-1629838)), hotel and shopping mall hotspots with the world’s most premium brands ([Orchard Road](https://www.tripsavvy.com/orchard-road-shopping-centers-1629862)), and a skyline straight out of the Jetsons ([Marina Bay](https://www.tripsavvy.com/things-to-do-in-marina-bay-1629856) and its landmarks like the [Marina Bay Sands](https://www.tripsavvy.com/marina-bay-sands-review-1629803) and the [Singapore Flyer](https://www.tripsavvy.com/a-look-at-the-singapore-flyer-1629853)).

* [Explore the local shopping scene](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapores-top-shopping-districts-4064529), from posh Orchard Road to Little India’s cultural treasures.
* See Singapore’s greener side: The city has more than 350 parks and four nature reserves,2﻿ which make up about 8,000 acres of the country’s real estate.
* [Visit Singapore’s many museums](https://www.tripsavvy.com/museums-in-singapore-1458499), covering ancient history, modern art and almost everything in between.
* Singapore’s a pioneer in the zoo world, with places like the [Singapore Zoo](https://www.wrs.com.sg/en/singapore-zoo.html), [Jurong Bird Park](https://www.wrs.com.sg/en/jurong-bird-park.html), and [Singapore Night Safari](https://www.wrs.com.sg/en/night-safari.html) offering you a close-up look at some of the world’s most endangered animals, housed in humane open enclosures.
* [Singapore's beaches](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-beaches-in-singapore-4776397) are much-loved by locals, but don't get a lot of foreign tourist traffic. That's their loss: the beaches on the east coast and Sentosa Island are some of the best places in Singapore to swim, relax and party

Explore more attractions with our full-length articles on [reasons to visit Singapore](https://www.tripsavvy.com/reasons-to-visit-singapore-1629793), the [best things to do with kids](https://www.tripsavvy.com/family-friendly-activities-in-singapore-4149481), and [Singapore’s ethnic enclaves](https://www.tripsavvy.com/reasons-to-visit-singapore-1629793).

## What to Eat and Drink

Sure, you can spend a mint on Singapore’s many expensive restaurants, but there’s a reason this country’s [one of Southeast Asia’s best cities for street food](https://www.tripsavvy.com/southeast-asia-best-cities-for-street-food-4142659). The food courts, known as “hawker centers,” serve a wide variety of Asian dishes, despite their general shortage on ambiance and air conditioning.

Singapore’s wide-ranging food reflects the multicultural mix of the Singaporean populace. Indian biryani stands jostle Western food booths and noodle stalls in most places. At any [top Singapore hawker center](https://www.tripsavvy.com/hawker-centers-discover-singapores-cheap-eats-1629783), tourists mingle with working stiffs, to [breakfast on roti kaya](https://www.tripsavvy.com/traveling-in-malaysia-1458612), or stuff their faces with Cantonese, Hokkien, Indian, Malay, and "Western" food. Prices are low ($5 buys you a big meal) and you can even order a [Tiger Beer to go with your meal](https://www.tripsavvy.com/asia-4138876) for only a little extra.

Explore our articles on [Singapore’s best hawker centers](https://www.tripsavvy.com/top-hawker-centers-in-singapore-1629795), [top restaurants](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-restaurants-in-singapore-4776382) and [top dishes to order on your next meal](https://www.tripsavvy.com/dishes-you-should-try-in-singapore-4064526).

## Where to Stay

There's a Singapore hotel for every budget, though you should expect that accommodations around here lie on the high end price-wise compared to the rest of Asia. For four-star and higher hotels, check out your options in Marina Bay and Orchard, among them historic hotels like the Raffles Hotel and newfangled wonders like the [Marina Bay Sands](https://www.tripsavvy.com/marina-bay-sands-review-1629803). Balestier Road, Katong, Joo Chiat, and Little India are better known for their backpacker and budget digs.

Find out more about [Singapore’s neighborhoods](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapore-neighborhoods-to-explore-4154863), and our recommendations of the best places in Singapore to stay for your budget.

## Getting There

Singapore is one of the easiest countries to travel to, given its central location in Southeast Asia and the abundance of [budget airline connections](https://www.tripsavvy.com/southeast-asias-top-low-cost-airlines-1629922) to the rest of the region. [Changi Airport](https://www.tripsavvy.com/guide-to-changi-airport-singapore-1629779) isn’t just the international gateway to Singapore, it’s also a major travel hub between Asia and the rest of the world. You can also travel overland, either by bus from [Kuala Lumpur](https://www.tripsavvy.com/kuala-lumpur-travel-1458480) or by train from as far away as Bangkok.

## Money Saving Tips

Singapore’s [reputation as an expensive destination](https://www.tripsavvy.com/what-100-dollars-buys-in-southeast-asia-4141051) is somewhat unfair: you can do plenty to save money without crimping your travel experience. Consider the following budget-saving tips when you visit:

* Eat at a hawker center instead of at restaurants. Meals come down to less than $5-$10 each, with an amazing selection of local cuisines to choose from
* Travel on the bus and MRT, use an [EZ-Link Card](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapores-mrt-and-buses-ez-link-1629781) to pay your way through. The EZ-Link card is a contactless payment card that you can purchase (and top up) at any 7-Eleven store, valid at any bus and train on the island. Avoid using taxis and Grab summoned cars.
* For souvenir shopping, try the markets around Chinatown and Little India, and bargain the prices down as often as possible.
* Buy snacks, drinks, and toiletries from supermarkets instead of convenience stores.

Find out more about [traveling on a tight budget in Singapore](https://www.tripsavvy.com/suviving-singapore-on-a-budget-1458501).

## Safety in Singapore

Singapore is a very safe travel destination. The government's stringent security measures, first spurred by the ongoing threat of terrorism around Southeast Asia, continues to uphold Singapore's reputation as a safe destination.

Singapore's reputation is partly held up by the fact that it has the strictest laws on the books—covering not just drugs, but also vandalism and political activity. [Tourists behaving badly](https://www.tripsavvy.com/how-to-stay-out-of-trouble-in-singapore-1458521) in Singapore should expect the law to come down *hard* on their shenanigans.

[Drinking alcohol in Singapore](https://www.tripsavvy.com/first-time-visitor-cambodia-travel-requirements-1629148) is not prohibited, but recent rules have limited the areas where you can drink to your heart's content. Singapore hawker centers have not stopped selling beer, but stalls in Geylang and Little India have stricter rules than usual.

Singaporean law shares the draconian attitude to drugs common in Southeast Asia. The country's strict Misuse of Drugs Act3﻿ punishes possession of even small amounts of illegal drugs and prescribes execution if you're caught with large amounts of controlled substances.