



Singapore – the Lion City-State

By Veena Patwardhan

A tour of one of Asia's most exciting holiday destinations

Singapore is one of those modern-day miracles. Just imagine, around 200 years ago when it was discovered by the British East India Company, it was a small fishing village populated by just around 1000 people. But after gaining independence from Malaysia in 1965, the island nation undertook a comprehensive development program and today, it is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and a leading global financial centre. In short, Singapore is one of Asia's greatest success stories.

mythical creature with the head of a lion and the body of a fish. The body symbolizes Singapore's origins as a fishing village and its fishing culture, while the lion head denotes the country's name. There are five merlions across Singapore, but the original one standing 8.6 metres tall is located in Merlion Park which is just opposite the popular Marina Bay. The tallest Merlion, which is a gigantic 37-metre model with two viewing decks, is located on Sentosa Island.

Amazing tourist attractions

Sentosa Island: the tiny island-state of Singapore is not just one island, but is actually made up of 63 islands. One of

The Night Safari : Located a short distance from the Singapore Zoo, it is one of the world's first safari parks for nocturnal animals. Its star attraction is a guided tram ride that takes visitors through seven geographical zones of the world from the Himalayan foothills to the Australian Outback and lets them watch diverse creatures of the night in their natural nocturnal habitats.

The Singapore Flyer : Located near the shore of Marina Bay, the Singapore Flyer is a 540-feet high observation wheel that soars higher into the sky than the famous London Eye by 90 feet. It offers a breathtaking 360-degree, unobstructed



Located at the southern-most tip of Malaysia, Singapore has also evolved as a major tourist destination. Today it has a population of around 5 million, but it attracts almost thrice that number of international visitors each year who arrive there for holidaying, shopping or for business. Singapore has a glitzy half, bursting with modern, high-rise buildings, sleek highways, luxury hotels and fancy malls, but half of this tiny city-state is still covered with lush greenery. There are ample opportunities for nature walks or trekking through jungles and botanical gardens and revelling in the abundance of natural beauty. Singapore also has a number of excellently maintained nature reserves.

Singapore's mascot - the Merlion

Singapore's original name was Singapura, which literally means Lion-City. The country's beautiful mascot, the iconic "Merlion" (meaning Sea-Lion), is a

them, Sentosa Island, was developed into a tourist resort in 1972 and is packed with fun-filled attractions for the whole family. Some of these include the Universal Studios, the Dolphin Show, where you can watch the feats of the rare pink Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins, and the Underwater World, a tropical aquarium you can actually walk through surrounded by some amazing sea creatures. It has a submerged, transparent 83 metres long acrylic tunnel with a moving walkway offering visitors a fish's eye view of sea life including huge sharks. Sentosa Island is located half a kilometre to the south of the city.

Singapore Zoo : It is one of the finest zoos in the world. Spread across around 28 acres, it houses over 3,600 mammals, birds and reptiles, including some rare and endangered species. It also features a tram service for making it easier for young and old to explore the entire zoo.

view of Marina Bay and the entire city-state. The Flyer is fitted with 28 air-conditioned capsules, each the size of a small bus.

Chinatown : Stop by to get a feel of a bygone era and Singapore's ancient Chinese culture. A major attraction here is an Indian temple - the Sri



Visa for Singapore

Indian citizens need a visa to visit Singapore.

All visa applications have to be submitted via an electronic visa (e-Visa) application system that allows visas to be processed online. Applications must be submitted to any of the authorised visa agents. Please contact them for their operating hours. For a list of authorized agents, click on Annex A when you visit the website:

http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/new_delhi/visa_information/overview.html

Visa Application Forms

This application form, that is, form 14A, can be downloaded from the website <http://www.ica.gov.sg> or can be obtained free of charge from the authorised visa agents or any Singapore Overseas Missions.

Submission of documents for tourist visa

The following have to be submitted along with the completed and signed Form 14A:

- A valid passport with at least six months validity on the date of departure from Singapore. If the applicant is holding any old passport, it is mandatory to enclose the same along with the current valid passport.
- Two recent coloured passport size photographs adhered to the form (35 mm wide by 45 mm high without border and taken within the last 3 months. One photograph should be pasted on the visa form and signed across, the second should be attached with a gem clip.
- A Covering letter from the Applicant.

• Leave letter from the company/ employer.

• If the applicant is residing at any other address than the one mentioned on the passport, then residential proof and a Xerox copy of the same will be required.

• Any other relevant supporting documents.

• The Visa will be valid from three months up to two years at the discretion of the High Commission.

Visa Fees

The visa processing fee for each application is S\$30. The online payment mode accepts Master/ Visa, Debit/ Credit cards only. The processing fee is non-refundable regardless of the outcome of the application or if you withdraw the application after submission.

Service Charge

In addition to the visa fee of S\$30 the authorised visa agents will also impose a fixed service charge of Rs 300 only for each visa application.

Visa Processing Time

2-3 working days after submitting the application to the authorised visa agent. This excludes the day of submission, weekends and public holidays.

Important Notes

Possession of a visa does not guarantee entry into Singapore. Visitors must also meet entry requirements such as holding a valid passport, sufficient funds for the period of stay in Singapore and confirmed onward/return air ticket.

For any enquiries on visa matters please contact: 22 - 22043205 or 22 - 22043209 during office hours. ■

Marriamman temple. And by the way, Singapore also has a Little India and an Arab Street which feature ethnic charms of their own.

Shopping Centres : Singapore is a good place to shop for anything from perfumes to furnishings. But it is increasingly becoming popular for its electronic items as well. Some of the major shopping spots include Orchard Road with its string of shopping malls and boutiques, Mustafa Centre that is open day and night, and Vivo City.

All in all, Singapore is a fabulous holiday destination, where you can explore, shop, and have fun in clean environs. And yes, you can be sure you won't experience a single boring moment on a holiday in Singapore! ■

Indian tourists say Australia is No.1 for Food and Wine experience

A recent survey carried out through an online questionnaire by Australia Consumer Demand Research in eleven of Australia's key tourism markets, including India, threw up some interesting results. These were released by Tourism Australia during its India 2020 campaign.

1,200 Indian customers were selected on the basis of their previous long-haul travel behaviour and for their intention to travel long-haul in the next few years.

Indians who had previously travelled to Australia also ranked the country as No. 1 on food and wine. They ranked Australian beaches, wildlife, island experiences, rain forests and the Great Barrier Reef, as top attractions that appealed to travellers. Sydney, Gold Coast, Cairns, Melbourne and Kangaroo Island were the most appealing regions for Indians intending to visit Australia in future.



Of all the 11 tourism markets surveyed, Indian visitors were ranked among those with high satisfaction and expectations from their previous visit to Australia and showed the highest intention to visit Australia for a holiday. Tourism Australia said it will be identifying newer opportunities for making the country's tourism offerings more attractive for Indian visitors.