

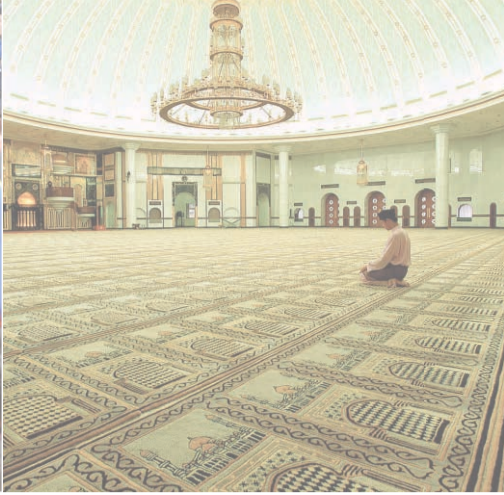


ASIAN TOURISM GUIDE 2012/2013

*Vital tourism statistics
and information on 17
Asian countries*

PRODUCED BY





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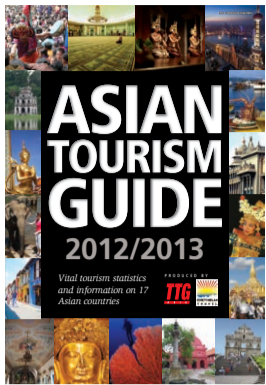
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Five and counting

Welcome to the 2012/2013 edition of Asian Tourism Guide (ATG).

I can't believe this is the fifth year we're producing the guide and my first order of business is to thank you, our readers and our advertisers, for supporting this publication, which shows that you see real value in it.

I would also like to thank our partner in producing ATG, Diethelm Travel Group, particularly former CEO John Watson and his successor, Richard Brouwer, for conceptualising this guide together with Raini Hamdi, our senior editor, five years ago.

Five years is a good time to reassess how we can further strengthen ATG to make it more useful to our readers. We have started work on this and early responses from readers tell us to make the guide handier by shrinking it down to a smaller, more compact size. We'll look into that of course, and welcome more voices from you as we revamp the guide for next year.

So this is an open call for feedback.

Send your comments, opinions and ideas, your 'ATG Feedback', to ttgnewsdesk@ttgasia.com.

In the meantime, the fifth edition of ATG is bursting at the seams with all the key tourism statistics of 17 Asian destinations. We've also introduced a new section called Diethelm's Hot Pick – an insider's recommendation from the local Diethelm office. It features a unique, must-do experience in the destination, be it gourmet, family, shopping or adventure, to satisfy clients' increasing demand for more experiential travel.

Enjoy the fifth edition of ATG.



Darren Ng
Managing director
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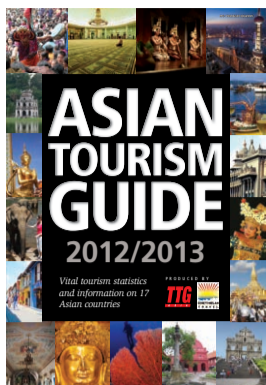
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Insider tips in your hand

Dear travel trade partners,

We, at Diethelm Travel Group, are pleased to be associated once again with TTG Asia's prestigious Asian Tourism Guide.

This, the fifth edition, sees the inclusion of Diethelm's Hot Pick – based on the themes Gourmet, Shopping and Children, these are a selection of our recommendations for destination must-do's.

Having more than 55 years of experience in this varied and dynamic region has taught us the value of harnessing the right facts and information and, through this well-received guide, we continue to provide our knowledge as a useful aid and reference tool for planning itineraries, events and meetings throughout Asia.

With the opening of Diethelm Travel Hong Kong this year, our respected and trusted inbound tourism brand continues to expand across the region. We now operate in 13 countries, with additional offices anticipated in 2013/2014.

Asia continues to attract significant visitor numbers, year over year, offering all a wonderful diversity of cultures, cuisines and memorable journeys.

Nowhere is there a better example of this than Myanmar, where recent changes in the political landscape have released a strong, pent-up demand for tourism in the area. Having a Diethelm Travel presence there since 1996 has positioned us well to use our local knowledge and experience to provide the highest levels of service, in a challenging environment, to the many travellers now visiting this magical and culturally rich country.

Our knowledge of Asia has helped us to better serve our partners and customers and, with the Asian Tourism Guide now well established, we continue to do so through what has become an indispensable resource for planning travel and touring in the region.



Richard R. Brouwer
CEO
Diethelm Travel Group



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Bhutan

General overview

Official name	Kingdom of Bhutan
Capital	Thimphu
Population	716,896
Total area	38,394km ²
Currency	Ngultrum
Official language	Dzongkha; English is widely spoken



Bhutan, land-locked and tightly embraced by Asia's two most populous nations – India and China – is probably one of the most desirable destinations for many well-travelled individuals. A single-minded focus on “high value, low impact” tourism has ensured that Bhutan's cultural, historic and natural heritage are not eroded significantly.

Steering clear of mass tourism, the Bhutanese authorities have pegged a daily “tariff” of US\$250 and US\$200 during the high and off-peak travel season respectively, creating an artificial demand cap on travel. Having only one airline to serve the destination – Drukair Royal Bhutan Airlines – also arrests any possible surge in inbound flow.

Reports in November 2012 indicated that Air India may be looking to serve Bhutan's Paro from Indian cities in the future, and for a start it has signed a code-share and interline agreement with Drukair.

Climate

Average temperature	-16°C to 13°C
Average rainfall	2.2mm to 106.2mm

Best time to visit

The autumn months from September-November are the most popular with visitors as clear skies and cool weather prevail. Trekkers are attracted to the ideal conditions in the mountains and this continues into February, when low-altitude trekkers and bird-watchers gather in Bhutan.

However, Bhutan is just as attractive during the other months. With low-hanging clouds and some precipitation, the mountains and deep valleys take on a completely different and perhaps more mystical ambience.

Throughout the year, temple festivals are staged and visitors are able to get up close to these spectacular performances. The peak March-May period is also a good time to visit as it coincides with several festivals.

Visitor arrivals statistics

International arrivals in Bhutan grew 56.7 per cent in 2011, achieving an all-time high of 65,756 visitors, excluding 35,077 regional visitors (from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives) who had arrived by road. Of these, 57.4 per cent were international leisure tourists, 25.6 per cent were high-end visitors from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives who had arrived by air, and 15.8 per cent were MICE visitors.

2011's stellar tourism performance was largely driven by excellent growth in visitors from Thailand (155.4 per cent), China (93.8 per cent), Singapore (71.9 per cent) and the UK (57.7 per cent). Other major markets such as Canada, Australia, Japan and the US achieved double-

digit growth.

Between January and October 2012, Bhutan welcomed 36,133 international visitors, while 32,662 high-end regional visitors swept in between January and July, most of whom had arrived by air.

With the peak season still ahead and additional air services by Drukair (a second daily Paro-Bangkok service and a twice-weekly Paro-Singapore service), the Tourism Council of Bhutan's (TCB) target of 100,000 international arrivals in 2012 is within reach.

Japanese arrivals are expected to double in 2012 as a result of a visit by the Bhutanese king and queen to Japan in 2011. Between January and July 2012, the number of Japanese visitors is almost equal to that for the whole of 2011.

Top 10 source markets 2012 (January to October)

Countries	Arrivals
Japan	6,215
USA	4,862
China	3,088
Thailand	2,742
Germany	2,421
UK	2,001
Australia	1,601
France	1,462
Singapore	1,112
Malaysia	880

Source: Tourism Council of Bhutan

NTO budget

For 2012, the TCB has a marketing budget of Nu 34.8 million (US\$670,000) and this is projected to increase to Nu 48.9 million for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Hotel statistics

According to TCB, Bhutan has 212 five-star rooms, 196 four-star rooms and 1,149 three-star rooms in 2012.

With its “high-value, low-impact” marketing focus, Bhutan has been very successful in attracting international hotel companies such as Taj Hotels Resorts & Palaces, Como Hotels and Resorts, and Aman Resorts.

In September 2011, TCB announced that 59 proposals were received in response to its call (made in December 2010) to build high-end hotels around the kingdom, especially in the eastern and southern regions. These would be hotels of three-star rating or better. TCB is simultaneously encouraging 54 two-star and 19 one-star hotels to upgrade their properties to three-star standard. Meanwhile, Bhutanese company – Druk Holding and Investment (DHI) – is committed to developing a wellness resort costing US\$35 million and it has already lined up an international brand to operate and manage the resort. DHI is partnering Singapore-based Bhutan Investment Corporation which is committing funds to the wellness resort and which will also source for investors in the Singapore market for future projects by DHI in the tourism and hospitality industry.

The Bhutanese government, together with TCB officials, have identified households in Trashiyangtse to offer farmstay for visitors who are keen to experience rural living. Some households were given cash grants to re-model their homes. Some of these facilities are already being offered to visitors.

New hotels in 2012

- Uma by COMO, Punakha, nine valley view rooms and two villas
- Bhutan Residence, 21 rooms and four serviced apartments

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Drukair is planning a third weekly service to Singapore in 2013 and a twice-weekly Paro-Mumbai service in March 2013.

Zhemgang District has been named the crown jewel of Bhutan's protected nature parks by bird-watchers from around the world. A bird-watching camp is being developed and will be completed in 2013.

Hot-stone bathing is Bhutan's equivalent to the Japanese onsen. Round hot stones from river beds are baked in log fires and dropped into a chamber connected to a wooden bath. Bathers are believed to derive relief for joint pains, rheumatism and backaches. A medicinal hot-stone bath is being developed in Monggar in 2013. TCB and the Ministry of Health are currently working to establish the framework and guidelines for *Sowarigpa* (traditional medicine) spa and wellness services. The country's Lingshi region produces 94 traditional medicines and the ministry is of the opinion that it could be sustainably harvested.

Key events and festivals 2013

- Punakha Dromche (February 15-19)
- Punakha Tshechu (February 20-22)
- Chorten Kora (February 25 to March 11)
- Gomkora (March 20-22)
- Paro Tshechu (March 23-27)
- Chukha Yakchoe (March 25-27)
- Ura Yakchoe (April 21-25)
- Nimalung Tshechu (June 16-18)
- Kurjey Tshechu (June 18)
- Thimphu Drupchen (September 9-13)
- Wangdi Tshechu (September 12-14)
- Gangtey Tshechu (September 12-14)
- Tamshingphala Choepa (September 13-15)
- Thimphu Tshechu (September 14-16)
- Tangbi Mani (September 18-20)
- Jambay Lhakhang Drup* (October 18-22)
- Prakhar Tshechu (October 19-22)
- Pema Gatshel Tshechu (November 9-12)
- Black Necked Crane Festival (November 11)
- Mongar Tshechu (November 9-12)
- Trashigang Tshechu (November 10-13)
- Nalakhang Tshechu (November 17-19)

Source: Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators. As most festivals are held in conjunction with the moon phase, dates may change and it is



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Mauritius

Thimphu Dzong, also known Trashichodzong, is the seat of the local government



prudent to check with Diethelm Travel at the time of booking.

*The Jambay Lhakhang Drup festival features a dance item performed by naked men, and photography is not permitted.

Essentials in the city

Food Be sure to sink your teeth into *momo kopi*, steam dumplings filled with finely-chopped cabbage and onions, cheese and butter.

Tippling policy Although tour prices are all inclusive, the going rate for tipping tour guides and drivers is US\$5 per person per day. Tipping is seldom expected in other establishments, some of which already impose a service charge which serves as a tipping pool for all employees.

Shopping Paro's Main Street features shops on both sides, all crammed with brasswares, silk and cotton scarves, incense sticks, silver filigree jewellery, *gho* (Bhutanese national dress for men) which can be matched with elaborately embroidered boots, *kira* (wrap-around sarong worn by Bhutanese women) and prayer flags that one could string across any open space to seek blessing for loved ones and friends.

How to maximise two hours of free time Drive out of the city to the Zhiwa Ling Hotel and feast your eyes on the most beautifully carved and decorated wood panels throughout the property. Many have come to regard the hotel as the *de-facto* National Museum and for a good reason. If richly decorated and embellished Bhutanese houses – even those belonging to the most ordinary villagers – are a feast for the eyes, then the Zhiwa Ling Hotel's ornate facade and intricately carved wood panels are a banquet.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Drive up to Paro Dzong (also known as Ringpung Dzong), which served in ancient times as a fortress and whose watch tower, Ta Dzong, later became the National Museum. The National Museum is, however, currently closed after suffering damage during an earthquake in recent years.

Within Paro Dzong's courtyard are administrative offices with the most ornate and beautifully decorated facades. The living quarters for monks ensure an inconstant movement of monks and novice monks across the courtyard.

The most precious possession within the dzong is the *Thongdrel*, a 20x20m *thangka* that survived the fire that destroyed the original dzong in 1907. The *Thongdrel* is only on show once a year during the Paro Tsechu celebrations.

Impressive lunch for clients At lunchtime, Bhukari at the Uma by COMO, Paro serves a spread of international comfort food. Grilled ocean trouts, Indian sets, Bhutanese sets and other western options beckon. Bhukari, which means fireplace in Bhutanese speak, takes on a circular pavilion layout with a fireplace as its centrepiece. It affords a sprawling view of the surrounding lush landscape. As Bhukari's chef hails from Indonesia, diners are invited to feast on authentic *mee-goreng*, a fried noodle

dish that features freshly pulled noodles.

Lunch on your own If one craves for South-east Asian cuisine while in Bhutan, there is Metta Resort and Spa to the rescue.

The hotel's owner, Sharine T'Tobgay, a Malaysian, is able to whip up *bak kut teh* (a rich, herbal soup of pork ribs), *nasi-lemak* (coconut milk-favoured rice), *bee-hoon goreng* (fried vermicelli) and Penang-style *rendang chicken* (thick chicken curry), subjected to pre-arrangement and availability of the freshest ingredients.

T'Tobgay would even sit down for an animated chat with diners when time permits. Visit www.bhutanmetta.com.bt for more information.



DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

A real taste of Bhutan at The Bhutanese



The Bhutanese is an authentic Bhutanese restaurant set in the heart of Thimphu city in Yarkay Complex, which boasts a great view of the clock tower where all entertainment shows are held.

Every dish served at The Bhutanese is prepared to order from fresh, high quality local ingredients. Must-eats include the *ema datshi*, a chilli and cheese dish which is the country's national food; the *nosha naezam*, a dish of minced beef; and the *kewa*, a dish of baked potato.

For a complete local dining experience, pair these dishes with the Bhutanese red rice and traditional buckwheat, *puta*.

The restaurant is committed to detail, as can be seen through its excellent décor and service – food is served in traditional "Tupperware", handwoven containers called *bangchung*.

Diners will also be serenaded by traditional local artists playing original Dzongkha tunes. This fits in well with the *chorten*, a shrine built inside the restaurant, creating a very peaceful ambience.

Late nights Club Insomnia Paro is one of few places where Bhutanese cast aside their traditional *gho* and *kira*, and turn up in funky tees and jeans. After a few bottles of Druk 11000 beer, loud music takes over and the dance floor quickly becomes the most densely populated spot in all of Bhutan. And yes, even this little happy kingdom is not immune to the riveting galloping moves of South Korean rapper Psy's Gangnam Style.

Electricity 230 volts, AC/50 Hz, two-pin round blade or three-pin round or flat blade plugs.

Visa requirements

Other than Indians, Bangladeshis and Maldivian nationals, all visitors to Bhutan require a visa.

All visas are issued from Thimphu, and only to tourists who are booked with a local licensed tour operator, directly or through a foreign travel agent. Applications for tourist visas are submitted by the tour operator.

Visa clearance from Thimphu must be obtained before arrival in Bhutan, and the process takes at least 10 days.

It is important to note that air tickets to Bhutan cannot be purchased without visa clearance.

At the point of entry and following a payment of US\$20, the visa will be stamped in the traveller's passport. Two passport-sized photos will also be required.

Visas are issued for a 15-day period. Extensions can be obtained in Thimphu at a cost of Nu510 (approximately US\$10).

Important contacts

NTO

Tourism Council of Bhutan overseas tourism development in the kingdom and performs the following core functions:

- Formulate and implement a national tourism policy and strategy
- Develop, implement and monitor guidelines to ensure sustainability of tourism activities
- Ensure safety, encourage investments in tourism, allocate national resources to support tourism as a priority industry and co-ordinate with tourism stakeholders
- Marketing and promotional activities in international markets
- Develop tourism product and services and human resources

Priority markets for the tourism bureau are the US, the UK, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia, along with the high-end Indian market.

www.tourism.gov.bt

Travel trade associations

Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO)

www.abto.org.bt

Compiled by Sim Kok Chwee

All information is correct at press time

Brunei

General overview

Official name	Brunei Darussalam
Capital	Bandar Seri Begawan
Population	408,786
Total area	5,765km ²
Currency	Brunei dollar
Official language	Malay, though English is widely spoken



Brunei is expected to welcome 269,989 tourists by the end of 2012, and grow that figure to 300,936 in 2013.

According to Brunei Tourism, eight out of 10 top source markets for the destination in the first four months of 2012 are in Asia.

Malaysia topped the chart with 18,843 tourist arrivals between January and April. While an exact year-on-year comparison with 2011 is not available, NTO data revealed that arrivals from Malaysia in 1Q2011 had numbered 22,044.

For the same period in 2012, China claimed second spot, contributing 10,909 footfalls to Brunei's total arrivals. In 1Q2011, there were 12,238 Chinese travellers to Brunei.

Meanwhile, in terms of tourism infrastructure, no new hotels are slated to open in Brunei in 2013.

Climate

Average temperature	23°C to 34°C
Average rainfall	3,200mm
Average humidity	98 per cent

Best time to visit

Brunei is open to international visitors all year round. There is no seasonality in room rates and rooms are easy to secure at any time of the year, except during Chinese New Year. During this festive period, travellers are advised to book accommodation in advance.

Visitor arrival statistics

While half of Brunei's top 10 tourism source markets are ASEAN nations, overall arrivals from this region had dipped 9.5 per cent in 1Q2012 over the same period in 2011. Nonetheless, the ASEAN bloc still accounts for the lion's share of tourist arrivals to Brunei.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	214,290, +36.1 per cent
2011	242,061, +13 per cent
2012 (Target)	269,989, +11.5 per cent

Average length of stay for top 10 markets

Three days

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to April)

Countries	2012
Malaysia	18,843

Continued next column

Continued from previous column

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to April)

Countries	2012
China	10,909
Indonesia	6,703
Philippines	6,495
Singapore	4,961
UK/ Ireland	4,377
Australia	4,308
North America	2,128
Thailand	1,393
Hong Kong	759

Source: Brunei Tourism

NTO target

Brunei Tourism is targeting 300,936 arrivals in 2013.

Hotel statistics

Most hotels in Brunei had maintained their contractual rates in 2012, and a majority did not impose peak season surcharges. Published rates are also consistent in most hotels throughout the year.

Estimated room count in Brunei

Overall number of rooms	3,000
Number of four-star rooms	1,000
Number of five-star rooms	650

New hotels in 2012, 2013

The 112-room Times Hotel Brunei is one of the newest

hotels in Brunei. It opened in March 2011. The Brunei Hotel in Bandar Seri Begawan reopened a month earlier, after closing its doors for a massive renovation.

There were no new hotel openings in 2012, and none have been scheduled for 2013.

Average occupancy rate

	2011	2012
Hotels across Bandar Seri Begawan	55%	55%
Four-star hotels in Bandar Seri Begawan	50%	50%
Five-star hotels in Bandar Seri Begawan	45%	50%

Source: Various trade sources

Average room rate (ARR)

	2011	2012
Five-star hotels	B\$195	B\$250
Four-star hotels	B\$120	B\$160

Source: Various trade sources

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Taman Kulimambang Butterfly Garden, located within Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park in Tutong district, opened in July 2012. The attraction is managed by the Brunei Museums Department and houses around 100 butterflies of different species.

Diving is a new attraction that is being promoted by Brunei Tourism. There are more than 10 dive sites in Brunei. There are good, shallow coral dives perfect for inexperienced divers, as well as more challenging reef and wreck dives. Shipwrecks scattered between Brunei and the Malaysian island of Labuan are mostly in pristine condition due to little dive activity.

www.ponidivers.com

www.oceanic-quest.com

www.thebananahutbrunei.com

Key events and festivals 2013

Hari Raya at Istana Nurul Iman (2nd to 4th day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri, in August 2013)

Visitors are offered the rare opportunity to step into Istana Nurul Iman, the largest residential palace in the world, during the Hari Raya Aidilfitri festive period. The Sultan and members of the Royal Family will personally greet and welcome all guests.

Brunei Open (July 25-28)

The sporting event began in 2005 as part of the Asian Tour golf tournament, and is held annually at The Empire Hotel & Country Club's Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course. To date, the Brunei Open has attracted many of Asia's top players to the destination.

www.bruneitourism.travel

Essentials in the city

Food Brunei's traditional *ambuyat* is made from sago and eaten with a bamboo fork called a *chandas*. *Ambuyat* has no flavour on its own and so it is usually served alongside a variety of dips, condiments, meats, soups and greens.

Quirky Visit a *tamu* for an authentic Bruneian social experience and a full-on feast for the senses. These al fresco markets have a long history in Brunei and are a kaleidoscope of colours, smells and sounds.

Tipping policy Tipping is usually not expected in Brunei. Some establishments include a service tax, otherwise, the market rate is 10 per cent of the total bill if service warrants it.

Shopping Brunei is famous for its high quality Brunei brocade (*kain tenunan*) such as the *jong sarat* brocade. Options are plenty at Arts and Handicraft Centre at Jalan Residency, Bandar Seri Begawan.

How to maximise two hours of free time Make a photo stop at Istana Nurul Iman, and conclude the brief excursion with a visit to picturesque Kampong Ayer, where traditional houses with wooden walkways are built on stilts and stand over water.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Start with some retail



Brunei's many beautiful mosques are a draw for tourists

therapy at Yayasan Shopping Complex, then sit down for lunch just across the road at Italian restaurant Fratini's, where verandah seats offer great views of Kampong Ayer.

After lunch, visit Brunei's Art Gallery of Bandar Seri Begawan and the Water Village, as well as the Arts and Handicrafts Centre, which is just a short stroll from the waterfront district. There, Brunei's traditional handicrafts brocades, silverware and woven baskets are on display.

Recharge with a tea break at Tarindak d'Seni, a restaurant located on the first floor of the Arts and Handicrafts Centre.

Impressive lunch for clients Kaizen Sushi Restaurant in Kiarong Complex, Bandar Seri Begawan serves Japanese cuisine against a great view of Kampong Ayer. The restaurant is spacious and tastefully decorated – ideal for a business lunch with important clients.

Lunch on your own Located within Yayasan Complex, the air-conditioned Nyonya Restaurant serves an extensive variety of Indian, Chinese and Malay dishes that are excellent value for money.

Late nights Nightlife options are scant in Brunei and most shopping outlets close by 21.30. Make up for this by organising a private party in your hotel room, a hotel function room or restaurant.

Electricity Socket type. Voltage is 240V AC at 50 cycles per second. Standard three-pin square plugs and sockets.

Visa requirements

Foreigners entering Brunei for employment must have the appropriate visa and employment pass prior to their

arrival. Their spouses and children (under 18 years old) are required to obtain dependents' passes. A 72-hour transit visa issued on arrival is available at B\$5 nett per passport.

Visa requirements by nationality

Nationality	Visa requirement
US	90-day entry with no visa
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, UK	30-day entry with no visa
Australia, Kuwait	Visa-on-arrival for visits not exceeding 30 days
Bahrain, Qatar	Visa-on-arrival for visits not exceeding 14 days
Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Maldives, Peru, Philippines, Switzerland, Thailand, Vietnam	14-day entry with no visa
China	Visa-on-arrival (14 days) only for tourists handled by travel agents. Those on business visits require sponsors or counterparts in Brunei Darussalam.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Important contacts

NTO

Brunei Tourism is a department under the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources. It is headed by Mariani Hj Sabtu, acting director.

Brunei Tourism has marketing representation offices in China, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand and its main target markets are Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Western Europe, the Middle East and other regional markets in ASEAN and the Far East.

Brunei generally targets the mature and well-travelled market segments, and through its promotional activities wants to project Brunei as a safe, wholesome and family-friendly destination.

Its principal attractions revolve around its natural, cultural, heritage and Islamic tourism offerings, without forgetting the opulence of its accommodation and the quality of its world class golf, diving and meeting facilities.

Tel: (67-3) 238-2822/(67-3) 238-2832

Fax: (67-3) 238-2824

www.bruneitourism.travel

Travel trade associations

The Association of Travel Agents Brunei

www.bruneitravelagents.org.bn

Brunei Association of Hotels

www.hotelsofbrunei.com

Compiled by S Puvaneswary

All information is correct at press time

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN MAGNIFICENCE



For a cultural immersion in an ancient Sultanate, discover Brunei's strong Malay, Islamic and Royal traditions that effortlessly blend heritage and piety with outward looking modernity, tolerance and genuine hospitality. Magnificent gilded Mosques, majestic architecture, richly endowed museums and picturesque water villages of houses on stilts dot Bandar Seri Begawan, the lovely capital of friendly Brunei Darussalam, the prosperous, safe and placid oil rich Kingdom nestled on the northern shores of the huge island of Borneo.

Culture and tradition is complemented by pristine nature, with easily accessible lush primary jungles teeming with life covering most of the country.

In Brunei one can also enjoy world class golf, diving and business events, from remote jungle lodges to palatial resort accommodation, allowing discerning travelers wholesome vacation experiences at good value for money.

Nature, heritage, opulence...Discover Brunei, the Green Heart of Borneo.

BRUNEI TOURISM

Jalan Menteri Besar
Bandar Seri Begawan BB3910

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Tel : + 673 - 238 28 22 / Fax : + 673 - 238 28 24

Email : info@bruneitourism.travel

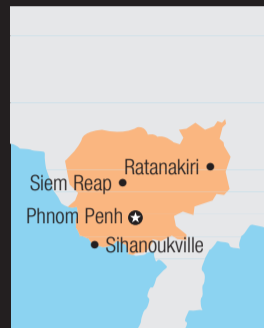


www.bruneitourism.travel

Cambodia

General overview

Official name	Kingdom of Cambodia
Capital	Phnom Penh
Population	14.7 million
Total area	181,035km ²
Currency	Riel, but the US dollar is widely used
Official language	Khmer



Cambodia welcomed 24.5 per cent more international visitors in the first eight months of 2012. Growing air links and the development of quality accommodation – especially along the coast – have been instrumental in fuelling this strong performance.

Cambodia welcomed even more air links in 2012, including Tiger Airways' daily Singapore-Phnom Penh services and Condor Airlines' weekly Frankfurt-Siem Reap flights. From February 20, 2013, Qatar Airways will extend its daily Doha-Ho Chi Minh City service to Phnom Penh.

Cambodia's tourism product was strengthened when Cambodia Angkor Air debuted a service between Siem Reap and Sihanoukville where various five-star hotels have opened. For the first time, it was possible for visitors to Cambodia to combine Siem Reap's cultural heritage with a beach resort holiday.

Tonle Sap Airlines has also been a boon to Cambodia's tourism sector, having launched flights between Siem Reap and China's Beijing, Ningbo and Shanghai, and Taiwan's Taipei and Kaohsiung.

Tourism earnings is expected to hit US\$2.2 billion in 2012.

Climate

Average temperature	27°C to 28°C
Average rainfall	1,000 to 1,500mm
Average humidity	80 to 90 per cent

Best time to visit

December and January are cool and dry and are consequently the most pleasant time to visit Cambodia. The dry season continues into April, when Cambodia is at its hottest with temperature of around 34°C. Although the rainy season lasts from May to October, rainfall occurs mostly in the late evening and during the night and do not disrupt travel throughout the kingdom.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Between January and August 2012, a total of 2,334,793 visitors arrived in Cambodia, representing a growth rate of 24.5 per cent over the same period in 2011. Only 47.7 per cent arrived by air through Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, while half of all arrivals crossed into Cambodia via its land borders with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The remaining 2.3 per cent came via a waterway.

Relative peace on the Thai-Cambodia border has given visitor arrivals from Thailand a shot in the arm, growing 83 per cent from 67,340 (January-August 2011) to 123,227 for the same period in 2012. Visitor arrivals

from Laos grew by a stunning 90 per cent in this period compared to the same period in 2011.

Arrivals from the rest of the top ten markets remained unchanged for the first eight months of 2012.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	2.51 million, +16.0 per cent
2011	2.88 million, +14.9 per cent
2012 (January-August)	2.33 million, +24.5 per cent

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Vietnam	614,090	19.4%
South Korea	342,810	18.3%
China	247,197	39.2%
Japan	161,804	6.6%
US	153,953	5.4%
Lao PDR	128,525	39.3%

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Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
France	117,408	3.6%
Thailand	116,758	-21.7%
Australia	105,010	12.2%
UK	104,052	1.0%

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Vietnam	520,165	27.3%
South Korea	287,210	26.2%
China	207,617	31.0%
Lao PDR	151,771	90.1%
Thailand	123,227	83.0%
Japan	115,440	11.6%
US	114,347	12.7%
France	82,795	6.5%
Australia	74,195	13.2%
UK	73,952	4.9%

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia

NTO budget

The Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia continues to market the destination under the *Cambodia-Kingdom of Wonder* branding and using the tagline *Clean city, clean resort and good service*. All of the ministry's marketing activities and operation are funded by a tight budget of US\$4.5 million in 2012.

Hotel developments

One of the most important hotels to open in Cambodia in 2012 is the Song Saa Private Island Resort, a luxurious resort developed across two islands – Koh Ouen and Koh Bong. Song Saa in Khmer means "sweethearts" and the resort's over-water, jungle and ocean-view villas command rates ranging from US\$1,595 to US\$5,153 per night in the high season.

The resort has been marketed strongly in Europe and the US, and besides luring visitors to the destination, it draws attention to Cambodia's aspiration to become better known as a beach destination that rivals its better known neighbours.

With direct flights to Sihanoukville from Siem Reap, the resort is just a 15-minute drive from Sihanoukville Airport and a short boat ride away. From Phnom Penh, guests can choose between a three-hour overland transfer by Song Saa's fleet of BMW 5 series limousines or book a helicopter transfer operated by Helicopters Cambodia.

Adding further to the choice of quality accommodation in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh is the Frangipani Villa Hotel Group which operates two hotels in Siem Reap and four in Phnom Penh. These are all in the four-star category and are tastefully decorated according to various art-centric themes.

New hotels in 2012 / 2013

- Sokha Phnom Penh Hotel, 798 rooms
- Thansur Bokor Highland Resort, 418 rooms
- Emario Hotel and Resort, room count unknown
- Sokha Bokor Hotel, 600 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Société Concessionnaire de l'Aéroport (SCA) operates Cambodia's three international airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville under a 25-year concession and in 2011, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports handled 1.84 million and 1.82 million passengers respectively. Strong growth trends have continued into 2012 (11 per cent growth for Phnom Penh and 24 per cent for Siem Reap, year-to-date), with Siem Reap's passenger throughput expected to surpass Phnom Penh for the first time. SCA will soon begin works to expand the passenger terminals of both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports and when completed in 2014 and 2015 respectively, both will be able to handle five million passengers per annum.

Uniworld River Cruises' 15-day programme along the Mekong River on its luxurious vessel, the *River Saigon*, has been a great success. The cruise starts from Ho Chi Minh City and ends in Hanoi, with various stops in Cam-

bodia such as Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. For the 2013 season, the company has committed a second ship – the *River Orchid* – to this itinerary. A total of 45 sailings are scheduled for 2013 and eight days of each sailing will be spent in Cambodia.

Key events and festivals 2013

Meak Bochea Day (February 25)

Celebrated on the full moon of the third lunar month, faithful Buddhists in Cambodia pay respects to Buddha on this day with visits to the temples, where they will participate in religious ceremonies.

Cambodian Khmer New Year (April 14, 15, 16)

Cambodians celebrate the start of a new Buddhist lunar year with visits to the temples and shrines to pay homage to Buddha and their ancestors. It is also a time for charity work and get-togethers with family and friends.

Royal Plowing Day Ceremony (May 9)

This ceremony marks the start of the rice-planting season in Cambodia. People appointed by the monarch will participate in the ritual, during which sacred oxens will plough a selected section of the field. Later, the oxens will be served a variety of food such as rice, beans and grass, and what they eat will determine the season's harvest.

Angkor Wat International Half Marathon (December 1)

This annual event takes participants through the beautiful ruins of the Angkor Archaeological Park in Siem Reap. www.angkormarathon.org/en/

Essentials in the city

Food Many herbs and spices such as lemongrass, cilantro, star anise, galangal and kaffir lime are key ingredients in Khmer cuisine, but the most distinctive ingredient is the *pra-hok*, a fermented fish paste, and the *kapi*, a fermented prawn paste.

Quirky Far from the reclusive North Korea and its larger-than-life leaders is the Pyongyang Restaurant on 400 Monivong Boulevard in Phnom Penh, which comes complete with singing and dancing waitresses serving ice-cold noodles. Not the cheapest place for a meal but certainly a novel experience for those unlikely to set foot in North Korea.

Tipping policy Tipping is more common today as a result of growing affluence among locals and the rising number of visitors. Tipping jars can sometimes be seen in more pricey restaurants and bar counters.

Shopping The Russian market (locally known as Toul Tum Pong Market) still appears to be the main attraction in Phnom Penh, with its wide range of fabric, handicrafts, "antiques", clothes, household appliances, food and even fresh meats and vegetables. Visitors can take pleasure in haggling with the pleasant-mannered vendors and then pile into a tuk-tuk for a breezy ride back to the hotel.

How to maximise two hours of free time The Royal Palace is a fitting place to begin one's acquaintance with Phnom Penh and within its compound, visitors can visit the Grand Throne Hall (Preah Tineang Tevea Vinichhay), the venue for past coronations and royal weddings. Also open to visitors are the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Preah Keo Morakot), stupas, royal dining hall, the Chan Chhaya Pavilion and even a French-styled building that was a gift from Napoleon III.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Cycle into the Khmer heartlands, through relatively flat verdant open country, where one would come face to face with the Cham communities, coriander gardens, wooden houses and even a Chinese-style pagoda. Take a ferry ride across the river to Koh Otnyahdei where the farming communities live. Explore a modern Khmer temple and a silk-weaver's house where dainty silk scarves are produced. A tour along these lines is offered by Diethelm Travel Cambodia, and promises visitors a different perspective of Phnom Penh.

Impressive lunch for clients Van's Restaurant (5, Street 102, Place de la Poste, Phnom Penh) sits in a lovingly restored French colonial-era building – the former Banque de l'Indochine – and serves a delightful menu comprising French favourites such as salmon tatar, foie grass terrines, crab and mango millefeuilles, red mullet, armoricaine, blanquette and seafood puff pastry. There is also a fine



Make a stop at the Angkor Archaeological Park, Siem Reap

DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

The freshest picks of the land and sea – Kampot pepper crab

Kep, on the south-eastern coast, is famous across Cambodia for fresh seafood, especially its signature Kampot pepper crab, which is served with fried fresh green Kampot pepper, still on the vine.

The freshest crabs are available at the crab market, where the line-caught crustaceans are held in floating cages in the sea just off the beach, and diners can wade out to the cages and pick what they desire. The vendors will then steam the crabs in boiling pots at the market.

Alternatively, crab dishes can be ordered at several seafood restaurants lining the seashore next to the market.

Built on terraces, these restaurants offer stunning sunset views of Phu Quoc Island and Bokor Mountain.

Kampot pepper is grown in the eponymous neighbouring province of Kampot, renowned for its pepper. Kampot farmers stay off chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers, choosing to go all-natural instead with decaying plants and crab waste.



Diethelm Travel Group

selection of the best wines and spirit.

Lunch on your own The Romdeng Restaurant (House #74, Street 174, Phnom Penh) is a non-profit training restaurant operated by former street youths. Set in a colonial house, it serves Khmer cuisine with a modern twist, using the best quality local produce. If you have adventurous tastes, try the crispy tarantula. And when you have thoroughly enjoyed your lunch, take advantage of the free Wi-Fi connection to get in touch with friends and family back home.

Late nights Head to the roof top of the Amanjaya Pan-cam Hotel where the Le Moon Terrace Bar is located. Stylish, relaxed, comfortable and with an unmatched view of the Tonle Sap and Mekong rivers, it is the perfect place to unwind.

Electricity Single phase voltage of 220 volts and a frequency of 50Hz, primarily with two- or three-pin sockets.

Visa requirements

All nationalities need to apply for a travel visa except nationals of the ASEAN member countries. A visa on arrival which is valid for 30 days is available at Phnom Penh Airport, Siem Reap Airport and at international border crossings. A tourist or business visa is also obtainable at the Royal Cambodian Embassy or consulate at a cost of US\$20 and US\$25 respectively.

Online tourist visa application is also available at www.mfaic.gov.kh/evisa/ContactInformation.aspx, along with credit card payment and a recent photo in jpeg format. Approval of the e-visa takes three working days. This service is not available to nationals of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

Important contacts

NTO

The Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, helmed by minister of tourism Thong Khon, has representative offices in South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, Portugal, the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Austria.

Tel: (855-23) 211-593

www.tourismcambodia.org

APSARA, the authority for the protection and management of Angkor and the region of Siem Reap, was created by the Cambodian government. It is tasked to take charge of research, protection and conservation of cultural heritage, urban and tourism development.

www.autoriteapsara.org

Travel trade associations

The Cambodia Association of Travel Agents seeks to work closely with the public and private sectors to develop and grow tourism, and to guide its members on achieving these objectives.

www.catacambodia.com

The Cambodia Hotel Association represents its members in shaping policies, advocating hotel vocational training and promoting investment in Cambodia's tourism industry.

www.cambodiahotelassociation.com.kh

Compiled by Sim Kok Chwee

All information is correct at press time

China

General overview

Official name	People's Republic of China
Capital	Beijing
Population	1.4 billion
Total area	9.6 million km ²
Currency	Renminbi
Official language	Mandarin



In 2011, China recorded 135.4 million visitors and generated US\$48.5 billion in revenue, representing a 1.2 per cent and 5.8 per cent increase respectively over 2010. This year, inbound visitor arrivals fell 1.5 per cent to 88.2 million tourists between January and August.

China Tourism Academy, the research arm of China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), anticipates that China will welcome 137 million tourist arrivals and generate US\$51 billion in revenue in 2012.

Climate

Average temperature	-9°C to 2°C (North, January) 22°C to 31°C (North, July) 14°C to 21°C (South, January) 25°C to 33°C (South, July)
Average rainfall	610.5mm
Average humidity	48 to 59 per cent in the north 62 to 80 per cent in the south

Best time to visit

China is a vast country with wide-ranging climatic conditions. The most comfortable season for travel is early autumn, between September to early October, when temperatures throughout China are reasonable with a limited amount of rain. Temperatures in spring are similar to autumn, which makes for pleasant weather. Summer spans June to end August and can be extremely hot, while winter can be incredibly cold, especially in the north.

Visitor arrivals statistics

According to CNTA, China attracted 13.5 million foreign visitors in the first six months of 2012, out of which 3.2 million travellers came for work and 5.1 million for leisure. Asia continues to be the largest source of foreign visitors to China, supplying 8.3 million tourists from January to June 2012, up 5.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2011. Europe is the second largest market, recording a 2.7 per cent growth to 2.8 million arrivals. China Tourism Academy, the research arm of the CNTA, is predicting 137 million inbound tourist arrivals and US\$51 billion in tourism revenue for 2012.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	133.8 million, +5.76 per cent
2011	135.4 million, +1.24 per cent
2012 (January-August)	88.2 million, -1.53 per cent
2012	137 million (Forecast)

Top 10 source markets in 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	4,076,400	27.5

Continued next column

Continued from previous column

Top 10 source markets in 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Japan	3,731,200	12.5
Russia	2,370,300	36.0
US	2,009,600	17.5
Malaysia	1,245,200	17.6
Singapore	1,003,700	12.8
Vietnam	920,000	11.0
Philippines	828,300	10.6
Mongolia	794,400	37.8
Canada	685,300	24.5

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	4,185,400	2.7
Japan	3,658,200	-2.0
Russia	2,536,300	7.0
US	2,116,100	5.3
Malaysia	1,245,100	-0.01
Singapore	1,063,000	5.9
Vietnam	1,006,500	9.4
Mongolia	994,200	25.2
Philippines	894,300	8.0
Canada	748,000	9.2

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January-August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	2,783,800	-3.4
Japan	2,556,200	8.4
Russia	1,570,700	-5.2
US	1,427,600	1.6

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Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January-August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Malaysia	760,500	-1.3
Vietnam	736,900	7.6
Mongolia	670,600	4.7
Philippines	643,200	10.7
Singapore	640,300	-0.1
Australia	494,400	8.7

Source: China National Tourism Administration

Total tourism receipts

2010	US\$45.8 billion
2011	US\$48.5 billion
2012 (January-August)	US\$32.1 billion
2012	US\$51 billion (Forecast)

Source: China National Tourism Administration

Hotel statistics

China's hotel industry offers a wealth of potential as urbanisation in the country still has a long way to go. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the scale of China's hotel market will surpass that of the US by 2025.

By the end of 2011, there were a total of 5,481 star-rated hotels in 50 major tourism cities in China. At present, there are 1,700 hotels under construction and it is estimated that the total number of hotel rooms in China will reach five million by 2016.

Average occupancy rate by hotel category in 2011

	Five-star	Four-star	Three-star
No. of hotels	615	2,148	5,473
Average occupancy rate	61	62	60

Average occupancy rate of top 10 tourism cities 2011

Cities	2011
Changsha	83.28
Sanya	71.39
Nanjing	70.12
Guiyang	69.55
Lanzhou	69.32
Xiamen	68.99
Qingdao	68.95
Chengdu	68.78
Fuzhou	68.33
Nanning	68.15

Source: China National Tourism Administration

New hotels in 2012

BEIJING

- Beijing Gong Mei Blue Peacock Business Hotel, 128 rooms
- Tangram Beijing Xinyuan Li, 161 rooms
- Beijing Cineaste Garden Hotel, 276 rooms

SHANGHAI

- Shanghai Caohejing Renaissance Hotel, 383 rooms
- Shanghai Sunrise Hotel, 130 rooms
- The Shanghai Fujian Hotel, 265 rooms

XIAMEN

- Hotel Pullman Xiamen Powerlong, 297 rooms
- Hotel Indigo Xiamen Harbour, 128 rooms
- Xiamen Starway Premier Hotel International Exhibition Center, 138 rooms
- Rui Yi Hotel Xiamen, 588 rooms
- The Westin Xiamen, 304 rooms
- Xiamen Yuanchang Kempinski Hotel, 460 rooms

CHONGQING

- Hyatt Regency Chongqing, 321 rooms
- Chongqing Tianyao Hotel, 171 rooms
- Chongqing Bizika Green Palace, 168 rooms



National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing

TIANJIN

- Tianjin Haihe Indigo Hotel, 96 rooms
- Dongwu Shiba Hotel City Inn Tianjin, 116 rooms
- Tianjin Yinlong State Banquet Hotel, 118 rooms
- Tianjin Tangla Hotel, 116 rooms

HAINAN

- Sanya Grand Fortune Bay Hotel, 391 rooms
- GuestHouse International Hotel Renaissance City Haikou, 180 rooms

SICHUAN

- The Mingyoun Central Hotel, 306 rooms
- Chengdu Tianyi Grand Garden Hotel, 208 rooms
- Chengdu Yinsheng International Hotel, 256 rooms

SUZHOU

- Suzhou Four Points by Sheraton, 283 rooms
- Suzhou Tonino Lamborghini Boutique Hotel, 92 rooms

GUANGDONG

- Days Hotel Huanan, 230 rooms
- Guangzhou Zengcheng Hengda Hotel, 214 rooms
- Foshan Citic Lake Golf Hotel, 60 rooms
- Sheraton Qingyuan Lion Lake Resort, 349 rooms
- Shenzhen Fantasia Boutique Hotel, 109 rooms
- Oakwood Premier Guangzhou, 225 rooms
- Modern Classic Hotel Shenzhen, 160 rooms

XI'AN

- The Westin Xian, 329 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Shanghai Disneyland Resort is the first Disney resort in mainland China and will include two themed hotels, a large retail, dining and entertainment venue and an array of recreation facilities when it opens end-2015. The resort is located in Shanghai's Pudong area.
en.shanghaidisneyresort.com.cn/en/

Oriental Fisherman's Wharf, situated on the Huangpu River in the Yangpu district of Shanghai, features a cluster of recreation and commercial outlets and offices. The first and second phases of the project are slated for completion by end-2012, opening a 500m coastline of new leisure options for visitors.

China Tibet Culture & Tourism Creative Park is under construction on the outskirts of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. Occupying an area of 811 hectares, the development is to comprise several themed districts including a theme park featuring a live show centred on Princess Wencheng, the niece of a Tang Dynasty emperor, who married a Tibetan king to establish peace between the two nations. The resort has a 2015 completion date.

Key events and festivals 2013**Chinese New Year (February 10)**

Known also as the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year is the most important traditional festival in China. Cultural activities such as fireworks displays and lion dances are staged in public spaces. This period is one of the busiest times for travel, with train and air tickets hard to get, so travellers are advised to plan well in advance.

Dragon Boat Festival

A traditional and statutory holiday in China, the festival occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. The most popular activity during this celebration is the dragon boat races held in many cities in southern China. It is also known as Duanwu Festival.

Shanghai Tourism Festival (September-October)

The Shanghai Tourism Festival offers locals and foreigners an opportunity to learn about the Chinese culture.

Essentials in the city – Beijing

Food Nothing tastes more like Beijing than a plate of Peking duck, which comes with a long history. The dish comprises thin, crispy slices of duck skin, eaten with pancakes, scallion and a sweet sauce. It is said to have been an imperial favourite, and is now recognised as a one of China's national foods.

Tippling policy Tippling is not necessary in most restaurants and hotels in China. Some upscale restaurants include a service charge in the bill.

Shopping Time-honoured feature stores such as Rui Fu Xiang and Nei Lian Sheng are worth a visit. The former has sold silk since 1893, while the latter, established 150 years ago, offers traditional cloth shoes that can rarely be found today.

How to maximise two hours of free time Embark on a Hutong tour, which takes the tourist on a rickshaw ride for a unique view of Beijing, an increasingly popular way to appreciate the capital.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Join Beijing's swarm of cyclists while covering the city's cultural attractions. Pedal to the renowned commercial street Wangfujin Avenue, Tiananmen Square, the moat of the Forbidden City and the Drum Tower and Bell Tower.

Impressive lunch for clients Restaurants specialising in Peking duck abound, but few places do it as well as Da Dong Roast Duck Restaurant. The location of the restaurant at Dongshishitiao also guarantees an ever-festive atmosphere.

Lunch on your own Beijing has a great variety of popular snacks such as spring rolls, baked bean cakes, soybean-

flour cakes and sweetened, baked wheaten cakes. Fill up on these goodies while in the capital.

Late nights Sanlitun and Houhai are the two hottest bar streets in Beijing. Besides these, Wudaokou and Luoguxiang are other great options for night owls.

Electricity The electricity in China is generally 220V, 50HZ, AC. A transformer, which can be bought in China for RMB100-200 (US\$16-32), and a portable plug adaptor are necessary.

Visa requirements

A visa and a passport with six months' validity are required for foreigners entering China. Usually, the validity of a single-entry or double-entry tourist visa (L visa) is 90 days or 180 days from the date of issue, which allows the visa holder to stay 30 days in China from date of entry.

Important contacts**NTO**

China National Tourism Administration is directly affiliated to the State Council and has 18 institutions in 14 countries and regions.

Tel: (86-10) 6520-1114

www.cnta.gov.cn

Travel trade associations**China Association of Travel Services**

cats.org.cn

Shanghai Tourism Bureau

chs.meet-in-shanghai.net

China Hotel Association

www.lyxh.org

PATA China Chapter

www.pata.org

Compiled by Hong Xu

All information is correct at press time

**Take home the wonders of jade and calligraphy**

Diethelm Travel Group

The Chinese have used jade to ward off evil and invite good luck for centuries. Regarded as the talisman of the human body, jade is said to be able to draw toxins from the body while the skin absorbs microelements from the pale green stone.

To purchase jade, Dragon Land Superior Jade Gallery in Beijing has a range of jade ornaments, jewellery and handicraft on exhibition and for sale.

Calligraphy is not only a practical technique for writing Chinese characters, but also a unique oriental art and a branch of learning and discipline. Although it uses Chinese words as a vehicle

of expression, one does not have to know Chinese to appreciate its beauty.

Beijing's Dazhailan and Liulichang are areas famous for their highly-regarded calligraphy stores. Here, the culturally curious can meet with the masters, learn about the art and buy a piece of calligraphy to take home.

Hong Kong

General overview

Official name	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
Capital	Hong Kong
Population	7.0 million
Total area	1,104km ²
Currency	Hong Kong dollar
Official languages	Chinese, English



In the first eight months of 2012, Hong Kong tourist arrivals rose to 31.6 million, a 16 per cent increase compared to the corresponding period last year. Cumulatively, overnight and same-day arrivals between January and August stood respectively at 15.7 million and 15.9 million, or 49.6 and 50.4 per cent of overall arrivals.

For the first half of the year, total tourism expenditure associated with inbound tourism was HK\$138.4 billion (US\$17.9 billion), a year-on-year increase of 17.7 per cent. Per capita spend of overnight visitors went up 7.8 per cent to HK\$7,736, while the figure grew 3.8 per cent to HK\$2,075 for same-day visitors.

Unsurprisingly, China continues to dominate in number of arrivals, growth in arrivals and per capita spend, and is likely to remain so given the relaxation of the Individual Visit Scheme in the mainland this year, making acquiring a visa to Hong Kong easier for the Chinese.

Climate

Average temperature	23°C to 28°C
Average rainfall	2,214.3mm
Average humidity	69 to 82 per cent

Best time to visit

Hong Kong's sub-tropical climate results in four seasons. Pleasant weather in November and December make the year-end the best time to visit, but the period is also peak season for business travel.

January and February are cloudy, with occasional cold fronts followed by dry northerly winds. Spring starts in March and April, when occasional spells of high humidity result in fogs and drizzles. Both air traffic and ferry services are occasionally disrupted because of reduced visibility.

Summer lasts from May to August. Severe weather phenomena that can affect Hong Kong include tropical cyclones (July to October), strong winter monsoon winds and thunderstorms that are most frequent from April to September. Waterspouts and hailstorms occur infrequently.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Despite the receding European economy, the Asian market, particularly mainland China, recorded steadfast economic growth and has become the key growth driver of Hong Kong's arrivals.

Traffic from mainland China made up the bulk of tourists to Hong Kong, recording some 22.6 million visi-

tors from January to August this year. In contrast, the second-largest source market Taiwan contributed only 1.4 million tourists, down five per cent year-on-year.

China also led the top 10 pack in terms of growth, followed by the Philippines (13.4 per cent), Japan (9.3 per cent), Indonesia (6.2 per cent), South Korea (5.4 per cent) and the US (0.3 per cent). The rest of the top 10 markets for the first eight months of 2012 registered a dip in arrival numbers.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	36 million, +21.8 per cent
2011	41.9 million, +16 per cent
2012 (January-August)	31.6 million, +16 per cent

BT-MICE arrivals

2010	1.4 million
2011	1.6 million
2012 (January-June)	760,738

Top 10 source markets in 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	22,684,388	26.3
Taiwan	2,164,750	7.7
Japan	1,316,618	9.3
US	1,171,419	9.5

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Top 10 source markets in 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	891,024	44.0
Singapore	709,777	13.8
Australia	650,681	8.4
Philippines	603,030	7.0
UK	515,693	0.3
Malaysia	453,235	28.2

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	28,100,129	23.9
Taiwan	2,148,733	-0.7
Japan	1,283,687	-2.5
US	1,212,336	3.5
South Korea	1,020,996	14.6
Singapore	793,887	11.9
Philippines	659,829	9.4
Australia	644,596	-0.9
Malaysia	632,858	9.3
Indonesia	520,795	14.9

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	22,575,101	23.4
Taiwan	1,392,289	-5.0
Japan	892,448	9.3
US	782,265	0.3
South Korea	729,168	5.4
Philippines	469,296	13.4
Singapore	443,424	-5.8
Australia	407,322	-0.2
Malaysia	377,490	-0.3
Indonesia	352,834	6.2

Average length of stay/average per capita expenditure of top 10 markets in 2011

Market	Average length of stay	Average expenditure (HK\$)
China	3.9	8,220
Taiwan	2.5	5,860
Japan	2.3	5,763
US	3.8	7,148
South Korea	2.3	4,349
Singapore	3.1	6,851
Philippines	3.2	5,463
Australia	3.9	8,089
Malaysia	3.2	5,367
Indonesia	3.0	6,229

Source: Hong Kong Tourism Board

Total tourism receipts

2010	HK\$212.2 billion
2011	HK\$263.1 billion

NTO arrivals target

Although the global economy is expected to be sluggish in the second half of this year, the Hong Kong Tourism Board is confident that its 2012 forecast of 44 million visitor arrivals is achievable. The forecast for the coming year will only be available in early 2013.

NTO overall budget

2010	HK\$351.8 million
2011	HK\$349.8 million

Hotel statistics

According to the Hong Kong Hotel Association, 2012 has produced strong performance for the hotel industry, which is likely to result in another record year.



Take in Hong Kong's livewire vibe at Causeway Bay

Hotel rates held up well between January and August 2012, while average hotel occupancy rate stood at a high of 89 per cent despite the three to four per cent increase in the city's room count from the previous year.

However, 2013 could prove challenging against a weak global economic backdrop and with more hotel rooms coming on stream. On the bright side, strong demand from Asia may compensate shortfalls. There may still be room for a small percentage increase in room rates in 2013.

Overall average occupancy rate

2011	89 per cent
2012 (January-August)	89 per cent

Overall average room rate

2011	HK\$1,356
2012 (January-August)	HK\$1,430

Projected number of rooms

2012	68,368 rooms
2013	71,448 rooms
2014	73,543 rooms

New hotels in 2012

- Tai O Heritage Hotel, 13 rooms
- Hotel Madera, 87 rooms
- L'hotel élan, 254 rooms
- Best Western Hotel Harbour View, 432 rooms
- Dorsett Kwun Tong, 361 rooms
- Ibis Hong Kong Sheung Wan, 550 rooms
- Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East, 359 rooms
- Holiday Inn Express Hong Kong Kowloon East, 300 rooms
- Auberge Discovery Bay, 325 rooms
- Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong, 240 rooms

New hotels 2013

- Dorsett Tsuen Wan, 570 rooms
- Penta Kowloon, San Po Kong, 720 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Thrill Mountain, Ocean Park is a carnival-themed area with six exhilarating rides, eight booth games, a variety of F&B outlets, as well as specially designed merchandise. Thrill Mountain is situated adjacent to the Summit Station of the Ocean Express. Ocean Park also welcomes private hire of its spaces for corporate events.

www.oceanpark.com.hk

Dialogue in Silence introduces the participant to a world of complete silence. The three-hour workshop is facilitated by professional deaf trainers, teaching participants to listen with their eyes, express themselves through their bodies and experience life with their hearts, in order to enhance one's communication skills.

dialogue-in-silence.hk

Grizzly Gulch and Mystic Point are new themed areas within Hong Kong Disneyland. Grizzly Gulch is based on an original story created exclusively for Hong Kong Disneyland and offers an immersive Wild West experience. Mystic Point will feature an eccentric world adventurer with a collection of exotic and mysterious international artefacts, and is scheduled to open in 2013.

www.hongkongdisneyland.com

Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, located on the runway of the former Kai Tak Airport, is right at the heart of Victoria Harbour. The first berth is expected to be operational in mid-2013.

www.tourism.gov.hk/english/ctkt/ctkt.html

Key events and festivals 2013

Chinese New Year Celebration (February 10)

www.discoverhongkong.com

40th Hong Kong Arts Festival (February 21-March 22)

www.hk.artsfestival.org

Hong Kong Sevens (March 22-24)

www.hksevens.com

Hong Kong Wine & Dine Month (November)

www.discoverhongkong.com

Essentials in the city

Quirky Modern Hong Kong has kept several traditional folk practices in its bosom, one of which is the interesting art of *da siu yan*, which means to hit a petty person. The petty person could refer to a trouble-maker or foe, or symbols of misfortune and unhappiness. This folk sorcery is a Cantonese custom and is often practiced by elderly ladies who are familiar with the ritual, which involves raining a string of poetic curses and beatings with an old shoe upon a paper figurine of the petty person. *Da siu yan* is often done in gloomy places. In Hong Kong,



Enter foodie heaven in Hong Kong

With more than 11,000 eateries, Hong Kong can be described as a dining district in itself. The more popular establishments are located in Lan Kwai Fong and SoHo in Central on Hong Kong Island as well as Knutsford Terrace in Tsimshatsui on Kowloon, where bars, clubs and nightlife come alive after dark.

Not forgetting the renowned seafood districts at Lei Yue Mun in Kowloon East, Sai Kung in the New Territories and on Lamma Island which provide visitors a good selection of restaurants and a lively al fresco dining ambience.

The Lin Heung Tea House established in 1926 is one of the oldest restaurants in Hong Kong where unpretentious diners contest for shabby seats at this celebrated tea house. This eatery makes no concessions to modernity or English speakers, so visitors should be prepared for pantomime or bring along a Cantonese-speaking friend.



the Canal Road Flyover between Causeway Bay and Wan Chai is a popular location.

Tipping policy While there is no need to tip, if service merits, a 'thank you' tip is welcome.

Shopping Head to the Lee Garden area in Causeway Bay for a dose of high street fashion, and Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui for luxury brands.

How to maximise two hours of free time Jump on a slow boat from Central to Cheung Chau for a seafood meal by the waterfront. The trip alone is a journey back in time as passengers sit outside in the sunshine, reading newspapers on the traditional boat.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Walk across the impressive terrain of Hong Kong Island from Causeway Bay to Stanley. The trail starts near the Parkview Complex and the two-hour hike brings you to the Stanley waterfront to enjoy a hard-earned pint of beer.

Impressive lunch for clients The Steakhouse Bar & Grill at the Hong Kong InterContinental Hotel serves the best steak in town, paired with a comprehensive salad bar guaranteed to delight any foodie. The restaurant also boasts an impressive view of the fragrant harbour.

Lunch on your own Head to one of the many Hong Kong-style cafes, known as *cha chaan teng*, for a quick and affordable meal. Chomp on local and Hong Kong-style Western dishes. Be ready to *dap toi* – share your table with strangers – during peak hours, but that's part of the fun of dining in a *cha chaan teng*.

Late nights Hong Kong is a late-night city, so after dinner venture out into the streets of Causeway Bay to shop, explore and find dessert stalls lurking right round the next corner.

Electricity, socket type European and British standards, 220V/50Hz

Visa requirements

Citizens of some 170 countries can visit Hong Kong visa-free for periods ranging from seven to 180 days.

For countries like Australia, Canada, the UK, Denmark, Japan and New Zealand, Hong Kong immigration allows their citizens to remain in Hong Kong for up to three months, visa-free.

Frequent visitors who hold valid passports and are eligible to come to Hong Kong without a visa or entry permit, may apply for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Travel Pass.

The Hong Kong Government and the Republic of Kazakhstan signed the Agreement on Mutual Exemption of Visa Requirements in May 2012, allowing passport holders from either country to stay in each other's territories for up to 14 days.

Important contacts

NTO

Hong Kong Tourism Board is a government-funded body under the control of the Tourism Commission. It has a worldwide network of 16 offices and representatives in five different markets.

Tel: (85-2) 2807-6543

www.discoverhongkong.com

Travel trade associations

Tourism Commission of the Government of the HKSAR

www.tourism.gov.hk

Quality Tourism Services Scheme

www.DiscoverHongKong.com/hk/qts

Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents

www.hata.org.hk

Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

www.tichk.org

Compiled by Prudence Lui
All information is correct at press time

India

General overview

Official name	Republic of India
Capital	New Delhi
Population	1.22 billion
Total area	3287260km ²
Currency	Indian rupee
Official Language	Hindi

*There are 22 national languages that are recognised by the Constitution of India, of which Hindi is the official language. Besides these, 844 different regional dialects are spoken in various parts of the country.



From January to June 2012, there were 3.2 million arrivals to India, a 7.4 per cent increase over the same period in 2011. This places India on track to surpass its 6.3 million visitors in 2011, a year that witnessed a growth rate of 8.9 per cent.

Total tourism revenue in 1H2012 hit US\$8.5 billion, an 8.2 per cent year-on-year improvement. In the full year before, India's tourism sector made US\$16.6 billion, up 16.7 per cent over 2010.

In terms of top tourism source markets, the US and UK maintained their first and second positions respectively in both 2010 and 2011. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Canada, Germany, France, Malaysia, Australia and Japan made up the rest of India's top 10 chart. All these markets registered year-on-year growth in footfalls in 2011. However, Australia slipped from its ninth position in 2010 to the last spot in 2011.

Climate

Average temperature	10°C to 15°C (winter) 32°C to 45°C (summer)
Average rainfall	150mm to 350mm (June to September)
Average humidity	25 per cent (April to May) 73 per cent (August)

Best time to visit

India is suitable for year-round visits, but the best time for travel is dependent on the itinerary and interests of the individual traveller.

Summer, from April to June, is best for visiting India's famous hill stations and mountains such as Nainital, Leh, Ladakh and Manali. It is also ideal for wildlife enthusiasts eager to visit India's national parks, as animals are active during the summer and seek out water sources in the heat of the day.

Alternatively, winter, from November to the start of April, is a good time to explore Goa's seashores and Rajasthan's cultural cities. The months of November to February are best for heading down to south India, where Kerala draws great interest.

However, travel within India during the monsoon period spanning June to September is not advised, as the rains can cause traffic disturbances.

Visitor arrival statistics

The first half of 2012 saw India welcoming 3.2 million tourists and reeling in US\$8.5 billion in tourist receipts.

In July 2012, the country registered 525,000 footfalls, a 2.1 per cent growth over the same month in 2011.

Tourism revenue in July 2012 stood at Rs83.9 billion (US\$1.5 billion), as compared to Rs71.2 billion in July 2011, a 17.9 per cent increase year-on-year.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	5.8 million, +11.8 per cent
2011	6.3 million, +8.9 per cent
2012 (Jan to June)	3.2 million, +7.4 per cent

Total tourism receipts

2010	US\$14.2 billion, +27.5 per cent
2011	US\$16.6 billion, +16.7 per cent
2012 (Jan to June)	US\$8.5 billion, +8.2 per cent

Source: Ministry of Tourism

Top 10 source markets 2010

Countries	Arrivals
US	931,292
UK	759,494
Bangladesh	431,962
Sri Lanka	266,515
Canada	242,372
Germany	227,720
France	225,232
Malaysia	179,077
Australia	169,647
Japan	168,019

Source: Ministry of Tourism

Top 10 source markets 2011

Countries	Arrivals (approximates)
US	1,004,000
UK	791,000
Bangladesh	399,000
Sri Lanka	305,000
Canada	255,000
Germany	253,000
France	237,000
Malaysia	218,000
Japan	189,000
Australia	186,000

Source: Ministry of Tourism

Hotel statistics

According to Indian ratings agency ICRA, the country's hotel industry will end 2011-2012 on a weaker note, with subdued pricing power eroding margins. Although some revival in operational metrics was witnessed during late 2010-2011, the industry lacked the pricing power to break out of its stagnancy.

According to the recent *Indian Hospitality Story 2012 & Beyond* report by the Confederation of Indian Industry and Cushman & Wakefield, economy to upscale hotels within the organised hospitality sector in India are more profitable due to lower per key costs, as compared to the upper upscale and luxury category hotels.

In 2011, the average occupancy of hotels in India was 63 per cent, while average room rate was Rs4,500. India's top cities – Bengaluru, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai – witnessed an average occupancy of 66 per cent and an average room rate of Rs5,700 in the same year.

In 1H2012, average room rates of these cities dipped to Rs5,200 as they strategised as to how to moderate their occupancy levels of 59 per cent in the slow months.

Room inventory by city/area

Cities/area	No. of rooms	Projected rooms over four to five years
Delhi NCR	22,931	17,550
Mumbai	18,500	10,200
Bengaluru	16,000	9,400
Hyderabad	9,900	3,719

Source: Cushman & Wakefield

New hotels in 2012

Delhi NCR

- DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Gurgaon-New Delhi NCR, 184 rooms
- Pullman Gurgaon Central Park, 285 rooms
- Formule 1 Greater Noida, 114 rooms
- Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort, 170 rooms
- Nidra Delhi, 70 rooms
- Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini, 183 rooms
- Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Paschim Vihar, 178 rooms
- Fortune Park Boulevard, New Delhi, 34 rooms
- Citrus Gurgaon Central, 46 rooms
- Central Blue Stone, Gurgaon, 46 rooms
- Kempinski Ambience Hotel Delhi, 450 rooms
- GLOW Greater Noida, 220 rooms

Mumbai

- Ginger Mumbai, 116 rooms
- Shangri-La Hotel, Mumbai, 368 rooms, 31 suites
- Ibis Navi Mumbai, 196 rooms

Chennai

- Park Hyatt Chennai, 201 rooms
- The Leela Palace Chennai, 326 rooms
- ITC Grand Chola Chennai, 600 rooms

New hotels in 2013

- Sheraton Amritsar Hotel, 180 rooms
- The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore, 250 rooms
- Ibis Delhi Airport, 464 rooms
- Sheraton Mysore Hotel, 220 rooms

- Howard Johnson Bengaluru, 115 rooms
- Lemon Tree Premier, Connaught Road, Pune, 238 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Worlds of Wonder is a theme park located in the heart of Noida on a major arterial route, and spread over 59 hectares. North India's biggest man-made lake at 1.4 hectares is situated within its premises, and was opened to the public in September.

The theme park will launch Calypso Bay, pegged as Asia's biggest water park, by March 2013. Attractions such as a 5D cinema, a skating arena and go-karting are also in the pipeline.

www.worldsof wonder.in

The Grand Venice (GV) will be India's first Venetian-themed family leisure spot when it opens by end-2012. Located in Delhi NCR beside the recently-opened Yamuna Expressway, the destination is easily accessed not just from Delhi NCR but also from the adjoining Agra, Aligarh and Lucknow. When completed, GV will comprise a shopping centre, amusement arcades, a luxury hotel, offices and India's first public aquarium, The Blue Planet.

www.thevenezia.com

Kempinski Ambience Hotel Delhi threw open its doors in November this year. Positioned as the biggest banqueting facility in Delhi, Kempinski has an inventory of 450 rooms and event space for 2,000-3,000 people. It also boasts an exclusive driveway and entrances, along with a dedicated catering and events team. The hotel aims to have MICE drive 70 per cent of its business.

www.kempinski.com

The Leela Palace Noida is coming to town, and will be situated in one of the five towers of Supernova, India's tallest and largest mixed-used development in Sector 94, Noida.

Supertech Limited and The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts have signed an MoU for the joint development of the property, with Supertech constructing and The Leela operating and managing it. The hotel will be completed approximately 48 months after commencement.

The Leela Palace Noida will comprise 250 exquisitely appointed guestrooms and suites, restaurants, lounges, banquet facilities, an internationally renowned spa and a modern fitness centre.

www.theleela.com

Key events and festivals 2013

Rann Utsav (December 15, 2012 - January 31, 2013)

www.gujarattourism.com

Maha Kumbh Mela (January 27 - February 25)

www.kumbhamela.net/maha-kumbh-mela.html

Jaipur Literature Festival (January 24-28)

www.jaipur literature festival.org

Surajkund Crafts Mela (February 1-15)

www.haryanaturism.gov.in

Goa Carnival (February 9-12)

www.carnivalgoa.com

Sindhu Darshan Festival (June 1-3)

www.sindhudarshan.com

Rajgir Dance Festival (October 4-26)

www.bstdc.bih.nic.in

Essentials in the city

Food Delhi must be a gourmand's heaven, as it features a variety of cuisines from different parts of India. Keep an eye out for specialities from the north-west frontier, such as Mughlai cuisine, which is evolved from the imperial kitchens of the Mughal Empire, and the ever popular Pobjabi cuisine.

Quirky Indians are extremely pleased when they find foreigners greeting them in their own tongue. Picking up a bit of the local language will help one develop a rapport with the natives.

Tipping policy Tipping is expected in Indian restaurants. However, the tip amount depends on the quality and the scale of the restaurant. Seven to 10 per cent of the total bill is a good gauge.



Enjoy camel rides along the coast of Gujarat

DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

DIETHELM TRAVEL

Chow down in Lucknow's colony of chefs



Lucknow city was once known as Awadh, and ruled by Nawabs who left a lasting legacy in many areas including cuisine.

In Bawarchi Tola, which means colony of chefs, the history of Lucknow can be experienced through freshly-cooked dishes that are prepared at numerous roadside eateries. Lucknowites believe that food should be rich and nutritious, and this philosophy is demonstrated through the choice of ingredients such as mutton, *paneer* (cheese), cardamom, saffron and other pungent spices.

Some eateries in the district deserve special mention. Mobeen's Pasanda, for one, marinates and coal-roasts thin lamb slivers, serving them with *sheermal*, bread with saffron.

Tundey Kebab sells minced meat that has been shallow-fried with 160 spices, complemented with *roomali roti*, a thin bread, on the side.

For the curry lovers, Raheem's Nihari Gosht dishes out special baked *kulcha* bread and lamb chunks in curry.

For dessert, Chanakya's Kulfi offers Indian ice cream, which is frozen milk with cardamom, saffron and dry fruits.

Shopping Janpath Market at Connaught Place is where the latest and most trendy fashion apparel can be found, and is often flooded with both locals and foreigners. Prices are reasonable, although bargaining is a must. Customers should aim to bargain prices down to 50 per cent of the amount quoted by a vendor.

How to maximise two hours of free time Operated by Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation, Delhi Haat is an open air area with stalls selling crafts from all over India. It is a perfect way to acquaint the traveller with the diversity of cultural traditions within the country.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Built in the 17th century, Chandni Chowk is now home to a maze of shops that

specialise in specific products. Shops selling the same products are clustered along specific lanes, making it easier for shoppers to zoom in to what they require. For instance, head to Katra Neel for fabrics and Balli Mara for gold jewellery.

Within walking distance are also a number of temples, bazaars and a mosque, which should satiate the traveller's cultural curiosity.

Impressive lunch for clients The Oberoi, New Delhi is home to Threesixty°, an all-day restaurant that features one of the best global buffet spreads in the city. It boasts sushi counters, a yakitori grill, a wood-fired oven and a tandoor. Threesixty° also has a private dining area which can accommodate up to 20 guests.

Lunch on your own Shopping malls will have a number of local restaurants, but for travellers who want something familiar as a break from the exotic, international fast food chains McDonalds and KFC are also easily found.

Late nights Popular venues in Connaught Place, Noida and Gurgaon offer night owls a wide range of late night hang outs.

Electricity Single phase of 230V. Obtaining a universal adapter is recommended.

Visa requirements

All foreign nationals entering India are required to possess international travel documents in the form of a national passport with a valid visa from an Indian mission or post abroad.

Visa on arrival is available for citizens of Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar.

Important contacts

NTO

The Ministry of Tourism has 14 overseas tourism offices, through which it endeavours to promote various Indian tourism products and to increase India's share of the global tourism market.

New Delhi office
Tel: (91-11) 2332-0342

Fax: (91-11) 2332-0109

www.tourism.gov.in

Travel trade associations

Travel Agents Association of India

www.travelagentsofindia.com

Indian Association of Tour Operators

www.iato.in

Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India

www.adtoi.in

Travel Agents Federation of India

www.tafionline.com

Compiled by Rohit Kaul

All information is correct at press time

Indonesia

General overview

Official name	Republic of Indonesia
Capital	Jakarta
Population	240 million
Total area	1.9 million km ²
Currency	Rupiah
Official Language	Bahasa Indonesia



Indonesia recorded 5.2 million tourists in the first eight months of 2012, up from five million during the same period last year.

Bali continues to be the darling of visitors, but other destinations such as Lombok, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua are gaining in popularity, especially for special interest tours like diving.

Improved air accessibility to Indonesia has been credited, among other factors, for the rise in arrivals. Budget flights connecting Semarang in Central Java with the commercial hubs of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore have boosted inbound incentive business, as well as special interest tours to the Karimunjawa islands.

Increased air services to Sumatra, such as Mandala Airlines' Medan-Singapore flights, have also encouraged greater interest from regional travellers.

Climate

Average temperature	22°C to 35°C
Average rainfall	2,160mm to 3,360mm
Average humidity	70 to 80 per cent

Best time to visit

In terms of weather, Indonesia is pleasant for year-round visits. However, the peak travel seasons hit Bali and several popular tourist destinations in the country from June to August, and December to early-January.

Having said that, growing domestic travel and increased accessibility to secondary destinations have made seasonality less distinct. Jogjakarta, Bandung, Lombok and Medan can be pretty packed during long weekends.

As such, it is advisable to check with local hotels and/or destination partners on the best dates to visit or organise events.

Visitor arrivals statistics

China was a stellar source market for Indonesia during the first eight months of 2012. Between January and August, mainland Chinese arrivals numbered 412,698, 25 per cent more than what was seen during the same period in 2011.

Stronger mainland Chinese arrivals were not only registered in major Indonesian destinations like Jakarta and Bali, but also elsewhere such as Batam and Bintan.

This is good news to the Indonesian tourism authorities, as China has been identified as one of the main source markets to be tapped for leisure, MICE and special interest footfalls.

Meanwhile, Singapore and Malaysia continue to rank first and second place in terms of arrival numbers. There

was, however, a slight decline in Singapore arrivals during the first eight months of this year – from 796,273 in 2011 to 788,249 in 2012.

Australia retained its position as the third largest source for Indonesia, but for the first time in more than five years the market showed only a single-digit growth of 2.7 per cent. Tourism players blamed aggressive promotions undertaken by Thailand for drawing away Australian attention, as well as the strong Australian dollar for making longhaul travel more affordable.

While latest tourism revenue is unavailable, Australia and Singapore were the top spenders in Indonesia in 2011, shelling out US\$1.5 billion and US\$1.1 billion respectively.

Average length of stay

	2010	2011
Singapore	4.67	4.44
Malaysia	5.03	5.23
Australia	10.56	9.47
China	5.98	6.01
Japan	6.14	6.37
Korea Republic	5.93	5.93
US	10.55	10.98
UK	11.76	10.26
Taiwan	5.84	5.63
India	8.68	7.90

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy

Arrivals from top 10 source markets

	2010	2011	2012*
Singapore	721,403	796,273	788,248
Malaysia	709,808	659,180	704,644
Australia	459,562	565,232	580,602
China	294,732	328,743	412,698
Japan	270,153	270,513	283,843
South Korea	193,247	200,565	207,162
US	115,291	125,891	132,258
UK	125,879	128,098	131,741
Taiwan	138,283	138,194	122,482
India	94,786	106,541	115,219

Source: Ministry Of Tourism And Creative Economy

*2012 data covers only the months of January to August

Revenue from top 10 source markets (in millions of USD)

	2010	2011
Singapore	927.97	1,054.21
Malaysia	864.34	930.85
Australia	1,171.87	1,502.10
China	433.38	520.61
Japan	409.87	419.80
Korea Republic	251.05	295.82
US	252.23	317.28
UK	277.14	269.61
Taiwan	184.76	188.15
India	147.29	175.13

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Total tourism arrivals (January to August)

2010	4.6 million
2011	5.0 million
2012	5.2 million

Overall tourism receipts

2010	US\$7.6 billion
2011	US\$8.5 billion
2012	US\$9.0 billion (Targeted)

NTO targets

The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has set a target of nine million arrivals and US\$10.4 billion in tourism revenue for 2013.

Such targets are not far-fetched, as the country's economy is on the upswing, riding on a wave of strong investments in various sectors including tourism. Growing low-cost carrier networks that connect Indonesia's secondary cities with regional destinations are also a catalyst, as they provide better accessibility to the country.

The tourism authority will focus on intensifying marketing efforts in 16 major markets and on developing products within the country.

Hotel statistics

Hotel developments are continuing across major destinations in Indonesia such as Bali, Jakarta, Bandung and Bintan, as well as secondary and tertiary locations.

Locations such as Garut and Tasikmalaya in West Java, Luwuk in Central Sulawesi and Lampung are seeing an influx of properties managed by major hotel companies such as Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts, Aston International, Accor and Dafam Hotel Management.

While a number of upmarket properties such as The Mulia, Mulia Resort & Villas in Nusa Dua Bali, Jumeirah Bali in Jimbaran and Alila Villas Bintan are coming on stream, economy and budget hotels are emerging most rapidly, catering mostly to the regional and domestic market.

Star-rated hotel occupancy

	Jan-Sep 2012	Jan-Sep 2011
Jakarta	56.34	56.56
Bali	60.91	65.32
West Java	49.14	48.87
Jogjakarta	52.23	48.13

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy

New hotels 2012**BALI**

- The Mulia, Mulia Resort & Villas, 637 rooms and suites, 108 villas
- Swiss-Belhotel Rainforest, 162 rooms
- Mercure Bali Nusa Dua, 210 rooms
- Ibis Bali Kuta, 156 rooms
- Eden Hotel Kuta, 278 rooms
- Harris Hotel Sunset Road, 185 rooms
- Pop! Hotel Kuta Beach, 223 rooms
- Quest Hotel Tuban, 95 rooms
- 100 Sunset 2 Hotel, 101 rooms
- Favehotel Umalas, 121 rooms

JAKARTA

- Keraton at The Plaza, 140 rooms
- Pop! Hotel Airport, 150 rooms
- Mercure Jakarta Simatupang, 232 rooms

BATAM

- Swiss-Belhotel Harbour Bay, 177 rooms

LOMBOK

- Hotel Santika Mataram, 123 rooms

JOGJAKARTA

- Grand Dafam MM Yogyakarta, 134 rooms

BANDUNG

- Trans Luxury Hotel, 282 rooms
- Ibis Bandung Trans Studio, 606 rooms
- Vio Pasteur, 64 rooms

New hotels 2013**BALI**

- Harris Hotel Bukit Jimbaran, 242 rooms
- Pop! Hotel Sanur, 120 rooms
- Swiss-Belhotel Watu Jimbar, 285 rooms
- The Alana Vasanti, 121 rooms
- Amaris Pratama Nusa Dua, 120 rooms

JAKARTA

- Grand Mercure Maha Cipta Jakarta Harmoni, 487 rooms
- Ibis Styles Jakarta Thamrin, 196 rooms
- Pop! Hotel Tebet, 147 rooms

BINTAN

- Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bintan, 190 rooms

JOGJAKARTA

- Pop! Hotel Gedongan Lor, 103 rooms
- Ibis Budget Yogyakarta, 186 rooms
- The Alana Yogyakarta, 269 rooms

LUWUK, CENTRAL SULAWESI

- Aston Luwuk Hotel & Convention Center, 90 rooms
- Hotel Dafam Istana Luwuk, 62 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Bintan Lagoon Resort now offers a direct ferry service between Singapore's Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal and a new private immigration and ferry terminal on its beachfront. Two high-speed 266-seat ferries have been deployed to service the 70-minute journey. www.bintanlagoon.com

Kereta Api Pariwisata, a subsidiary of state-owned train company KAI, has launched train travel programmes across Java. Using KAI's scheduled train network, tourists are offered the choice of travelling in a normal cabin or chartering one of the three luxury compartments which can seat 19 to 22 people. The top-end option comes with meeting facilities, a bar, a karaoke set, and a VVIP room. All train tours start off in Jakarta. Options include a three-day/two-night tour to Jogjakarta, a one-day city tour around Cirebon, and a four-day/three-night tour covering Malang, Batu and Bromo. Accommodation, tours and land transfers are provided in these destinations. www.indorailtour.com

Key events and festivals 2013

Jakarta International Java Jazz Festival (March 1-3)
www.javajazzfestival.com/2013

Semarang Night Carnival (April 27)
www.central-java-tourism.com

Essentials in the city – Jakarta

Food Try *rujak juhi*, a salad of noodles, boiled potatoes,



cucumber and lettuce, drenched in a sweet and sour peanut sauce and with *juhi* (shredded salted octopus) sprinkled on top.

Tippling policy Five to 10 per cent of the bill is suitable when no service charge is levied.

Shopping Take your pick of top quality Indonesian products in the Mall of Indonesia in Jakarta.

How to maximise two hours of free time Bearing in mind Jakarta's unpredictable traffic, it is best to spend your free time near your hotel. Visit a museum, relax in a day spa, or find a nice coffee shop round the corner where you can enjoy a variety of coffee available in the country.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Head to Museum Tekstil Jakarta (or Jakarta Textile Museum) for a lesson on how to make your own piece of batik. Further the handicraft experience with a ceramic workshop at Rumah Tanah Baru, an hour or so by car from Jakarta. Rumah Tanah Baru also boasts scenic landscapes, beautiful traditional architecture, as well as a small number of guesthouses.

Impressive lunch for clients Kembang Goela or Merah Delima, both in the capital city, are good choices. They serve authentic Indonesian cuisine in elegant settings.

Lunch on your own Places such as Central Park, Plaza Indonesia EX and Grand Indonesia Shopping Town house a number of cafes and restaurants that offer a comfortable ambience for a quiet lunch.

Late nights Pizza e Birra and Paulaner Brauhaus are popular watering holes in Jakarta, frequented by the young, urban crowd.

Electricity Two-pin (round) plug.

Visa requirements

Every visitor must possess a passport which is valid for at least six months at the time of arrival.

Non-extendable visa-free entry to Indonesia for 30 days is available to passport holders of Brunei, Cambodia, Chile, Equador, Hong Kong SAR, Laos PRD, Macao SAR, Malaysia, Morocco, Myanmar, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Visa on arrivals (VOA) are offered to 63 nationalities and can be obtained upon a traveller's arrival at major airports in Indonesia. The visa costs US\$25 for 30 days and is extendible up to another 30 days.

Travellers who are entitled to VOA must be citizens of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Algeria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Egypt, Fiji, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Netherlands, Oman, Panama, China, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Rumania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Suriname, Switzerland, Sweden, Taiwan, Tunisia, Timor Leste, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the UK and the US.

Important contacts**NTO**

Directorate General of Marketing is part of the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. It

is spearheaded by Sapta Nirwandar, who is also deputy minister of tourism and creative economy. The NTO reports to the minister of tourism and creative economy.

The ministry has 12 Visit Indonesia Tourism Officers (VITO) in Australia, China, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, the UAE, the Netherlands, and Russia. There are plans to appoint one more VITO in China in 2013.

Leisure

Nia Niscaya
Tel: (62-21) 383-8309
Fax: (62-21) 386-0628
nia_niscaya@yahoo.com

MICE

Rizki Handayani
Tel: (62-21) 383-8300
Fax: (62-21) 344-9268
www.budpar.go.id

Travel trade associations

Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies has members comprising wholesalers, inbound, outbound travel consultants and ticketing agents. The association is under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Established in 1970, it has chapters in the country's 33 provinces. www.astindo.org

Indonesia Ticketing Agents Association is under the auspices of the Ministry of Transportation. It has chapters in Jakarta, Bali, Jogjakarta, West Java, East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, East Kalimantan, Aceh, North Maluku and Maluku provinces. Founded in 1999, the association is still expanding chapters and is an active member of the Federation of Asean Travel Association.

Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association counts hotels, owner companies, restaurants and hotel institutes as its members. It was founded in 1969 and has more than 10,000 members around Indonesia today. It is an active member of the ASEAN Hotel and Restaurant Association and the ASEAN Tourism Association. www.ihra.co.id

Indonesia Congress and Convention Association was founded in 1998 for MICE stakeholders in Indonesia. It now has 12 chapters in Indonesia and 300 members. It is also a member of the Asian Federation of Exhibition & Convention Associations.

Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association was established in 1990. This association has more than 360 active members across Indonesia, comprising exhibition organisers, freight forwarders, stand contractors, venue owners and suppliers. www.icca.or.id

Indonesia National Air Carriers Association is a trade association for the Indonesian airline industry. Founded in 1970, it now counts 39 scheduled and chartered airlines as its members. www.inaca.org

Compiled by Mimi Hudoyo
All information is correct at press time

Laos

General overview

Official name	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Capital	Vientiane
Population	6.8 million
Total area	238,800km ²
Currency	Lao kip (US dollar and Thai baht accepted)
Official language	Lao



Visit Laos Year 2012 has been a success so far. Tourist arrivals in 1H2012 increased 16.9 per cent compared to the same period last year, primarily fuelled by arrivals from neighbouring countries and China. Improved infrastructure between Laos and Thailand, including bridge links and road networks, have led to a boom in arrivals from the country's top source market. The fourth Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge in Chiang Rai province, slated for completion in 2013, is expected to bring even more Thais to Laos. Meanwhile, the launch of regular flights between Vietnamese city Danang and Lao's Pakse and Savannakhet is also set to boost arrivals from Vietnam.

By end of 2012, Lao Airlines will commence services to Seoul and Busan in South Korea and Guangzhou in China, as well as launch a new route to connect Vientiane, Savannakhet, Pakse and Danang.

Climate

Average temperature	28°C
Average rainfall	1,500mm to 2,000mm in Vientiane 1,000mm to 1,500mm in northern provinces 3,000mm in southern provinces
Average humidity	75 to 85 per cent

Best time to visit

The best time to visit is from October to March when weather conditions are most favourable, although prices of accommodation and tour products and services may be higher compared to other times of the year. May to September are wet from monsoon rains, but hotels and tour operators tend to offer cut-price deals and discount rates. Temperatures drop in the north of the country, especially in the mountainous regions, from November to February, but gradually climb and are extremely comfortable from May through July.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Laos experienced tourist arrivals in excess of two million for the first time in 2009, and has since welcomed year-on-year increases of 25 and 8.3 per cent in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

In the first six months of 2012, the country welcomed 1,736,655 visitors – a year-on-year increase of 16.9 per cent – primarily hailing from neighbouring countries.

According to official arrival statistics for January to July, as supplied by the Lao Tourism Development Department, Thailand contributed the largest share of tourists to Laos. There were 1,026,979 Thai tourists.

Vietnam follows in second place, contributing 355,212 travellers to Laos.

The Lao Tourism Development Department predicts arrival numbers for the whole of 2012 to register a 25 per cent increase over 2011 and expects tourist receipts to grow by 11.3 per cent year-on-year to US\$452 million in 2012.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	2,513,028, +25 per cent
2011	2,723,564, +8.3 per cent
2012 (January to June)	1,736,655, +16.9 per cent
2012 (Estimated)	3,400,000, +25 per cent

Total tourism receipts

2010	US\$381.6 million
2011	US\$406.2 million
2012 (Estimated)	US\$452 million

Source: Lao Tourism Development Department

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals
Thailand	1,579,941
Vietnam	561,586
China	150,791
US	50,092
France	44,399

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Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals
Japan	37,883
UK	35,622
South Korea	34,707
Australia	31,874
Germany	21,280

Source: Lao Tourism Development Department

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to July)

Countries	Arrivals
Thailand	1,026,979
Vietnam	355,212
China	107,032
South Korea	27,931
US	27,927
France	23,892
Japan	19,889
UK	19,018
Australia	18,487
Germany	11,263

Source: Lao Tourism Development Department

Arrivals targets for 2013

Buoyed by the successful *Visit Laos 2012* campaign, the Lao Tourism Development Department expects arrivals in 2013 to reach 3,160,234, providing an estimated US\$476 million in revenue.

Laos will also host the rotating ASEAN Tourism Forum in 2013 which will see more than 1,600 delegates, 800 ASEAN exhibitors and many tourism officials and delegates in attendance. The event is expected to boost arrivals and further cement Laos' position on the map.

Although the country has experienced a small increase in high-end accommodation, the number of luxury visitor arrivals is likely to remain low.

Hotel statistics

A variety of new hotel projects have emerged throughout the country. The majority of new establishments have been constructed in Vientiane, some of which were in preparation for the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting which took place on November 5-6, 2012.

One of the most significant soft-openings was the US\$50 million landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel, which accommodated some of the delegates and officials attending the meeting. The hotel is now closed again, and is expected to be fully completed later in 2013.

Other completed hotel developments include the 26-room Hotel Dhavara and the 29-room Mandala Boutique Hotel.

Luang Prabang continues to experience a steady rise in mid-range accommodation options, including the Le Sen Hotel and the Sanctuary Hotel, while Pakse recently welcomed the launch of the Athena Hotel.

As Laos continues to push its ecotourism agenda as part of the *Visit Laos 2012* programme, a variety of ecolodges and homesteads are expected to emerge throughout the country over the next 12 months.

Overall number of rooms

	2010	2011
Vientiane		
Total rooms	8,512	10,948
Hotels (more than 15 rooms)	6,011	7,468
Guesthouses (less than 15 rooms)	2,501	3,480
Luang Prabang		
Total rooms	2,817	3,241
Hotels (more than 15 rooms)	1,021	1,244
Guesthouses (less than 15 rooms)	1,796	1,997
Pakse & Champasak (Total rooms)		
Total rooms	2,705	3,250

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Overall number of rooms

	2010	2011
Hotels (more than 15 rooms)	1,365	1,773
Guesthouses (less than 15 rooms)	1,340	1,477
Luang Namtha (Total rooms)	944	1,086
Xieng Khouang Total rooms	992	492
Savannakhet Total rooms	2,302	2,702
Khammouane Total rooms	992	1,230
Oudomxay Total rooms	1,158	1,124

Source: Lao National Tourism Administration

New hotels in 2012

VIENTIANE

- Dhavara Hotel, 26 rooms
- Mandala Boutique Hotel, 29 rooms

LUANG PRABANG

- Le Sen Hotel, 19 rooms
- Sanctuary Hotel, 29 rooms

PAKSE

- Athena Hotel, 21 rooms

New hotels in 2013

VIENTIANE

- Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel, 216 rooms
- Ibis Hotel Vientiane, 64 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Wattay International Airport, Laos' busiest airport, completed an upgrade in October, giving it the capacity to accommodate up to 25 aircrafts. Improvements were also made to the infrastructure leading to the international airport, including roads and electrical systems.

Lao International Convention Center opened in October and was used as the main venue for the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting. Constructed in less than a year, the centre is strategically located in Vientiane and is capable of accommodating 3,000 people.

Kao Rao Cave in Luang Namtha province is a new attraction. Officially opened in January 2012, Kao Rao Cave contains one of the longest unmapped labyrinths in the the country's north-east. Tourists have flocked to the cave since its opening.

Lao Central Airlines, the country's first private airline, commenced operations in 2012. Based in Vientiane, it debuted with a thrice-weekly direct service to Bangkok, and now also operates daily flights between the capital city and Luang Prabang.

Elephant Conservation Center in Sayabouly, some two hours from Luang Prabang, opened in January and hosted the annual Lao Elephant Festival the following month. Accommodation is available at the centre, in addition to trekking and numerous other activities that visitors can participate in.

Fifth Laos-Thailand Friendship Bridge will soon join a collection of bridges that connect the two countries. It is slated for construction in 2013. The bridge, which will connect the Lao province of Bolikhamxai and Thailand's Bung Kan province, is expected to be completed in the next few years.

Key events and festivals 2013

ASEAN Tourism Forum 2013 (January 17-24)

To be held at the International Convention Center in Vientiane, the ASEAN Tourism Forum brings together tourism officials and delegates from ASEAN nations. Besides raising the profile of the ASEAN region as a tourist destination, the event is expected to boost regional and global arrivals to Laos.

Wat Phu Festival (February 24-25)

Held on the evening of the third full moon of the lunar



Enjoy a slower pace in Laos and watch the fisherman work

calendar, locals and curious tourists would congregate at the ruins of the 11th century Khmer temple complex in Champasak. Celebrations include buffalo fights, elephant racing and traditional music and dance performances.

Boun Pi Mai (April 13-15)

Similar to the Thai new year festival Songkran, Boun Pi Mai is a colourful and wet welcome to the Buddhist new year. Parties tend to run late into the evening, and revelers often end up completely soaked through.

Visakha Puja (May 24) and Boun Bang Fai

Visakha Puja is a temple festival celebrating the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha. Locals also celebrate the pre-Buddhist rain festival Boun Bang Fai in May, which sees communities organise dances, parties and the highly anticipated launches of homemade rockets. Each village has their own date for these rocket festivals.

Boun Ok Phansa and Boat Racing Festival (sometime in October)

To commemorate the end of the three-month Buddhist lent, offerings are made at the temples in the morning, while countless candlelit processions fill the capital city and flower-adorned floats are set adrift along the Mekong River. The renowned boat races are held on the river, departing Vientiane, Savannakhet and Champasak the following day.

Essentials in the city – Vientiane

Food Vientiane offers a variety of food options from

street vendors to an emerging array of higher-end eateries. Le Silapa, Aria Mixay and the L'adresse de Tinay are popular restaurants, particularly for international cuisine.

Quirky Climb to the top of the Patuxay Victory Monument – the Arc de Triomphe of the capital city – and experience downtown Vientiane from a different perspective. Apparently constructed from cement donated by the US to construct an airport, the popular sight has attained the nickname 'the Vertical Runway'.

Tipping policy Tipping is not customary, however, small notes received as change is appreciated. Most upscale restaurants include a service charge (usually 10 per cent) in the bill.

Shopping Located right on the Mekong riverfront in Chao Anou Park, the intriguing Night Market offers lively market stalls and authentic local food. It is usually open daily from 17.00 to 22.00.

How to maximise two hours of free time Pull on a pair of comfortable walking shoes and take a leisurely trek from downtown Vientiane to Wat Sok Pa Louang. Enjoy the sights along the way, and in 45 minutes, your body will be ready for a soak in a herbal sauna and a traditional massage. Wat Sok Pa Louang is open from 13.00 to 20.00, and massages cost around US\$5.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Friday afternoons are usually referred to as extended Saturdays by local office workers. Numerous beer gardens open early and serve up dishes that go well with Beer Lao.

Impressive lunch for clients Conveniently located in central Vientiane's Namphou Square, the Mix Restaurant is a chic and casual eatery, serving up quality dishes at reasonable prices. Ideal for both a quick coffee date and a more formal affair, the Mix Restaurant has quickly become one of the capital's most reputable establishments. Come back in the evening for excellent live music in the Beer Garden outside of the restaurant, or simply to enjoy the bustling atmosphere around the fountain or on the rooftop.

Lunch on your own With a variety of bagels, sandwiches, salads, pizzas, lasagna, cakes and cookies, the renowned JOMA Cafe is an ideal establishment to catch a light lunch. There is a street terrace outside and free Wi-Fi Internet connection is offered to patrons.

Late night Wine 95 is a chic wine bar and cocktail joint which regularly hosts jazz nights and other live music events. The establishment stays open late most nights and is well known for its vibrant atmosphere and regularly changing selection of quality wines.

Electricity A single phase voltage of 220V and a frequency of 50Hz, primarily two-pin.

Visa requirements

A passport valid for at least six months and a visa are required for most foreigners entering Laos. Visas cost from US\$20 to US\$42, depending on government agreements, and can be obtained at embassies, consulates or designated tour companies. Visas-on-arrival for most countries cost US\$30 to US\$40 and can be obtained at Wattay, Luang Prabang and Pakse international airports, as well as at major overland gateways.

Visa exemptions apply to visitors from ASEAN member nations, as well as Japan, Russia, Mongolia, Switzerland and Luxembourg for stays of maximum 15 days. Visa extensions are available at US\$2 per day at immigration headquarters or via designated tour operators at major destinations for an additional fee.

Important contacts

NTO

Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
www.tourismloos.org

Travel trade associations

The Lao Association of Travel Agents
www.latalaos.org

Compiled by Timothy France
All information is correct at press time



Step into the shoes of a rice farmer in Luang Prabang

Rice is an important staple food for many people across the globe, and forms the basis of many cuisines in different cultures.

The Living Land Organic Farm just outside of Luang Prabang has put together a hands-on activity which takes the visitor through all the steps involved in the planting and harvesting of this important grain. It is an educational experience suitable for families and travellers of all ages.



In this programme, participants become a rice farmer for half a day, learning how to select seeds, sow

and harvest the crop. They will even get a chance to plough the fields alongside the farm's friendly water buffaloes.

After a morning of fun and hard work, interim farmers are invited to indulge and tantalise their tastebuds with a memorable rice-tasting session.

Macau

General overview

Official name	Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
Capital	Macau
Population	544,200 (estimate)
Total area	29.2km ²
Currency	Pataca
Official languages	Cantonese, Portuguese



China, Hong Kong and Taiwan continue to be the top three visitor generating markets for Macau, although the latter two demonstrated a downward trend in the first eight months of 2012. China not only contributes the largest number of arrivals, its travellers are top spenders too.

Markets such as Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam showed double-digit increase in terms of arrival, while longhaul markets such as Europe indicated stable growth.

As a small port city, Macau's tourism challenge continues to be the length of stay taken by visitors, which stood at an average of 1.39 days between January and August 2012.

Climate

Average temperature	20.5°C to 25.4°C
Average rainfall	2,122.9mm
Average humidity	82.5 per cent

Best time to visit

The best time to visit Macau is in autumn (October and December) and spring (March to May), when temperatures are mild. Winters can be fresh, with cold northern winds sweeping down from mainland China.

Visitor arrivals statistics

The territory demonstrated a slower growth rate in the first eight months of 2012 due to the global economic turmoil.

Visitor arrivals stood at 18.7 million for the period, a year-on-year growth of 1.1 per cent. More than 11.2 million of these visitors were from China, up 6.6 per cent compared to the first eight months of 2011.

New tourism facilities such as the Sands Cotai Central integrated resort, which opened two of its three hotels in April 2012 and the last property in September, are expected to attract a greater number of new and repeat visitors to Macau. Sands Cotai Central's extensive collection of meeting and convention space is also expected to strengthen Macau's position as a MICE destination.

The Macau Government Tourist Office expects China arrivals to continue its upward trend, following the extension of the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) on September 1. With the revised policy, non-permanent residents in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen are allowed to apply for Macau and Hong Kong entry permits in the cities they are residing instead of returning to their native hometowns for the application.

Average length of stay of selected source markets

Countries	2010	2011	2012*
China	1.32	1.32	2.0
Hong Kong	1.37	1.37	1.4
Taiwan	1.83	1.83	1.9
Japan	1.82	1.87	1.6
India	1.81	1.9	1.8
Malaysia	1.69	1.57	1.6
Korea	1.86	1.58	1.5
USA & Canada	2.98	3.1	NA
Europe	3.43	2.83	2.0
Australia & New Zealand	3.01	2.83	NA

Source: Macau Government Tourist Office

*2012 data covers only the months of January to August

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	%Change
China	16,162,747	+22.2
Hong Kong	7,582,923	+1.6
Taiwan	1,215,162	-6.0
Korea	398,807	+20.2
Japan	396,023	-4.2
Malaysia	324,509	-4.0
Singapore	280,602	+9.1
Philippines	268,710	+8.5
Indonesia	220,423	+5.7
Thailand	196,375	-7.6

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	11,202,643	6.6
Hong Kong	4,790,983	-7.8
Taiwan	719,917	-14.6
Korea	298,850	8.3
Japan	283,771	14.6
Philippines	186,305	10.4
Malaysia	183,866	-6.9
Indonesia	145,334	2.3
Thailand	142,748	4.2
Singapore	126,242	-23.2

Total tourism arrivals

2010	24,965,411, +14.8 per cent
2011	28,002,279, +12.2 per cent
2012 (January-August)	18,703,119, +1.1 per cent

Total visitor expenditure

2010	MOP213.4 billion (US\$26.7 billion)
2011	MOP261 billion
2012 (January-June)	MOP151.9 billion

Gaming expense

2010	MOP179.4 billion
2011	MOP251.4 billion
2012 (January-June)	MOP133 billion

Accommodation and others

2010	MOP25.9 billion
2011	MOP34.1 billion
2012 (January-June)	MOP18.9 billion

Hotel statistics

Despite the addition of almost 6,000 rooms with the complete opening of Sands Cotai Central in September 2012, room rates in Macau are still holding strong. Robust demand, on the back of an upward arrival trend, is said to be the cause.

As a result, hotels in Macau are not only commanding good room rates, they are also enjoying high occupancy in 2012.

Overall average occupancy rate

2010	84.53 per cent
2011	88.4 per cent
2012 January-August	87.71 per cent

Overall average room rate

2010	MOP1,174.47
2011	MOP1,347.7
2012 January-August	MOP1,405.73

Average occupancy rate of four-star hotels

2010	85.13 per cent
2011	88.97 per cent
2012 January-August	87.53 per cent

Average occupancy rate of five-star hotels

2010	83.71 per cent
2011	87.52 per cent
2012 January-August	87.69 per cent

Average room rate of four-star hotels

2010	MOP654.73
2011	MOP810.92
2012 January-August	MOP845.73

Average room rate of five-star

2010	MOP1,423.43
2011	MOP1,598.35
2012 January-August	MOP1,663.96

Overall number of rooms

2010	20,988
2011	23,222
2012 January-August	25,108

Number of four- and five-star rooms

2010	16,781
2011	18,975
2012 January-August	15,081

Source: Macau Government Tourist Office

New hotels in 2012

Sands Cotai Central

- Conrad Macao, 636 rooms
- Sheraton Macao, 3,863 rooms
- Holiday Inn Macao, 1,224 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Audio Guiding Service was introduced by the Macau Government Tourist Office in July 2012, with the objective of improving visitors' understanding of tourist attractions and World Heritage Sites in the destination. The service is now available in six languages – Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, English, Japanese and Korean.

Visitors can borrow the audio equipment for free at the information counter of the Macau Government Tourist Office in Senado Square, from 09.00 to 17.00 daily.

Future attractions/tourism infrastructure

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, which sits over the waters of Lingdingyang, Pearl River Estuary, promises greater ease of commute. Construction started in December 2009, and works are expected to be completed by 2015/16.

www.hzmb.org

Galaxy Macau has embarked on its second phase expansion, which is due to complete in mid-2015. The new wing will house The Ritz-Carlton, Macau and the JW Marriott Hotel Macau. The Ritz-Carlton, Macau will feature 250 one- and two-bedroom suites, including the stylish The Ritz-Carlton suite, while JW Marriott Hotel Macau will boast nearly 1,100 rooms and suites.

Wynn Cotai, the latest project undertaken by Wynn Resorts on the Cotai Strip, is expected to be ready in 2016. It will feature about 2,000 hotel rooms and 400 gaming tables.

Essentials in the city

Food Besides authentic Portuguese cuisine, visitors can also excite their tastebuds with a variety of international and local culinary delights served within the many fancy integrated resorts or at any bustling hawker outlets.

Quirky Traffic continues to be a bugbear in Macau. Snagging a taxi during peak hours may be a challenge, so it is common practice for tourists to take advantage of complimentary casino coach services to get around the city.

Tipping policy There's no need to tip but one can do so to reward good service.

Shopping Head to the Rua de S. Paulo area for lovely reproductions of traditional rosewood furniture, porcelain wares, lacquer, bronzeware, wood carvings and Chinese paintings.

How to maximise two hours of free time Hop over to Coloane and head straight to Chef Antonio Coelho's Restaurante Espaco Lisboa, just off St Francis Xavier Chapel Square. Place your order for some authentic Portuguese wine, fresh clams steamed with garlic and cilantro, and a hearty Portuguese steak. Make room for Chef Antonio's flambé crepe. Before leaving Coloane, head to the famous Lord Stow's Bakery for a box of Portuguese-style egg tarts.

Insider's tip for half-day off in Macau Put your physical limit to the test at the Macau Tower, which reaches 338m into the sky. Participate in the Skywalk X or Sky Jump activity if you dare. If not, take a stroll along the Observation Deck for spectacular views of the city. Later, enjoy a meal at Macau Tower's 360° Café, a revolving restaurant that whips up a tantalising buffet spread.

Impressive lunch for clients Book a table at The Tasting Room at the Crown Towers, City of Dreams. Led by Chef Guillaume Galliot, The Tasting Room is renowned for its fine, contemporary European cuisine and extensive collection of premium wines and vintages. Opening hours are 12.00 to 15.00, and 18.00 to 23.00. Call (853) 8868 6681 for reservations.

Lunch on your own The Lung Wah Restaurant near the Red Market serves Chinese dim sum and tea in a traditional setting. It is also a beloved gathering spot for locals.

Late nights Enjoy local or international movies at the UA Galaxy Cinemas, which houses nine 3D-capable screens

Explore the charms of the Ruins of St. Paul



Make space for egg tarts from Lord Stow's Bakery

and up to 1,000 seats.

Electricity European and British sockets are the norm, 220V/50Hz

Visa requirements

Visas are required by all visitors except:

- Nationals of Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Croatia, Czech, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominica, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania and the UK (six months) for a stay of up to 90 days;
- Nationals of Australia, Brunei (14 days), Canada, Chile, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Monaco, Namibia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the US and Uruguay for a stay of up to 30 days;
- Holders of a Hong Kong identity card, Hong Kong permanent identity card or re-entry permit;
- Nationals of China with valid Macau entry/depart documents;
- Holders of consulate/diplomatic documents issued by the Macau SAR or Hong Kong SAR;
- Holders of diplomatic passports;
- Holders of Laissez Passer issued by the United Nations; in the course of duty;

• Holders of travel document issued by the Portuguese authorities for the foreign citizens.

Visa on arrival is available at the immigration counter, but some nationalities are required to apply for an entry visa before heading to Macau. Visit www.fsm.gov.mo for more information, or email sminfo@fsm.gov.mo.

There are three types of visas:

- Individual – MOP100, children under 12 years of age pay MOP50.
- Family Passport – MOP200
- Group – MOP50 per person for bonafide groups of 10 or more and children aged 12 or under.

Important contacts

NTO

The Macau Government Tourist Office has 14 representatives in Australia, India (Mumbai and New Delhi), Hong Kong; Indonesia, Japan; Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, the US (California and New York), France; United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland; German-speaking markets.

Meanwhile, there are four Macau delegations, namely Tourism Sector of Office of the Macau SAR in Beijing, Belgium-Macau Economic and Trade Office and Macau Tourism Promotion & Information Center in Portugal, and Macau Economic and Cultural Office in Taiwan.

MGTO

Tel: (853) 2831-5566
Tourist hotline: (853) 2833- 3000
Fax: (853) 2851-0104
industry@macautourism.gov.mo
www.macautourism.gov.mo

Macau Business Tourism Centre

Edif. Ritz, Largo do Senado, Macau
Tel: (853) 8396-3008,
Fax: (853) 2872-7310
projects@macautourism.gov.mo

Travel trade associations

Association of Macao Tourist Agents
Email: amta@macau.ctm.net

Macau Hotel Association

mhacmo@macau.ctm.net
www.macauhotel.org

Compiled by Prudence Lui

All information is correct at press time

Malaysia

General overview

Official name	Malaysia
Capital	Kuala Lumpur
Population	29.4 million
Total area	329,758km ²
Currency	Ringgit Malaysia
Official language	Bahasa Malaysia English is widely spoken



Between January and June 2012 Malaysia welcomed 11.6 million tourist arrivals. Nine out of ten top source markets are from the Asia-Pacific region, with Indonesia, China, Japan and the Philippines registering double-digit year-on-year growth.

By the end of 2012, Malaysia is expected to see 25 million tourist arrivals and bag RM60 billion (US\$19.6 billion) in tourist receipts.

The country's minister of tourism, Ng Yen Yen, said tourism performance so far was putting the destination on track to achieving the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan 2020's goal of 36 million arrivals and RM168 billion in revenue.

Tourism Malaysia expects ASEAN nations to continue making key contributions to the destination's tourist arrivals.

Climate

Average temperature	21°C to 32°C (lowlands) 15°C to 25°C (highlands)
Average rainfall	2,000mm to 2,400mm
Average humidity	70 to 90 per cent

Best time to visit

Malaysia's moderate weather makes it good to visit all year round, although heavy rain tends to drench the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia in December and January. Langkawi, a popular resort destination and host of the high-profile biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition, suffers heavy rain from July to October.

Diving season on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and in East Malaysia runs from March to October.

Low season occurs during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which will run from July 9 to August 7 in 2013. Travel consultants can negotiate for better rates from hotels during this period.

Visitor arrival statistics

Malaysia welcomed 11.6 million tourists during the first six months of 2012, registering a year-on-year growth of 2.4 per cent.

Correspondingly, total tourism receipts in 1H2012 rose four per cent, channeling RM26.8 billion into national coffers. The destination earned RM25.7 billion during the same period in 2011.

The ASEAN region remains the key source market for Malaysia, contributing a monster share of 73.8 per cent of total arrivals in 1H2012. This figure reflects a one per cent decline over 1H2011, a result of a change in arrival tracking methodology. Now, arrivals are categorised by nationality of the traveller, instead of coun-



The iconic Petronas Twin Towers rise in the background, against Kuala Lumpur's evening skies

try of residence. Hence, expatriates working or living in ASEAN nations are no longer included in the count. With the new method of recording arrivals, dips in arrivals were seen in Singapore (-4.8 per cent), Thailand (-11.5 per cent), Brunei (-1.2 per cent) and Cambodia (-4.2 per cent).

Longhaul markets posting substantial growth include Oman (33.2 per cent), Russia (28.2 per cent), France (20.6 per cent), the US (18.9 per cent), South Korea (18 per cent), Kuwait (17.4 per cent) and Denmark (15.7 per cent).

Arrivals from Saudi Arabia grew a whopping 71.7 per cent, thanks to the implementation of a new rule which requires all travellers, including children, to travel on their own passports. Prior to that, children would travel on their parent's passports.

Total tourist arrivals

2009	23.6 million
2010	24.6 million
2011	24.7 million
2012 (January to June)	11.6 million
2012 (Target)	25 million

Top 10 source markets (January to June)

Countries	2011	2012	% Change
Singapore	6,125,305	5,832,330	-4.8
Indonesia	923,439	1,108,361	20.0
China	564,955	758,289	34.2
Brunei	595,340	588,165	-1.2
Thailand	721,907	638,641	-11.5
India	341,511	365,104	6.9
Australia	270,655	242,579	-10.4
Philippines	163,965	238,175	45.3
Japan	162,861	215,872	32.5
UK	185,708	196,738	5.9

Source: Malaysian Immigration Department

Average per capita expenditure (in RM) of top 10 markets

Countries	2010	2011	% Change
Singapore	2,178.90	2,219.90	1.9
Indonesia	1,015.30	1,059.40	4.4
China	2,768.40	2,816.30	1.7
Brunei	2,334.40	2,459.60	5.4
Thailand	1,015.30	1,059.40	4.3
India	2,615.80	2,685.20	2.7
Australia	4,113	4,204.60	2.2
Philippines	1,875.80	1,920.20	2.4
Japan	2,751.10	2,837.10	3.1
UK	3,831.50	3,899	1.8

Source: Tourism Malaysia

Business travel and MICE arrivals

2011	1,285,145
2012 (Target)	1,325,000

Source: Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau

NTO marketing budget and target

Tourism Malaysia was granted RM150 million to spend on advertising and promotions in 2012.

For the new year, however, that fund is more than doubled to support the new *Visit Malaysia Year 2013/2014* campaign, which also celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the joining of Sabah and Sarawak with the federation of Malaya to form Malaysia in 1963. Some RM358 million has been set aside for this.

Malaysia is expected to welcome 26.8 million tourists in 2013.

Hotel statistics

The number of four- and five-star rooms in Malaysia as of July 2012 was in the 60,000 bracket, and another 3,000 rooms in both categories are expected to come on stream by the end of 2012, according to statistics from the tourism ministry.

Hotel rates in Malaysia are among the lowest in Asia.

According to the Malaysian Association of Hotels, the average room rate at a five-star property between January and May 2012 was RM323. For the same period, the average room rate at a four- and three-star hotel was RM203 and RM102 respectively.

To cater to the tourism ministry's goal of 36 million arrivals by 2020, Tourism Ministry has projected that an additional 37,000 rooms in the four- and five-star categories are required.

Meanwhile, room rates of three- to five-star hotels are expected to rise between eight to 15 per cent in 2013.

Average occupancy rate (January to May)

	2011	2012
Kuala Lumpur	72	70
Penang	64	62
Langkawi	54	69
Kota Kinabalu	64	69

Average room rate (January to May)

	2011	2012
Kuala Lumpur	RM296	RM302
Penang	RM227	RM241
Langkawi	RM715	RM768
Kota Kinabalu	RM214	RM238

Source: Malaysian Association of Hotels

New hotels in 2012

- Impiana KLCC Hotel, 180 new rooms in addition to existing 335 rooms
- Best Western Premier Dua Sentral Kuala Lumpur, 364 rooms
- Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, 370 rooms
- Ibis Styles Fraser Business Park Kuala Lumpur, 500 rooms
- Ibis Styles Cheras, 156 rooms
- Tunamaya Beach & Spa Resort Tioman, 54 villas
- The Sterling Melaka, 37 rooms
- Best Western Plus Riverside Hotel Malacca, 170 rooms
- Hatten Hotel Melaka, 704 rooms
- Traders Hotel, Puteri Harbour, Iskandar, 283 rooms
- Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan, 299 rooms
- Citadines Uplands Kuching, 215 rooms
- Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa Sarawak, 118 rooms

New hotels in 2013

- Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar, 513 rooms,
- Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral, 482 rooms
- Novotel Melaka, 320 rooms
- Ibis Styles Lahad Datu, 108 rooms
- Ibis Styles Ipoh, 118 rooms
- Hilton Garden Inn Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 255 rooms
- Best Western Premier Melaka, 300 rooms
- UCSI City Island Hotel Kuching, 360 rooms
- Seri Chenang Resort & Spa Langkawi, 6 villas

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Legoland Malaysia is Malaysia's first international theme park. Opened in Nusajaya, Johor on September 15, the family-friendly theme park offers more than 40 rides and attractions.

www.legoland.com.my

Puteri Harbour Family Theme Park offers four floors of fun for the family. Located in Nusajaya, Johor, the new attraction features three distinct areas that are themed after popular cartoon characters. Lat's Place is a themed restaurant that celebrates the famous village boy cartoon character, Lat; Sanrio Hello Kitty Town comprises various walk-through attractions, interactive activities and rides; and The Little Big Club is home to six themed interactive play zones.

www.playtime.com.my

KLIA2 is a new airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur, slated to open in April 2013. Spanning at least 257,000m², it will allow seamless connectivity between low-cost and full-service carriers. There will be 60 gates, eight remote stands, 80 aerobridges and a retail space of 32,000m² to accommodate 225 retail outlets. It is designed to cater for 30 million passengers a year, with the provision to expand to 45 million.

www.klia2.info

DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

DIETHELM TRAVEL

Dig into Malaysia's culinary melting pot



Diethelm Travel Group

One interesting way to explore Malaysia is by eating your way through the variety of cuisine found in multiracial Kuala Lumpur.

Top recommendations are Bijan Restaurant, a modern restaurant in which traditional Malay cuisine is taken out of hawker stalls and served against a lush

backdrop; The Noble House, which serves Chinese gourmet creations and delicacies with a modern touch in a contemporary setting; and Spice of India, an Indian fine dining restaurant that is also perfect for corporate dining events.

Intrepid travellers who desire a more unpolished local experience should make a beeline for Jalan Alor. The area teems with hawker stalls parked along the street, each selling a different local dish. The variety can be overwhelming for first-timers, who may have some difficulty deciding on what to eat.

Hang Tuah Village in Malacca is a replica of the village of the 15th century legendary Malay warrior, Hang Tuah. The RM132-million project is scheduled for completion in 2013, and will include replicas of traditional Malay houses during the Malacca Sultanate, a Hang Tuah museum, an auditorium, a hall and a cultural stage.

Key events and festivals 2012

F1 Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix (March 22-24)
www.malaysiangp.com.my

Sabah Fest (May 4-5)
www.motour.gov.my

Colours of 1Malaysia (May 18)
www.motour.gov.my

Rainforest World Music Festival (June 28-30)
rwmf.net

Essentials in the city

Food Ice kacang and chendol are local cold desserts good for beating the tropical heat. Ice kacang is a bowl of shaved ice shaped like a mountain, drizzled with colourful syrups and hiding red beans and palm seeds in its base. This dessert is especially popular with children. Chendol is a milky swirl of coconut milk, gula melaka (liquid palm sugar) and green jelly made from flour.

Quirky The best affirmative reply to any question or request is "boleh", which means "can do" in Bahasa Malaysia.

Tipping policy Tipping is usually not expected. Some establishments include a service tax, otherwise, about 10 per cent of total bill if service warrants it.

Shopping Purchase a unique sayong (gourd shaped carafe) from Karyaneka in Kuala Lumpur.

How to maximise two hours of free time Visit Central Market in Kuala Lumpur which sells antiques, local paintings, handicraft and souvenirs all under one roof. If one desires more shopping options, Chinatown is located nearby on Petaling Street. It is ideal for those looking for a bargain or anything from herbal medicine and dried food to T-shirts, jewellery and wallets.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Kuala Lumpur Craft Complex is a one-stop venue where one can learn about Malaysian handicraft. The craft village conducts hands-on demonstrations and interactive sessions, while the craft museum displays a wide selection of handicraft. There's also a boutique where visitors can shop for souvenirs.

Impressive lunch for clients Seri Angkasa Revolving Restaurant in the KL Tower offers a 360° view of the city from the diner's seat. For RM88 nett per person, the lunch buffet offers a smorgasbord of Western, Chinese, Malay and Indian dishes.

Lunch on your own The upmarket Food Republic food court at Pavilion Kuala Lumpur serves the best of Malaysia's food stalls in an air-conditioned environment.

Late nights The stretch of pre-war double-storey houses at Changkat Bukit Bintang have been converted into restaurants and bars.

Electricity Socket type. Voltage is 240V AC at 50 cycles per second. Standard three-pin square plugs and sockets.

Visa requirements

Single-entry visas, valid for three months from date of issue, are issued to foreign nationals who require a visa to enter Malaysia for social visits. Those on business trips can apply for multiple-entry visas instead, which are valid for three to 12 months from the date of issue.

Indian and mainland Chinese citizens who wish to enter Malaysia for social visits can apply for multiple-entry visas at a cost of RM100 for Indian citizens and RM30 for mainland Chinese citizens.

US citizens travelling for social, business or academic purposes are exempted from visa requirements, and the same applies to nationals of all ASEAN countries (except Myanmar) for a stay of less than one month. A visa will be required for stays exceeding 30 days, except for Brunei and Singapore citizens.

For Israeli nationals, visas are required and permission must be granted by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Important contacts

NTO

Tourism Malaysia is the promotional arm of the Ministry of Tourism. It has 42 overseas offices.

Tel: (60-3) 8891-8000
www.tourism.gov.my

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, a subsidiary of Tourism Malaysia, is a one-stop centre that coordinates MICE activities in the country. For MICE enquiries, contact general manager, sales and marketing, Ho Yoke Ping, at pingho@myceb.com.my.

Tel: (60-3) 2034-2090
Fax: (60-3) 2034-2091
www.myceb.com.my

Travel trade associations

Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents
www.matta.org.my

Malaysia Inbound Tourism Association
www.mitamalaysia.com

Malaysian Association of Hotels
www.hotels.org.my

Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners
www.maho.org.my

The Malaysia Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers
www.maceos.com.my

PATA Malaysia Chapter
www.pata.org

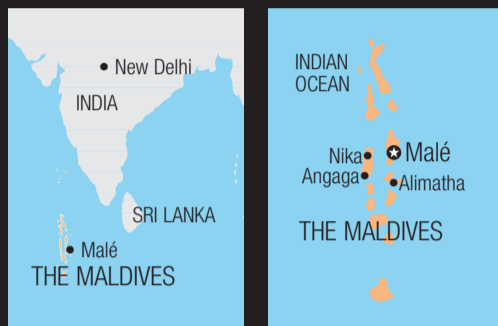
Skål International Kuala Lumpur
www.skalkl.org

Compiled by S Puvaneswary
All information is correct at press time

The Maldives

General overview

Official name	Republic of Maldives
Capital	Malé
Population	396,334
Total area	90,000km ²
Currency	Rufiyaa
Official language	Dhivehi, but English is widely spoken



Political unrest affected tourism in the Maldives in the first few months of 2012, following the resignation of president Mohamed Nasheed on February 7. The Chinese market was worst hit by the developments – temporary suspension of charters led to a drop in arrivals.

However, with new destination promotion campaigns and road shows in key markets, the tourism industry rebounded and by end-September arrivals rose 3.4 per cent to 691,608.

Despite the problems, the government is still hopeful of reaching its target of one million tourist arrivals in 2012. The Maldives marks 40 years of tourism in 2013 and the fourth edition of the five-year masterplan (2012-2016) is under preparation.

Climate

Average temperature	25°C to 31°C
Average rainfall	1,786.4mm to 2,277.8mm
Average humidity	80 per cent

Best time to visit

The Maldives has year-round tropical weather. There are two monsoons – the south-west from May to October and the north-east from November to April.

Peak travel season falls between December and April, when the weather is calm with the least rainfall. February and March are the sunniest and ideal for European holidaymakers seeking refuge from winter back home. However, the off-peak season attracts many Chinese visitors when prices are also on the low side. Regular showers are expected in June and July.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Total international visitor arrivals from January to September rose just marginally to 691,608, or 3.4 per cent over the same period in 2011. The average length of stay of visitors was 6.8 days.

Europe continues to be largest source of visitors to the Maldives by region, contributing 57.7 per cent of tourists, with the second largest regional group being Asia, providing 35.9 per cent of traffic.

Trends show that gradually 50 per cent of travellers to the Maldives are expected to come from Asia, particularly China.

China is showing strong growth, while Maldivian authorities are also banking on India's sizable middle-class that travels and relishes high-class hotels and top-notch cuisine.

As per statistics in 2012, the industry faced many cancellations – 6,700 bed nights – from February 10 to the end of the month, owing to the political unrest, according to the Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corpora-

tion (MMPRC).

Subsequently, a sustained marketing and promotion campaign, which included road shows in selected capitals and familiarisation trips for journalists from key source markets, turned the situation around and brought about a 14.5 per cent year-on-year growth in July.

Meanwhile, the MMPRC expected some 100,000 arrivals in August, the peak month for inbound tourism, but recorded slightly less than 80,000 visitors.

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	198,655	6.7
UK	104,508	-8.5
Germany	90,157	17.4
Italy	83,088	-7.3
Russia	63,936	30.2
France	59,694	9.0
Japan	35,782	-7.8
Switzerland	32,504	17.1
India	30,978	20.3
Korea	25,285	11.9

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January - September)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	169,117	15.3
UK	67,987	-13.7
Germany	71,950	16.2

Continued next column

Continued from previous column

Top 10 source markets in 2012

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Italy	47,348	-26.3
Russia	46,440	13.6
France	42,197	-1.9
Japan	25,947	-1.7
Switzerland	25,487	16.8
India	19,723	-4.2
South Korea	15,661	8.2

Source: Ministry of Tourism

Tourism receipts

Years	Receipts	% Change
2010	US\$713.6 million	17.3
2011 (estimated)	US\$2 billion	280

Source: Maldives Inland Revenue Authority

Hotel statistics

As of end-September 2012, the Maldives had in operation 99 resorts with 22,177 beds, 18 hotels with 1,567 beds and 75 live-aboard safari vessels with 1,125 beds.

Between January and September, average occupancy was 75.8 per cent at resorts, 30.5 per cent at hotels and 27.2 per cent for live-aboard safari vessels.

New hotels in 2012/2013

- JW Marriott Maldives Gaakoshibee Resort & Spa, 100 villas
- Radisson Plaza Resort Maldives, 281 villas
- Radisson Blu Hotel Maldives Hulhumale, 250 rooms
- Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa Maldives, 140 villas

Source: Ministry of Tourism

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

New international connections on Maldivian, the country's international airline, began November this year. The carrier introduced flights to Chennai and Mumbai in India and to the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. It also commenced daily flights to the south Indian city of Thiruvananthapuram (also known as Trivandrum).

Meanwhile, Mega Maldives Airlines announced it was launching new routes connecting the capital with Seoul, Melbourne, Johannesburg, Tokyo and two points in Germany. It has added a third aircraft to its fleet, a Boeing 757-200W, to support existing services between Malé and Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing and Chengdu. There has been no word yet on when these services are expected to commence.

Two international airports in Hanimadhoo and Gan are being planned to serve the southern and northern atolls. These future facilities will help to support the current Ibrahim Nasir International Airport. The move is part of the Maldives' fourth edition of its five-year tourism masterplan, covering 2012 to 2016, which places an emphasis on developing new airports as the main infrastructure for tourism.

Subsix at the Niyama, Per Aquum's newest resort in the Maldives, opened as the world's first underwater club in September. Access to the club is via a staircase from Edge, an overwater restaurant, taking guests six metres below the surface of the Indian Ocean.

Down below, guests will find themselves in an intimate club with floor-to-ceiling windows surrounding three sides of the structure. The club has a bar and DJ console, while seating is spaced carefully to allow unobstructed views of exotic marine life.

Essentials in the city – Malé

Food Give *addubondi* a try. It is a long, coconut-based candy which comes wrapped in a banana leaf. Find it at the local market.

Quirky In October 2009, the Maldives held a cabinet meeting at the bottom of the ocean, with ministers dressed in scuba gear. Communication relied on hand signals. Chaired by then-president Mohamed Nasheed, it was meant to draw global attention to climate change. It was also the first-ever cabinet meeting held underwa-



Breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean are in abundance in the Maldives

ter. Now that's an idea for event planners heading to the Maldives.

Tipping policy A service charge of 10 per cent is usually added to the bill but customers may choose to leave a tip.

Shopping Malé, the capital city of the Maldives, is small – spanning only 2km² – but there are plenty of souvenir shops on Chaandhane Magu to keep visitors occupied. These shops sell items such as *thudu kuna*, a mat woven with local natural fibres. However, note that the export of products made of turtle shell, black coral, pearl oyster shell and red coral is banned.

How to maximise two hours of free time Panini, the 24-hour lobby café at Traders Hotel Maldives on Ameer Ahmed Magu in Malé, offers light refreshments and a chance to socialise. There are also numerous seaside cafes along the seafloor, allowing one to gaze at the sea while sipping coffee.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Visit the lively fish market on the northern tip of Malé and see a stunning variety of fish such as large tuna, sailfish and swordfish, or visit the fruit and vegetable market next door, all within a stone's throw of any hotel on this tiny island capital.

Impressive lunch for clients Located on top of the Hulhumalé Ferry Terminal, the Sea House is said to be the most fashionable café in town, with its pleasant sun deck from where dolphins are occasionally spotted. Food is good while the coffee and the lemonade, great.

Lunch on your own The Seagull Café is a popular outdoor dining spot in Malé. It boasts a wide range of homemade Italian ice-cream – the perfect remedy for sweltering days. The café also good for a hearty breakfast, quick lunch or just a cup of aromatic Italian coffee. It is open daily, from 09.00 to midnight every Saturday to Thursday,



DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

DIETHELM
TRAVEL

An underwater wonderland for the children

The Maldives is known for being one of the best diving spots in the world, and exploring the wonders of the ocean is no longer an experience exclusive to adults. Children from the age of five can now take their first underwater breaths alongside the reefs with children's diving courses offered at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island.

The young ones can explore the natural beauty of the Maldivian ocean with its soft white sands and safe shallow lagoons full of brightly-coloured fish, while being guided in a fun and safe way through the basics of diving under the direct care and supervision of PADI Instructors.

Beginner classes take place near the coral gardens of the Ithaa undersea restaurant. Once they are confident, the children will graduate to the vibrant reef that runs the length of the luxury resort's main island.



Diethelm Travel Group

and from 16.00 to midnight every Friday.

Late nights There are no nightlife venues in Malé.

Electricity 230-240V, three-pin round or rectangular blade plugs or two-pin flat blade.

Visa requirements

Visitors of all nationalities travelling with a valid passport are granted a free 30-day visa on arrival, provided they also possess sufficient funds and a return ticket. Visa extensions may be obtained at the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Malé.

Important contacts

NTO

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture is the Maldives' government body charged with developing strategies to increase tourism revenue, gain investor confidence for tourism and formulating and enforcing standards for destination marketing and promotion.

Tel: (96-0) 332-3224/ (96-0)3323226

Fax: (96-0) 332-2512

www.tourism.gov.mv

Travel trade associations

Maldives Tourism Promotion Board

www.visitmaldives.com/en

Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators

www.matato.org

Maldives Association of Tourism Industry

www.matimaldives.com

Liveboard Association Maldives

www.liveboardassociation.mv

Maldives Association of Yacht Agents

www.mayamaldives.com

Compiled by Feizal Samath

All information is correct at press time

Myanmar

General overview

Official Name	Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Capital	Nay Pyi Taw
Population	60 million
Total Area	676,577km ²
Currency	Kyat
Official Language	Myanmar



Political developments over the past year have opened the window on Myanmar as a new market for tourism. With sanctions and travel boycotts lifted in recognition of reforms made, Myanmar is fast becoming a hot destination not only for travel, but also for investments.

Arrivals are expected to rise by approximately 30 per cent or more this year, following a similar increase in 2011, say industry sources.

Statistics show that seven out of Myanmar's 10 source markets come from Asia, with Thailand and Japan in the lead with 48,014 and 23,242 arrivals respectively in the first seven months of 2012. While Asian countries will continue to supply the majority of visitors, strong growth is likely in previously nascent Western markets because of Myanmar's improving international image.

Climate

Average temperature	20°C to 24°C (October to March)
Average rainfall	5,000mm (coastal region) Below 1,000mm (central region)
Average humidity	66 to 82.6 per cent

Best time to visit

Myanmar can be visited all year round. Myanmar enjoys a tropical climate, which is roughly divided into three seasons. The winter season, from October to February, with average temperatures between 20°C and 24°C, is the best time to visit.

The summer season starts from March through May with average temperatures between 30°C and 35°C, while the monsoon runs from June through September with average temperatures between 25°C and 30°C.

Yangon normally receives early morning and afternoon showers while rainfall in Bagan and Mandalay is very low. The weather around Inle and Shan State is quite pleasant all year round, but nights are cold from December to February.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Myanmar received almost 300,000 foreign visitors from January to July this year, up 37.5 per cent year-on-year, based on figures from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

More than 60 per cent of visitors were from Asia, including 48,014 from Thailand – the single largest group by nationality – followed by Japan with 23,242, China with 22,283 and South Korea with 17,799.

Europe accounted for 65,300 visitors, representing 23.3 per cent of total arrivals. France led the way with 15,094 arrivals, the UK with 11,124 and Germany with 10,077.

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals
Thailand	61,331
China	35,181
Malaysia	23,286
South Korea	22,507
Japan	21,264
US	20,487
France	19,288
Singapore	15,386
Taiwan	15,362
Germany	13,245

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January - July)

Countries	Arrivals
Thailand	48,014
Japan	23,242
China	22,283
US	18,285
South Korea	17,799
Malaysia	15,916
France	15,094
Singapore	12,689
Taiwan	11,509
UK	11,124

Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism

Types of tourist for the year 2011

Package tour groups	26 per cent
Foreign independent travellers	38 per cent
Business travellers	21 per cent
Others	15 per cent

Hotel statistics

Ministry figures for 2011 show that Myanmar has 731 licensed hotels and more than 25,002 rooms.

Earlier this year, the ministry announced plans to increase the number of hotel zones in Myanmar, with 11 already created in key tourist regions and more likely to come. In May, the President's Office gave the green light to develop a new hotel zone at Inle Lake, and the new 250.9-hectare zone will be allocated to 16 hotels that have been waiting for planning approval, according to an official from the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

Meanwhile in central Yangon, historic state-owned buildings have been put up for tender to ease the city's shortage of hotel rooms. Local and foreign companies alike have been invited to bid on the properties for conversion into hotels on long term leases. Singapore currently tops foreign investment in Myanmar's hotel sector, followed by Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Britain.

Global hotel chains, including US-based Starwood Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International have also expressed interest in running hotels in Myanmar.

Total number of hotels, motels and guesthouses in key destinations

Cities	No of hotels
Yangon	193
Mandalay	76
Bagan	75
Inle Lake	42
Pyin Oo Lwin	34
Nay Pyi Taw	31
Chaungtha Beach	24
Kalay	24
Ngwe Saung Beach	21
Taunggyi	17

Room rate by star rating

Star rating	Price ranges
Five-star	US\$180-182
Four-star	US\$120-174
Three-star	US\$90-115
Two-star	US\$50-75
One-star	US\$35-50
Non-rated	US\$20-30

Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism

New hotels in 2012

- Hotel 7 Mile Yangon, 53 rooms
- Green Hill Hotel Yangon, 108 rooms
- Jade City Hotel Nay Pyi Taw, 90 rooms

New hotels in 2013

- Centrepoint Towers Hotel Yangon, 270 rooms
- Nawarat Hotel Yangon, 100 rooms
- Rose Garden Hotel Yangon, 60 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Golden Myanmar Airlines, the country's new international carrier, is considering using Mandalay International Airport as its base. The airline is planning to operate scheduled flights to Bangkok, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

www.gmairlines.com

The Myanmar Hospitality & Tourism Conference will be held at Traders Hotel, Yangon from February 26-28, 2013, the product of an agreement between The Myanmar Tourism Federation and Sphere Conferences. Positioned as a gateway for investors, owners, developers and operators of hospitality and tourism products to explore opportunities available in Myanmar, the conference will offer face-to-face meetings with local government offi-

cial, associations and industry leaders, and the chance to gain first-hand knowledge about the country's tourism masterplan.

www.mhtc.sphereconferences.com

Orient-Express's Orcaella is a new river cruise that will take to the Irrawaddy River in 2013. Sailing between Yangon and Bhamo, the four-deck boat will operate from January to April and July to December. Each of Orcaella's 25 air-conditioned cabins feature floor-to-ceiling glass doors that open up to river-facing balconies. There is an observation deck, an all-day lounge and bar, a swimming pool, a fitness centre, a spa, as well as a resident doctor. It is suitable for corporate events too, with a deck that is large enough for 70-80 people, offering enough space for themed activities and local entertainment on board, such as movie nights, traditional dances and musicians.

Daily charter services to Nay Pyi Taw began on September 9, operated by FMI Air Charter, a subsidiary of First Myanmar Investment. The thrice-daily Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw service is operated using the 44-seat ATR 42 and 16-seat Beech 1900D, leased from state-run Myanmar Airways. Flights depart at 07.00, 11.30 and 16.00.

reservations@fmiaircharter.com

Nay Pyi Taw International Airport opened on December 19, 2011, the third international airport after Mandalay and Yangon. The airport will handle up to 65,000 flights per year and has a 3.6km runway, 69m high control tower, 10 passenger boarding bridges and a capacity of 50,000-60,000 flights annually. The airport can handle five million visitors a year.

Key events and festivals 2013

Kachin Manaw Festival (January 9-10)

This festival originated as part of *nat* or spirit worship in the past. Celebrated by the Kachins, one Myanmar's major ethnic groups, the Manaw festival draws many Kachins local and abroad who come to meet and perform the Manaw dance at this event.

Naga New Year Festival (January 12-16)

The traditional Naga New Year Festival takes place every January in Sagaing Division. The festivities include the setting up of the Naga ceremonial pole, in a ceremony attended by the Naga clans in traditional costumes, and the New Year ceremony itself.

Thingyan Water Festival (April 13-16)

Locals celebrate the Thingyan Water Festival by splashing water at each other. Stages are set up along the street for people to ambush others, making any attempt to avoid getting drenched futile.

Taung Byone Nat Festival (August 14-21)

Held every year near Mandalay, Taung Byone Nat Festival is one of Myanmar's loudest and most colourful celebrations, held to honour the Taung Byone spirit brothers, U Min Gyi and U Min Galay. It draws mediums and devotees from all over the country, as well as curious tourists. Festivities last several days, leading up to the day of the full moon in the lunar month of Wagaung.

Taunggyi Fire Balloon Festival (November 11-17)

Taunggyi, the capital of the Southern Shan State, hosts hot air balloon competitions during the annual Tazaungdine Lighting Festival, which usually occurs around end-October to early-November. Day balloons come in the shape of pagodas or animals such as elephants, dragons or ducks, while the night balloons are huge elongated paper balls with small multicoloured paper lanterns hanging from their sides. Fireworks are tied to these balloons and set off in mid-air.

Essentials in the city

Food Try *shan* noodles, a dish made of rice noodles in a spicy tomato sauce with pickled radish, cilantro, peanuts, and chicken. It is favoured as a breakfast dish or an evening snack.

Tipping policy From 500 Kyat (US\$0.60) for a local restaurant to 2,000-3,000 Kyat for international standard hotels and restaurants.

Shopping Local souvenirs, fake antiques and crafts from all over Myanmar can be found at Bogyoke Aung San Market, also known as Scott Market, in Yangon. For antiques, Zaw Zaw Antique Shop in Dhammazed Road,



The art of fine food in Myanmar

Both a restaurant and a bakery offering fine food, Sharky's is the de facto place to go for fine-food connoisseurs in Yangon. Situated on Dhamazed Road, the eatery stars Ye Htut Win, a Yangon native and skillful cheesemaker who use only local products from Myanmar.



Diethelm Travel Group

Patrons swear by the food, which includes an extensive menu of local condiments, vegetables, salads, fresh breads such as baguettes and croissants, ice cream, macarons and thin-crust gourmet pizzas, all

made with local produce. Last but not least are Ye Htut Win's famous cheeses.

Sharky's also exhibits the works of unusual Burmese artists, and an outdoor terrace 'guarded' by two art pieces that take the form of cows is available for those who prefer to dine al fresco.

Bahan Township, Yangon is one of the biggest antique dealers around.

How to maximise two hours of free time Bogyoke Aung San Museum was constructed in the former residence of Bogyoke (General) Aung San, revolutionary and father of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Reopening to the public more than five years after it was shuttered for renovations, the museum houses pictures and paintings of Aung San, excerpts from his most



Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon is recognised as the most sacred Buddhist pagoda in the country

well-known speeches and a host of his personal possessions, including a collection of 240 books. The two-storey wooden residence in Bahan Township was built in 1921 and was home to Aung San and family until his assassination in July 1947.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Take a daytrip to Twante Village, located on the other side of the Yangon River. Access is fairly straightforward via a local ferry from Pansoden Jetty in Yangon, then a local taxi. The ride will be uncomfortable but interesting, giving the traveller a glimpse of life on and along the famous Twante Canal. Stop by Shwesandaw Pagoda for a quick visit, then hop on a trishaw to Twante to admire traditional pottery at the many workshops there.

Impressive lunch for clients The newly-opened Summer Palace Chinese restaurant in Traders Hotel and Tiger Hill in Chatrium Hotel are best for those hankering for a taste of the Far East.

Lunch on your own Check out the roadside food stalls along Anawrahta and Sule Pagoda Road that serve local and Indian dishes. For Chinese food, go to 19th street in Chinatown within Latha Township.

Late nights YGN Bar in Yangon International Hotel, 50th Street in Botataung Township, BME 2 on University Avenue in Kamayut Township are popular venues for those looking for nightlife options.

Electricity Single phase voltage of 220-230V and a frequency of 50 Hz, primarily two-pin sockets.

Visa requirements

A tourist visa must be obtained in advance from Myanmar's embassies or consulates abroad and is valid for a stay of 28 days. A pre-arranged visa-on-arrival is applicable only to tourists buying tour packages with authorised Myanmar-based travel companies.

Subject to approval by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, the visa-on-arrival (VOA) must be arranged at least 10 days prior to the travel date. However, the ministry will make the final decision on visa approval. When the visa is approved, the company will notify the applicant, airline and airport. The applicant will receive an approval letter that can be presented at the airport's immigration counter in Myanmar, after which the immigration officer will perform a series of checks and then issue the visa.

Several types of visas are available, including a 28-day tourist visa (US\$30, non-extendable), a 70-day business visa (US\$40, extendable), 28-day social visa (US\$40, extendable) and 24-hour transit visa (US\$18).

As a special case, Myanmar issues VOAs to travellers brought back from Cambodia's Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and China's Guangzhou, after Myanmar Airways International debuted flights to the two destinations in 2011.

Important contacts

NTO

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MHT) does not have tourism representation overseas, but it appoints about 30 tourism companies abroad for destination promotion. Myanmar is also being promoted and marketed through the ASEAN Promotional Chapters for Tourism in Seoul, Sydney and Beijing. The country's embassies and consulates overseas are able to disseminate tourism information in their respective host countries and MHT regularly distributes tourism collaterals and tourism information through these offices.

Tel: (95-67) 406-056

www.myanmar-tourism.org

Travel trade associations

Myanmar Tourism Board

www.tourismmyanmar.org

Myanmar Marketing Committee

www.myanmar-tourism.com

Union of Myanmar Travel Association

www.umt.net.org

Compiled by Rahul Khanna

All information is correct at press time

The Philippines

General overview

Official name	Republic of the Philippines
Capital	Manila
Population	97.6 million
Total area	299,764km ²
Currency	Philippine peso
Official languages	Filipino and English



Tourist arrivals to the Philippines reached 2.9 million during the first eight months of 2012, a respectable 9.8 per cent growth over the same period in 2011, buoyed by a host of factors including the new tourism campaign *It's More Fun in the Philippines*, increased regional and domestic air links from budget carriers, and major events such as the Asian Development Bank Board of Governors meeting.

China, the fastest growing and the fourth biggest source market, managed 20 per cent growth to record 179,879 arrivals during the eight-month period, despite the ban on group tours to the Philippines imposed in May due to a political standoff between the two countries.

Though lifted in October, the impact of China's travel ban lingers on, prompting the Department of Tourism (DoT) to scale down its 2012 arrivals target to 4.5 million from 4.6 million previously.

Climate

Average temperature	26.6°C
Average rainfall	965mm to 4,064mm
Average humidity	77 per cent

Best time to visit

The Philippines is coolest from November to February, while hot and dry weather dominates between March and May. Rain and typhoon occur from June to September, and respite in the form of fair weather comes only in October.

Visitor arrivals statistics

The Philippines drew a total of 3.9 million arrivals in 2011, and the first eight months of 2012 saw 2.9 million visitors.

Asia remains a crucial region for the destination's tourism industry. According to data dating back to 2010, six of the 10 major source markets are Asian – South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Between January and August 2012, these six markets provided 51 per cent of total arrivals to the Philippines. South Korea has maintained its position as top source market, posting an annual double-digit growth since 2010. The mainland Chinese market also registered double-digit growth since 2010.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	3.5 million
2011	3.9 million
2012 (January to August)	2.9 million

Top 10 source markets in 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	740,622	27.1
US	600,165	3.0
Japan	358,744	10.4
China	187,446	20.9
Australia	147,469	11.4
Taiwan	142,455	39.3
Hong Kong	133,746	8.9
Singapore	121,083	23.2
Canada	106,345	7.4
UK	96,925	6.5

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	925,204	24.9
US	624,527	4.1
Japan	375,496	4.7
China	243,137	29.7
Taiwan	181,738	27.6
Australia	170,736	15.8
Singapore	137,802	13.8
Canada	17,423	10.4

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Top 10 source markets in 2011

Hong Kong	112,106	16.2
UK	104,466	7.8

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January - August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
South Korea	679,123	10.4
US	446,684	4.1
Japan	278,017	9.7
China	179,879	19.1
Taiwan	155,675	29.1
Australia	118,050	11.3
Singapore	95,913	7.5
Canada	81,093	5.9
Hong Kong	77,506	2.2
UK	74,696	7.8

Source: Department of Tourism

New hotels in 2012

MANILA

- Ascott Bonifacio Global City, 220 rooms
- Best Western Premier F1 Hotel, 243 rooms
- Best Western Plus Antel Hotel, 210 rooms
- Holiday Inn Suites Makati, 349 rooms
- Tune Hotel Makati, 213 rooms
- Tune Hotel Ermita, 167 rooms

CLARK AND ANGELES CITY

- Best Western The Mint Hotel, 52 rooms
- Tune Hotel Angeles City, 165 rooms

PALAWAN

- Apo Hotels, 108 rooms
- Go Hotels Puerto Princesa, 108 rooms
- Pangulasian Island Resort El Nido, 42 villas
- Princess Garden Island Resort & Spa, 78 rooms

VISAYAS

- Ambassador in Paradise Resort Boracay, 47 rooms
- Nandana Boracay, 92 rooms
- The District Boracay, 48 rooms
- Go Hotels Tacloban, 98 rooms
- Go Hotels Bacolod, 102 rooms
- Go Hotels Dumaguete, 102 rooms
- The Bellevue Resort Bohol, 159 rooms
- Tune Hotel Cebu, 150 rooms

New hotels in 2013

MANILA

- The Fairmont Makati, 280 rooms
- Raffles Makati, 32 suites
- Worldhotels and Residences Makati, 401 rooms
- Solaire Manila Hotel, 500 rooms, suites and villas

PALAWAN

- Mövenpick Resort & Spa Huma Island, 80 bungalows

VISAYAS

- MJ Hotel, 84 rooms

MINDANAO

- Park Inn by Radisson Davao, 204 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Solaire Resorts & Casino Manila, one of the four integrated gaming and leisure facilities at Entertainment City along Manila Bay, will in 1Q2013 commence the first phase of its operations. Solaire Manila Hotel, a grand ballroom for 1,600 pax, and some 18,500m² gaming space will be open for business.
www.solairemanila.com

SM Mall of Asia Arena is the newest indoor entertainment and sporting event destination in the country. The venue, fronted by a unique eye-shaped facade, contains 64,085m² of space and seating capacity for 15,000.
mallofasia-arena.com

SMX Davao Convention Center boasts 5,400m² of exhibition and meeting space for up to 5,000 people. Its hotel component, Park Inn by Radisson Davao, will open in 1Q2013.

Aura Pavilion at Bonifacio Global City will provide 2,000m² of MICE space, including three halls and nine meeting rooms, when it opens in early 2013.

Key events and festivals 2013

Philippine MICE Conference (March 6 to 9)

The country's premier annual tourism event focusing on the MICE market takes place from March 6-9, 2013, in the city of Davao.

www.dotpcvc.gov.ph

Pahiyas (May 14 to 15)

A visual and culinary treat, this harvest festival in Lucban, Quezon is marked by *kiping*, leaf-shaped and multi-coloured rice paste wafers that adorn the facades of houses in the most creative and decorative ways, together with fruits and flowers. The festival is also a chance for the traveller to tuck into the best of local cuisine and delicacies in this thanksgiving.

www.visitmyphilippines.com

Kadayawan sa Dabaw (August 17-18)

Davao's most popular and colourful fiesta is a celebration of life, giving thanks for the gifts of nature and the wealth of culture. Celebrations are capped by a parade of the ten tribes of Davao, each donning its unique costumes and dancing to tribal music.

www.visitmyphilippines.com

Giant Lantern Festival (December 21)

Lanterns, 5.5m in diameter and fitted with 7,000 blinking lights, go on parade in San Fernando, Pampanga to medleys of Christmas songs.

www.visitmyphilippines.com

Essentials in the city – Manila

Food Savour these lip-smacking delights while in Manila: *adobo* – chicken, pork or both served in a garlicky stew with vinegar and soy sauce as base; *lechon de leche* –

slow-roasted baby pork with crispy skin; *sinigang* – soup soured with tamarind and served with pork, beef, chicken, fish or shrimp.

Quirky Filipinos show respect to their elders by calling older men *tito* (uncle) and women *tita* (aunt) and those just a bit older *kuya* (elder brother) and *ate* (elder sister), even if they're strangers. In the vernacular, thank you is *salamat*, but *salamat po* when speaking to the elderly.

Tipping policy Tipping is expected for service, and 10 per cent of the total bill is the standard amount. However, some bills do include a service charge.

Shopping Purchase handicrafts, basketry, handwoven cloths, ethnic stuff and embroidered fineries at Kultura; pearls and gemstones at Festival Mall in Alabang; and looms and antiques in Malate and Ermita.

How to maximise two hours of free time Explore Greenbelt in the Makati CBD, on foot. Sample local *merienda* (afternoon snacks) in any of the outdoor restaurants or simply relax by the garden around the Don Bosco Church.

Impressive lunch for clients Fête them at La Cocina de Tita Moning, an ancestral home turned into an elegant fine dining restaurant, or at Sala Bistro in Makati for European fine dining.

Lunch on your own For something local and fuss-free, chow down on the grub served at local fastfood outlets such as Mang Inasal, Chow King and Razon's.

Late nights Manila is a hotspot for late night revelry. Clubs, music lounges and sing-along bars are in abundance. Live music entertainment is a staple among deluxe hotels and there's always a concert or stage play taking place somewhere.

Electricity 220V AC is the common standard. 110V AC is also used, especially in major hotels.

Visa requirements

Visitors from countries with diplomatic relations to the Philippines may enter and stay for 21 days provided they already have an outbound ticket and a passport valid for at least six months beyond the period of stay.

A tourist visa is needed for those planning to stay for more than 21 days. Chinese nationals, including citizens of Hong Kong and Taiwan, will need a special permit from the Philippine embassy or consulate.

Important contacts

NTO

Department of Tourism (DoT) was started in the 1950s as a private initiative but is now the primary government agency for encouraging, promoting and developing tourism for the Philippines. The DoT has 23 overseas offices.

Tel: (63-2) 523-8411

www.tourism.gov.ph

Tourism Promotions Board

www.dotpcvc.gov.ph

Travel trade associations

Philippine Tour Operators Association

www.philtoa.org

Philippine Travel Agencies Association

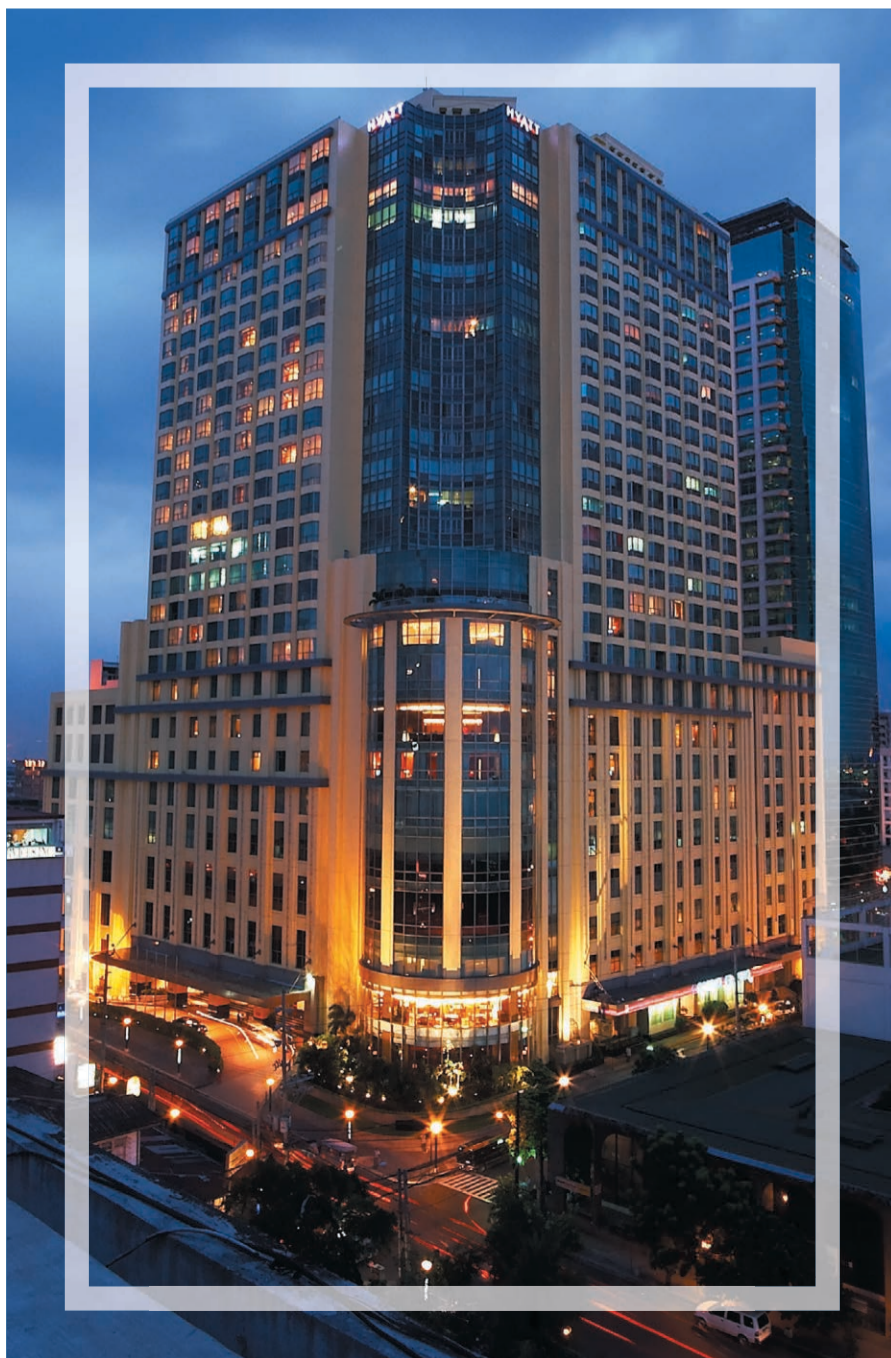
www.ptaa.org.ph

Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines

www.hrpa.org.ph

Compiled by Rosa Ocampo

All information is correct at press time



THE PERFECT LOCATION BY THE BAY

Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila, located just off Manila's famous Roxas Boulevard, offers the height of luxury and breathtaking sunset views over Manila Bay.

Spacious guestrooms offer a luxurious combination of comfort and style with world-renowned Filipino hospitality. Experience the award-winning dining at Li Li Cantonese restaurant, The Fireplace and Market Cafe to tempt the palate.

Ideally suited for events planners seeking a higher level of personalised service, the Ballroom and Le Salon offer flexibility with state-of-art technology and a team of dedicated professionals to assist at every step of the way. For larger scale events, our location is ideally placed within minutes of the Philippine International Convention Centre (PICC), World Trade Centre, SM Exhibition Centre and the recently opened SM Arena.

A destination surrounded by historical attractions, lively entertainment and grand shopping centres, experience Manila at its best with a level of comfort and convenience that will make you feel right at home. Hyatt. You're More Than Welcome.



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Singapore

General overview

Official name	Republic of Singapore
Capital	Singapore
Population	5.2 million
Total area	714.3km ²
Currency	Singapore dollar
Official languages	English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil



Despite the uncertainty in the global economy, the outlook for Singapore's tourism sector is conservatively optimistic, with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) forecasting 13.5-14.5 million visitor arrivals for 2012, versus just over 13.1 million in 2011.

During the first quarter of 2012, inbound arrivals grew by 15 per cent year-on-year to hit close to 3.6 million.

Average room rate climbed to S\$260.20 (US\$213) between January and July 2012, an 8.8 per cent rise on the same period in 2011. Average occupancy, on the other hand, remained stable at 87 per cent.

Climate

Average temperature	22°C to 34°C
Average rainfall	2,342.2mm
Average humidity	60 to 90 per cent

Best time to visit

Heavy rains dominate between November and February, while April is a hot and humid month. Wet weather may, however, still persist during drier months, and it is best to be prepared for intermittent downpours throughout the year.

Visitor arrival statistics

2011 was a record year for Singapore's tourism industry, with almost all of its top 10 source markets, with the exception of the UK, showing significant increases.

Overall, arrival figures grew by 13.1 per cent in 2011 to 13.1 million, but owing to the ongoing uncertainty in the global economy, year-on-year growth is anticipated to range between a more modest 3.1-10.7 per cent in 2012.

During the first five months of 2012, Indonesia retained its place as the top source market in terms of both expenditure and arrivals. China continued to lag behind in second place for arrivals, followed by Malaysia. During this period, the Philippines and the UK showed a slight decline, while Thailand shrank by 2.9 per cent.

STB is making strategic strides to keep the growth momentum going by focusing on quality tourism. This drive will be funded by an additional S\$905 million war chest for initiatives such as the co-creation of innovative tourism products and events, and the enhancement of the sector's workforce capabilities.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	11.6 million, +20.2 per cent
2011	13.2 million, +13.1 per cent
2012 (January-May)	5.9 million, +12.3 per cent

Total arrival days for all international arrivals

2010	45.6 million days
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2011	49.1 million days
2012 (January-Mar)	12.8 million days

Top 10 source markets 2010

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Indonesia	2,305,149	32.1
China	1,171,337	25.0
Malaysia	1,036,918	35.7
Australia	880,486	6.0
India	828,903	14.2
Philippines	544,344	26.0
Japan	528,817	7.9
UK	461,714	-1.7
Thailand	430,022	35.3
US	416,990	12.5

Source: Singapore Tourism Board

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Indonesia	2,592,222	12.4
China	1,577,522	34.7
Malaysia	1,140,935	10.0
Australia	956,039	8.6
India	868,991	4.8
Philippines	677,723	24.5
Japan	656,417	24.1
Thailand	472,708	9.9
Hong Kong	464,375	19.8
UK	442,611	-4.1

Source: Singapore Tourism Board

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to May)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Indonesia	1,112,527	14.5
China	855,577	30.7
Malaysia	481,878	11.0
India	384,805	7.0
Australia	384,341	1.2
Philippines	299,366	-0.2
Japan	292,181	18.3
UK	204,569	-0.7
Thailand	203,924	-2.9
US	198,514	8.1

Source: Singapore Tourism Board

Top 10 markets in tourism receipts 1Q2012 (\$ million)

Indonesia	704
China	658
India	267
Australia	256
Japan	232
Malaysia	217
Philippines	200
US	172
UK	134
Hong Kong	131

Percentage of BT-MICE to overall arrivals

2008	29.7 per cent
2009	27 per cent
2010	27 per cent
2011	33 per cent (estimated)

Source: Singapore Tourism Board

Hotel statistics

Preliminary data from STB shows that occupancy rates varied slightly in the first seven months of 2012, hitting a high of 90 per cent in July, a peak period for both corporate and leisure-related events.

Arrival figures will continue to outstrip hotel supply between 2012 and 2014, which should continue to shore up occupancy and room rates. However, analysts anticipate a supply glut in the medium term, if the current rate of growth is not maintained.

The average room rate in Singapore for January to July was S\$260.20 (US\$213), an 8.8 per cent increase on the same period in 2011. Despite the anticipated slowdown in arrivals, room rates are still tipped to rise by between five and 10 per cent by end-2012.

Horwath HTL projects an estimated 5,868 rooms to come on stream between 2012 and 2014, 65 per cent of which will be mid-tier and economy properties.

Average occupancy rate/Average room rate

	Overall average occupancy	Overall average room rate	Total number of rooms
2010	85%	S\$217	39,000
2011	86%	S\$245	49,719
2012*	87%	S\$260.20	50,013

Source: Singapore Tourism Board/Horwath HTL
*2012 data covers only the months of January to July

Projected number of rooms

3,455 rooms for 2013 and 760 in 2014, according to Horwath HTL, as of July 2012.

New hotels in 2013

- Aqueen Hotel Paya Lebar, 160 rooms
- Carlton City Hotel, 386 rooms
- Days Hotel Singapore at Zhongshan Park, 405 rooms
- Ramada Singapore at Zhongshan Park, 391 rooms
- Fairy Point Hill, 135 rooms
- Holiday Inn Express (Clarke Quay), 400 rooms
- Holiday Inn Express (Orchard), 220 rooms
- One Farrer Hotel, 250 rooms
- Pan Pacific Serviced Suites, Beach Road, 180 rooms
- Sofitel So Singapore, 134 rooms
- Westin Singapore Marina Bay, 301 rooms

New hotels in 2014

- Aqueen Hotel Geylang, 100 rooms
- Aqueen Hotel Tyrwhitt, 160 rooms



Trend setting Gallery Hotel was established with 222 rooms and 5 functional meeting rooms. Located near the Singapore Riverfront albeit a variety of watering holes located along the river belt, the hotel boasts a myriad of dining establishments and bistro pubs that will tickle your discerning taste buds. The accolade winning Gallery Hotel hosts a state of the art gym, an award-winning spa amongst many other business facilities.

- A leading business hotel that inspires work, rest and play for the discerning and trendy
- Bespoke services and business-focused amenities in an arts-centric ambience



GALLERYHOTEL

WWW.GALLERYHOTEL.COM.SG
1 NANSON ROAD, SINGAPORE 238909

- Up@Robertson Quay, 300 rooms
- Patina Hotel, 200 rooms
- Traders Orchard Gateway Singapore, 502 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Gardens by the Bay's largest garden Bay South opened in June. Featuring two cooled conservatories and a bevy of food and beverage outlets, the garden is easily accessed via a footbridge that runs through Marina Bay Sands. www.gardensbythebay.org.sg

The Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore doubled Singapore's berth capacity when it opened in May. The 28,000m² facility, which is operated by SATS-Creuers, has helped to ease the capacity crunch at the Singapore Cruise Centre HarbourFront terminal. www.mbcs.com.sg

Espa at Resorts World Sentosa is the UK-based spa operator's Asian flagship. Featuring Singapore's first authentic Turkish hammam, guests are treated to pampering spa rituals within the spa's 10,000m² luxurious, verdant surroundings. www.rwsentosa.com

River Safari, Asia's first river-themed wildlife park, opens in 1Q2013. Built over 12 hectares, the attraction features 5,000 animals across 500 species. www.riversafari.com.sg

Key events and festivals 2013

River Hong Bao (January 24 to February 1)
www.riverhongbao.sg

Mosaic Music Festival (March)
www.mosaicmusicfestival.com

World Gourmet Summit (April 16 to 23)
www.worldgourmetsummit.com

Singapore Food Festival (July)
www.singaporefoodfestival.com.sg

F1 Singapore Grand Prix (September 20 to 22)
www.singaporegp.sg

ZoukOut (December)
www.zoukout.com

Essentials in the city

Food Singapore's diversity is reflected in its culinary delights. Hainanese chicken rice, laksa, chilli crab, *char kway teow* and *rojak* are must-tries.

Quirky Singaporeans are not incapable of speaking the Queen's English. They merely prefer to punctuate their sentences with 'lah' or 'loh' for a Singaporean touch.

Tipping policy Tipping is not a common practice in Singapore as a 10 per cent service charge is usually included in the bill.

Shopping Explore Haji Lane for cutting-edge fashion or wander down to Arab Street, Chinatown and Little India for unique home décor, handicrafts and accessories.

How to maximise two hours of free time Wander around Marina Bay Sands, stopping at TWG for a cup of tea and scones, before viewing eye-catching exhibits at the ArtScience Museum. For a surreal experience, hop onto a gondola, and be whisked along the resort's indoor waterways past gilded storefronts.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Head to Changi Point and hop onto a rickety bumboat to Pulau Ubin, a rustic escape from the heady buzz of Singapore. Hire a bicycle and pedal past rubber plantations and secluded beaches, before tucking into a seafood lunch.

Impressive lunch for clients For a sublime experience, head to Restaurant André in the conservation district of Bukit Pasoh. Helmed by Taiwanese chef and owner André Chiang, the 30-seater restaurant treats diners to a slick interpretation of Southern French nouvelle cuisine, peppered with Mediterranean touches.

Lunch on your own Located within the Central Business District, Forlino at One Fullerton provides lovers of all things Italian with an unparalleled vantage view of Sin-



Gardens by the Bay and Marina Bay Sands are among the latest tourism stars in Singapore

Singapore Tourism Board

gapore's Marina Bay. For cheaper eats and a wide selection of local and Asian dishes, head to Lau Pa Sat Festival Market in the central business district.

Late nights Visit Clarke Quay for its hedonistic dance clubs and bars that feature live music of various genres.

Electricity Singapore's voltage is 220-240 AC, 50 Hz. Most hotels can provide a transformer to convert it to 110-120 AC, 60 Hz.

Visa requirements

Foreigners holding travel documents issued by the following countries will require either a business or social visit visa to enter Singapore:

- Assessment level one countries: Commonwealth of Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan), Georgia, India, Myanmar, Nigeria, China and holders of Hong Kong Document of Identity and Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Travel Permit.
- Assessment level two countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, and holders of Palestinian Authority Passport, Temporary Passport issued by the UAE and Refugee Travel Document issued by Middle East countries.

Important contacts

NTO

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) was first established as the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board in 1964. It now has an extensive network of 22 regional offices and two marketing representatives across eight regions.

Apart from courting the leisure market, STB has a Business Travel & MICE Group to promote Singapore as a premier business events destination.

Tel: (65) 6736-6622
Fax: (65) 6736-9423
www.yoursingapore.com

Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau
www.yoursingapore.com/content/mice/en.html

Travel trade associations

National Association of Travel Agents Singapore
www.natas.org.sg

Singapore Hotel Association
www.sha.org.sg

Association of Singapore Attractions
www.singapore-attractions.com

PATA Singapore Chapter
www.patasingapore.org.sg

ASEAN Tourism Association
www.aseanta.org

Compiled by Linda Haden
All information is correct at press time



Joget to a different beat in colourful Katong

The Peranakans are descendants of 17th century Chinese and Indian immigrants who married non-Muslim natives from the Malay Archipelago. Due to the assimilation of different cultures, most Peranakans are fluent in two or more languages, such as Malay and a Chinese dialect, regularly including Malay words in their daily life like *joget*, or to dance.

A former Peranakan enclave, Katong retains a distinct laidback vibe and Peranakan charm, reflected in the malls and shophouses that line the streets. A visit to Rumah Bebe is a must when in the Katong area. Housed in a Peranakan shophouse, the store stocks beautiful hand-made artworks such as beaded shoes and bags.



Shoppers can tailor-make their very own beaded products. Stop by the Katong Antique House to marvel at the various traditional Peranakan costumes, crockery and furniture on display at this shophouse. Antique enthusiasts will definitely find rare and exquisite items to add to their collections. Making an advance appointment is recommended.

Sri Lanka

General overview

Official name	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Capital	Colombo
Legislative capital	Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte
Population	20.6 million
Total area	65,610km ²
Currency	Sri Lanka Rupee
Official language	Sinhala, Tamil and English



Visitors to the Sri Lankan capital after a three-year hiatus will notice a remarkable and refreshing change in the environment and landscape. Colombo is being rapidly transformed into one of the best garden cities in Asia, with neat walkways and pavements, jogging tracks, fountains, shopping malls, sports complexes and green open spaces. The 96km Colombo-Galle Southern Expressway opened last year, substantially easing access to the southern resorts in Sri Lanka.

The development comes as the country targets 2.5 million tourists by 2016, from a current count of more than 800,000 visitors.

Hotels are being refurbished, new ones are opening and an online visa system was introduced in January 2012. An expressway linking the country's only international airport at Katunayake – about 30km from the capital – to the city will open in early 2013. It will cut travel time by half. Domestic airports are also being renovated.

Climate

Average temperature	27°C to 29°C
Average rainfall	1,500mm to 2,100mm
Average humidity	79 per cent

Best time to visit

Sri Lanka is a round-the-year destination. For those who seek the sun and the sea in the south-western coastal area, the best time to visit is between November and April. The central highlands are pleasantly cool and relatively dry from January to April. Travel peaks from mid-December to mid-January and from March to April. Sri Lanka also gets a tad busy in July and August when festivals and pageants are held in the country.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Sri Lanka welcomed 693,772 visitors between January and September 2012, up 16 per cent over the same period in 2011.

By region, East Europe registered the biggest growth, with arrivals leaping 52 per cent to 43,039, in the first nine months of 2012. However, it was Western Europe, a traditionally high-performing market for the destination, that chalked up the highest number of arrivals – 269,169 – with an 18.6 per cent increase from last year.

South Asia came in second, with 169,927 arrivals, but year-on-year growth was slower in 2012 at 3.1 per cent.

By country, arrivals from India, Sri Lanka's top source market, showed a marginal growth of 1.3 per cent to 122,120.

The UK, once Sri Lanka's biggest source market, showed signs of recovery. It contributed 81,762 footfalls

from January to September, a 3.5 per cent growth. In September alone, there were 9.1 per cent more arrivals from the UK, compared to the same month a year ago.

Meanwhile, tourism earnings grew 24.2 per cent to US\$560 million in the first seven months of 2012.

Total tourism arrivals

2010	654,476, +46.1 per cent
2011	855,975, +30.8 per cent
2012 (January-September)	693,772, +16 per cent

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

Average length of stay in 2011

10 nights

Total tourism receipts

2010	US\$576 million, +64.6 per cent
2011	US\$839 million, +45.7 per cent
2012 (January-July)	US\$560 million, +24.2 per cent

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

Average expenditure in 2011

US\$98 per tourist per day

Arrivals target

Sri Lanka aims to achieve 950,000 in arrivals in 2012 and 1.25 million in the following year. By 2016, the government hopes to welcome 2.5 million visitors and generate US\$2.75 billion in annual foreign exchange earnings.

MICE tourism is also being actively promoted, with authorities seeking to position Colombo as an exciting

destination that hosts music concerts alongside conventions, exhibitions and incentives.

A major boost for the destination's MICE efforts is the meeting of the Commonwealth heads of state and government in November 2013. The high profile meeting is expected to draw more than 2,000 delegates and generate massive publicity.

Hotel statistics

Hotels in Colombo have been made to abide by a minimum room rate structure since March 7, 2011. Based on this structure, a five-star hotel charges US\$180, four-star US\$140, three-star US\$90 and two-star US\$30-US\$50 (prices exclude taxes). However, city rates are negotiable for group tours and packages.

Star-class hotels outside the capital city are allowed to charge any amount.

Meanwhile, there is rapid growth in the country's hotel landscape, as the industry prepares for the massive boom in arrivals expected in 2016. New properties are coming up across Sri Lanka, particularly in the western, southern and eastern regions.

Sri Lanka is also hoping to attract more than US\$3 billion worth of tourism-related investments over the next three years and increase room capacity to 45,000.

Average occupancy rate of four-star hotels

2010	74.7 per cent
2011	78.1 per cent

Average occupancy rate of five-star hotels

2010	76.8 per cent
2011	78.7 per cent

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

New hotels 2013

- Mövenpick Hotel Colombo, 224 rooms
- The Taprobana, Balapitiya, 30 rooms
- Club Waskaduwa Beach, Kalutara, 49 suite
- Emerald Bay Hotel, Galle, 66 rooms (reopening after full closure for refurbishment)

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Colombo Racecourse is a new mall that opened on the site of a former racecourse on October 20, 2012. It is home to many shops and restaurants.

The National Performing Arts Theatre, gifted by the Chinese government and one of the largest facilities in South Asia, opened in early 2012 in Colombo. The theatre is equipped with ultra modern facilities such as an auditorium with 1,288 seats, a library and training facilities.

18 Hairpin Bends on the picturesque Kandy-Mahiyangama road has been redeveloped into a beautiful six-kilometre drive with smooth, spacious bends to negotiate a vehicle. With this redevelopment, 18 Hairpin Bends is rid of its former reputation as a treacherous stretch for motorists. Driving along this new stretch of road offers one spectacular views of the surrounding landscape, with many places to stop and relax. It was reopened for traffic in May 2012.

Key events and festivals 2013

Colombo Navam Perahera, Colombo (February 25)

A grand and colourful Buddhist pageant held in Colombo every February, the event reflects the country's strong religious and cultural traditions.

SriLankan Airlines Pro Surf 2013, Arugam Bay (dates TBA)

Organised by the flag carrier, this popular annual surfing competition sees the participation of more than 125 world class surfing experts from Australia, the US, Germany, the UK, New Zealand and Japan.

Hikkaduwa Beach Festival, Hikkaduwa (dates TBA)

More affectionally known as Hikka Fest, this annual beach music festival is held in the southern coastal town of Hikkaduwa, once a popular retreat for hippies. The event draws local and foreign music artistes and DJs, and is usually held in July.

Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (November 15-17)

To be held for the first time in Sri Lanka, this prestigious event is attended by dozens of government chiefs from the Commonwealth nations.

Commonwealth Investment Summit (November 15-17)

This summit runs parallel to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, and is aimed at attracting potential investors from the Commonwealth to look at investment options in Sri Lanka.

www.srilanka.travel, www.ceylonroots.com

Essentials in the city

Food Try the mouth-watering *lamprais*, the ultimate Sri Lankan meal that is made with chicken or beef curry, brinjal curry, meatballs, *seeni sambol*, onion *sambol*, plantain fries and rice, all wrapped in a banana leaf. *Sambol* is a spicy side dish, often made with chopped onions, salt, pepper and chilli powder.

Quirky It is common to see a ritual of lighting a traditional oil lamp being performed at public events or functions. Oil in the lamp is recognised as life, while heat from the lit lamp generates warmth. In many homes, this ritual is practiced once in the morning and once in the evening, and has deeper spiritual significance.

Tipping policy The rule of thumb is to offer between US\$1 to US\$3 to hotel staff, and US\$5-US\$15 per day to a tour guide or driver. You may also want to tip a porter US\$0.30 per bag.

Shopping Stock up on traditional local handicrafts as gifts for friends and family back home at Laksala stores across Sri Lanka. Laksala, also known as the Sri Lanka Handicrafts Board, was established to preserve and develop traditional skills of local craftsmen. It manages 140 training centers, 23 sales outlets and 14 provincial purchasing points.

How to maximise two hours of free time Join a walking tour of the bustling business district of Pettah, alongside the Colombo harbour where trade and commerce began in the country. Weave through the traditional bazaar, which was built by the Dutch in the 17th century, and browse a wide range of products, from fabrics and footwear to watches and rare first edition books. Marvel at the Wolfendhal catholic church, built in 1642, and several ancient Hindu temples.

Insider's tip for a half-day off Make a beeline for the coastal fishing town of Negombo, 35km north of Colombo, and watch local fishermen haul in their catch through the Dutch canal. Later, relax on the beach, visit some of the many churches or historical buildings in town, or make a trip into the Muthurajawela sanctuary, a sprawling 809-hectare plot which is home to crocodiles and various types of birds.

Impressive lunch for clients The Ministry of Crab is renowned for serving up quality local crab dishes. Owned by cricket superstars Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, and Japanese cuisine expert Dharshan Munidasa, the restaurant also boasts a spectacular location. It sits in a 400-year-old building – once a Dutch hospital – in the heart of the Colombo.

Lunch on your own Scarlet Room at the Colombo Courtyard boutique hotel in the capital city. The restaurant serves global cuisine, including many Mediterranean specialties.

Late nights Club Mojo at the Taj Samudra Hotel is the go-to place in the capital city for live music and all-night revelry. Another option in Colombo is Club Amuseum on Galle Road.

Electricity, 230 to 240V, AC. Those travelling with laptops are advised to bring power stabilisers.

Visa requirements

New visa rules came into force at the start of 2012, with Sri Lanka terminating its 30-day free visa on arrival for nationals of 80 countries. Now, all travellers must apply for an online visa – Electronic Travel Authorisation – and pay a processing fee of US\$50. Approval is promised within 48 hours. The facility applies to both leisure and brief business travel.

Stays beyond 30 days require an extension, plus a separate visa fee which varies according to the nationality of the traveller.

Foreign nationals planning to visit for official or diplomatic purposes should forward their applications to



Watch the gentle giants play at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

DIETHELM
TRAVEL

Discover the true taste of Sri Lanka at Nuga Gama



Easily the best kept secret in town, Nuga Gama at Cinnamon Grand Hotel in the heart of Colombo presents guests with an authentic Sri Lankan dining experience.

Nuga Gama, which means Banyan Village, is named after the 200-year-old banyan tree that sits at the very centre of the restaurant. The rustic Nuga Gama harks back to Sri Lanka's rural roots and has been aptly described as 'the village in the city'.

All meals are prepared by village womenfolk and are based on traditional recipes. When it's time to dine, diners can choose from an array of foods. A must-try is the traditional string hoppers and hoppers accompanied by *katta sambol* (a chili *sambol* made with Maldivian fish) and the popular black pork curry.

After the meal, guests are offered ginger flavoured tea to complete the authentic Sri Lankan experience.

the Department of Immigration & Emigration via the relevant Sri Lankan government ministries and agencies, or overseas missions.

www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hkvisas_visit.htm
www.eta.gov.lk

Important contacts

NTO

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau is responsible for all marketing and promotional activities. It has one overseas office in the UK and uses Sri Lankan diplomatic missions in other countries to help promote the destination. The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority is the apex body for the tourism bureau.

Tel: (94-11) 2426-900; (94-11) 2437-055, 59, 60
www.srilanka.travel; www.sltda.gov.lk

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau is the government arm that monitors the development of the country's business events industry. It functions under the Ministry of Economic Development.

www.visitsrilanka.net

Travel trade associations

Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators, established in 1982, has 84 members.

www.slaito.com

IATA Agents Association of Sri Lanka, formed in 1988, has 87 members and is affiliated to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

www.iata-agents.lk

Tourist Hotel Association of Sri Lanka is affiliated to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

www.chamber.lk

Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka, established in 1974, is the national body of travel agents.

www.visitsrilanka.org

The Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism Sri Lanka, founded in 2005, has 79 members. It represents small and medium-scale enterprises such as hotels, guest houses, restaurants and travel agents.

www.asmetrilanka.com

PATA Sri Lanka Chapter is affiliated to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and has 72 members.

www.patasrilanka.org

Compiled by Feizal Samath

All information is correct at press time

Thailand

General overview

Official name	Kingdom of Thailand
Capital	Bangkok
Population	69.52 million
Total area	513,115km ²
Currency	Thai Baht
Official Language	Thai



Shocking events of recent years are well and truly behind Thailand, as the tourism industry records impressive growth. International arrivals and tourism revenues have grown at double-digit rates over the last two years, and 2012 looks set to be another good year.

There are significant shifts in tourism trends however, with Asian markets assuming more prominent positions against a stagnating European market. China has overtaken Malaysia as the major source market, with Russia growing quickly.

Thailand is trying to spur this growth with new campaigns to drive international arrivals towards the 22.2 million mark in 2013, while also fostering high yield tourism. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is striving to grow revenues towards a target of two trillion baht (US\$64.9 billion) in 2015. The MICE sector will make a major contribution to this feat, as the Thailand Conventions and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) raises the country's profile as an international destination, exceeding its own targets well ahead of schedule.

Even Thailand's jaded hotel market has witnessed improvements, but it remains burdened by oversupply. Rapid growth in arrivals is providing much needed business, but a large development pipeline could threaten occupancies if demand growth subsides.

Climate

Average temperature:	20°C to 30°C (November to January) 34°C (February to May) 29°C (June to October)
Average rainfall:	150mm (February to May) 1,500mm (June to October)
Average humidity:	75 per cent (February to May) 87 per cent (June to October)

Best time to visit

November, December, and January offer the most favourable climatic conditions, especially for travellers from cooler climates. This is peak season across the country, and coincides with major holidays in Europe and the US, making it an expensive time to visit.

Things start to heat up from mid-February onwards, with temperatures peaking above 35°C near Songkran Festival in April. Low travel season sets in during the wet months, when humidity is high and heavy downpours are

frequent. Tourists can easily negotiate the short intense showers however, but preparations should be made, and flash floods are not uncommon.

Trips to cool highland areas in the north help tourists escape the heat of spring time. Meanwhile, south-eastern Thailand has slightly different weather patterns, where rainfall is lower than along the Andaman coast, and the seasons slightly later.

Visitor arrivals statistics

Thailand's tourism sector has done well. The industry has seen consistent growth since the GFC in 2008, despite political unrest in 2009 and 2010, and severe flooding in 2011. Demand for the destination remains strong, and rapid growth has resumed as it enjoys a period of relative stability. After a 20 per cent leap in arrivals in 2011, the first eight months of 2012 recorded an 8.6 per cent growth, putting the Kingdom on course to surpass its 19.5 million tourism arrivals target for the year.

Correspondingly, tourism revenues are up by more than 19.5 per cent in 1Q2012. Having smashed last year's target, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports looks set to

surpass its 766 billion baht target this year.

A concerted international marketing drive by TCEB is also yielding result. International MICE revenues in 2011 hit US\$2.2 billion, with nearly 800,000 arrivals. With that, the MICE bureau has achieved its 2013 targets, making Thailand's robust business events industry one to watch.

In terms of key source markets for January to August 2012, China has surpassed Malaysia as the top contributor of international tourism. Growth rates are consistently high and this is helping to stave off stagnant outbound travel from traditional European markets, and generate demand during traditional low season periods.

Total tourist arrivals

2010	15.9 million, +12.6 per cent
2011	19.2 million, +20.8 per cent
2012 (January-August)	14.3 million, +8.6 per cent
2012 (Target)	19.5 million
2013 (Target)	22.2 million

Total tourism receipts

2010	590 billion baht
2011	786 billion baht
2012 (January-March)	263 billion baht
2012 (Target)	766 billion baht
2013 (Target)	966 billion baht

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
Malaysia	2,500,280	21.43
China	1,721,247	53.38
Japan	1,127,893	13.51
Russia	1,054,187	63.52
Korea	1,006,283	24.94
India	914,971	20.33
Laos	891,950	24.69
UK	844,972	4.22
Australia	829,855	18.88
Singapore	682,364	13.06

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January-August)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	1,685,896	35.38
Malaysia	1,602,141	-5.81
Japan	872,101	9.86
Russia	780,337	19.96
Korea	756,736	4.61
India	681,089	8.35
Laos	652,749	4.81
Australia	621,122	15.31
UK	567,870	-0.32
Singapore	525,235	18.34

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sport

Arrivals target for 2013

TAT has set an ambitious target of 22.2 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2013 and total revenues of 966 billion baht – objectives that appear eminently achievable given current rates of growth.

This year saw the introduction of the *Miracle Year Thailand* campaign and a push for high yield visitors with strategic promotion of niche tourism sectors including golf, health and wellness, weddings and honeymoons, and green tourism.

These will continue to be promoted through *Action Plan 2013*, which aims to increase per capita spend and nurture emerging tourism markets through various campaigns such as the *DISCO Plan*. Meanwhile, TAT has established the *Thailand and Beyond Strategy* to position the country for the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and achieve gross revenues of two trillion baht from international and domestic tourism in the same year – a target set by the cabinet.

These efforts continue to be well funded and increasingly digitised, helping to place TAT at the forefront of destination marketing.

Hotel statistics

Oversupply has haunted Thailand's hotel market for many years, with hoteliers struggling to fill beds and cutting rates to attract customers. Subsequently, Thailand is among the world's most competitively-priced holiday destinations.

Occupancy rose significantly through 2011 to 61 per cent country-wide, a result of rising visitor numbers. Improved hotel performance has continued through 2012, particularly in Phuket and Koh Samui. This upward trend in occupancy will rely on continued healthy growth in arrivals, and with room supply increasing insatiably, particularly in Phuket, businesses may struggle in future shocks. This is great for the consumer of course, who can enjoy a broad range of products at very low rates relative to Hong Kong or Singapore.

Room inventory* by region in 2012

Region	Total accomo.	% Change	Total rooms	% Change
Bangkok	680	1.49	94,847	0.76
Central (excl Bangkok)	511	13.81	24,584	8.58
West	1,688	10.11	44,103	9.38
East	1,434	8.72	83,887	3.01
North-east	1,733	33.51	54,774	16.73
North	2,659	21.42	81,004	11.29
South	3,662	72.57	152,243	45.16

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand.

*Hotels, resort, guest house, bungalow, motel, serviced apartment, raft, homestay, youth hostel, national park house, lodge house, others

Average occupancy rate by region

Location	2011	2010	% Change
Bangkok (250 rooms and more)	60.69	51.18	9.51
Bangkok (249 rooms and under)	59.46	52.25	7.21
North	45	44.1	0.9
North-east	63.01	58.95	4.06
South-western side (Phuket, Phang-nga, Krabi)	66.74	60.38	6.36
South-eastern side (Samui)	50.24	49.35	0.89
East	61.76	54.19	7.57

Source: Thai Hotel Association

New hotel openings in 2013

BANGKOK

- Hotel Indigo Bangkok Wireless Road, 188 rooms
- Huachang Heritage Hotel Bangkok, 80 rooms
- Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Bangkok, 290 rooms
- Hilton Sukhumvit Bangkok, 287 rooms
- DoubleTree by Hilton, Sukhumvit Bangkok, 182 rooms (refurbishment)
- Bangkok Marriott Hotel Sukhumvit, 296 rooms
- Marriott Executive Apartments Bangkok, Sukhumvit Thonglor, 74 rooms

PHUKET

- Nikki Beach Hotel & Spa, Phuket, 151 rooms, 23 villas
- Novotel Phuket Kamala Bay, 166 rooms
- Patong Bay Hill, 744 rooms
- oceanfront Sky Villas, 34 villas
- Days Hotel Phuket Town, 120 rooms
- Point Yamu by COMO, 109 rooms

PATTAYA

- Centara Avenue Residence & Suites Pattaya, 146 rooms
- B2 South Pattaya, 65 rooms
- Mövenpick Resort & Spa White Beach Pattaya, 264 rooms
- Sun Exclusive, 78 rooms
- Siam@Siam Pattaya, 268 rooms
- Holiday Inn Express Pattaya, 200 rooms

ELSEWHERE

- Mercure Cha Am, 154 rooms



Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

Thai Airways International launched Airbus A380-800 services in October 2012 from its hub in Bangkok to Hong Kong and Singapore. It will operate its super jumbo aircraft to and from Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Paris, Narita, and London in 2013.

Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Center is scheduled to officially open in December 2012. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports has handed operational and management responsibilities to TAT, and some bookings are in for 1Q2013.



A buffet of recreational choices along the riverfront



With a festival-market-meets-living-museum concept, Asiatique The Riverfront is a colonial-style bazaar comprising 1,500 shops, 40 restaurant and two cultural theatres in an open-air environment.

Asiatique The Riverfront aims to recreate the spirit of the past, when people commuted regularly by boats and streetcars, fused with modern day recreation options.

Visitors can indulge in the variety of shops and eateries and also visit ancient tram tracks, a historic pier, century-old warehouses and waterfront cranes.

In the town square district, visitors will find the new 400-seat calypso cabaret theatre as well as the award-winning Joe Louis Puppet Theatre.

Asiatique The Riverfront is located on the oldest road in Bangkok, Charoen Krung Road, and is open every day from 17.00 to 24.00.

The easiest, and probably the most entertaining, way to get there is by boat. A free shuttle boat picks up visitors from Sathorn Pier underneath Taksin BTS station every 10 to 15 minutes.

Promenada Resort Mall Chiang Mai opens in 2013, offering indoor and outdoor shopping, entertainment and leisure elements such as an open air parkland, an outdoor theatre, waterfalls, lush greenery and an ice skating rink.

Key events and festivals 2013

Songkran Festival (April 13 - 16)

The entire Kingdom shuts down for the Thai New Year and water-gun sales go through the roof for the liveliest holiday of the year. The holiday has become the world's largest water festival, and walking anywhere without getting wet is more or less impossible. The underlying significance of this festival is the process of cleansing and purifying one's self before starting the New Year.

Thailand Grand Sale (June-September)

The nationwide event offers shoppers discount of up to 80 per cent on various goods and services at participating retailers. All major department stores in Bangkok are involved, offering knock-down prices on many designer clothes and accessories, while hotels offer special rates on room nights and associated services.

Loi Kratong (November 17)

This is held across the country to celebrate the god of the river or *pra mea kongka* during the full-moon night of the 12th Lunar month. Thais will float lotus-shaped baskets, or *krathong*, that carry a candle down the river, wishing for happiness and prosperity, while sending off misery. It is visually spectacular, with thousands of candles lighting up rivers and lakes across the country.

Essentials in the city – Bangkok

Tippling policy Most restaurants include a service charge on their bills, so tipping is not expected in Thailand.

How to maximise two hours of free time A traditional Thai massage is a great way to pass time in Thailand, and does wonders for holistic health.

Impressive lunch for clients Choose any of the top luxury hotels. They all offer great restaurants, easy access, and are popular meeting points for businessmen.

Late nights LEVELS at Aloft Bangkok Sukhumvit has become a big hit on the Bangkok party scene. Be sure to arrive fashionably late.

Electricity Single phase voltage of 220V and a frequency of 50Hz, primarily two- and three-pin sockets.

Visa requirements

Foreign citizens must hold a valid passport with at least six months validity, a valid Thai visa, and proof of onward travel. However, visitors from Hong Kong and 48 ASEAN or Western countries, including most European, Commonwealth and North American citizens, are not required to have a Thai visa for visits lasting less than 30 days. Nationals of 21 countries, including China, India and Russia, can obtain a visa on arrival at a fee of 1,000 baht for stays not exceeding 15 days.

Important contacts

NTO

Tourism Authority of Thailand
www.tourismthailand.org

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau
www.tceb.or.th

Travel trade associations

Tourism Council of Thailand
www.thailandtourismcouncil.org

Association of Thai Travel Agents
www.atta.or.th

Thai Hotels Association
www.thaihotels.org

Thai Travel Agents Association
www.ttaa-thai.com

Pacific Asia Travel Association
www.pata.org

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Vietnam

General overview

Official name	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Capital	Hanoi
Population	89 million
Total area	329,560km ²
Currency	Dong
Official Language	Vietnamese



The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) has forecasted foreign arrivals for 2012 to reach 6.5 million. It appears well on track to meet this target, with 75 per cent or 4.9 million visitors in the first nine months of the year, representing close to 13 per cent growth over the same period last year.

Revenues over the first nine months totalled US\$5.3 billion of VNAT's targeted US\$7.2 billion for 2012. Last year, revenues soared 25 per cent over 2010's figures. VNAT expects arrivals to rise by one million in 2013, along with a US\$2.9 billion surge in revenues.

Climate

Average temperature	22°C to 27°C
Average rainfall	1,500mm to 2,500mm
Average humidity	80 per cent

Best time to visit

Vietnam's temperate north and tropical south keep its tourism industry active throughout the year.

The southern lowlands – particularly the beaches, Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta – are best visited when it's cool and dry from November to February.

Room rates drop during the hot season from February to May and fall further when the rains come from June to October.

Cool, damp winters cover Vietnam's north from November to April when Hanoi's competitive room rates attract MICE groups, while hot summers from May to October lure travellers to the cool mountain resorts.

Stay away from central Vietnam from late-autumn until early-winter, especially October, when storms are a problem.

Visitor arrival statistics

Arrivals to Vietnam are going strong, with a year-on-year growth rate of nearly 13 per cent across the first nine months of 2012.

This, however, pales in comparison to the boom years of 2010 and 2011, when figures jumped 33 and 20 per cent respectively, as the global economy recovered from the 2008 financial crisis and fears of bird flu eased.

Nine in 10 of Vietnam's top 10 source markets saw growth this year, and five – South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand – experienced a double-digit increase in outbound traffic to Vietnam. South Korea spearheaded the movement with a 38.2 per cent growth, while China retained top spot on the arrivals chart.

Market research firm RNCOS expects tourism revenue to grow at a compound annual growth rate of around 13 per cent between 2012 and 2015.

Top 10 source markets in 2011

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	1,416,804	56.5
South Korea	536,408	8.2
Japan	481,519	8.9
US	439,872	2.1
Cambodia	423,440	66.3
Taiwan	361,051	8.1
Australia	289,762	4.2
Malaysia	233,132	10.3
France	211,444	6.1
Thailand	181,820	-18.4

Top 10 source markets in 2012 (January to September)

Countries	Arrivals	% Change
China	991,954	1.3
South Korea	526,470	38.2
Japan	428,170	24.5
US	338,765	3.0
Taiwan	317,515	19.4
Cambodia	236,967	-21.6
Australia	212,222	0.8
Malaysia	210,805	25.4
France	168,973	8.1
Thailand	158,470	23.4

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, General Statistics Office of Vietnam

Total tourism arrivals

2010	5 million, +33 per cent
2011	6 million, +20 per cent
2012 (January-September)	4.9 million, +12.8 per cent

Total tourism receipts

2010	US\$5 billion
2011	US\$6.2 billion
2012 (January-September)	US\$5.3 billion

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, General Statistics Office of Vietnam

Arrivals target for 2013

VNAT expects seven million foreign arrivals in 2013, in addition to 34.5 million domestic arrivals. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism aims to welcome 10.3 million foreigners and 47.5 million domestic trips with a combined revenue of US\$19 billion by 2020.

Hotel statistics

Vietnam's building boom may be paying some dividends for tourism as tour operators report that the country's infamous room shortage is finally showing signs of easing.

The country now boasts 136 four-star hotels with 16,551 rooms and 53 five-star hotels with 12,265 rooms.

Average occupancy rates for Vietnam

2010	52 per cent
2011	55 per cent
2012	NA

Average occupancy rate in 2012 (January to April)

Cities	Five-star	Four-star
Ho Chi Minh City	66.7%	66.5%
Hanoi	59.2%	52.8%
Danang	43.5%	49.5%

Average room rate in 2012 (January to April)

Cities	Five-star	All categories
Ho Chi Minh City	US\$133.20	US\$78
Hanoi	US\$106.60	US\$65.10
Danang	US\$104	US\$55.70

Source: CBRE Vietnam

New hotels in 2012

HO CHI MINH CITY

- Grand Silverland Hotel, 90 rooms
- Ibis Saigon South, 140 rooms
- Novotel Saigon Centre, 247 rooms

HANOI

- Golden Silk Boutique Hotel Hanoi, 55 rooms

DANANG

- Hyatt Regency Danang, 409 rooms
- InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort, 197 rooms
- Mercure Danang, 272 rooms
- Novotel Danang Premier Han River, 323 rooms

OTHERS

- Banyan Tree Lang Co, 49 rooms
- Angsana Lang Co, 229 rooms
- Anantara Mui Ne Resort and Spa, 90 rooms
- Best Western Pearl River Hotel Hai Phong, 101 rooms
- Crowne Plaza Nha Trang, 308 rooms

2013 and beyond

HO CHI MINH CITY

- Best Western Premier Saigon Kenton, 300 rooms (2014)
- Ibis Saigon Grand Palace, 338 rooms (2015)
- Le Meridien Saigon, 350 rooms
- Pullman Saigon Centre, 322 rooms

HANOI

- JW Marriott, 450 rooms
- Mercure Hanoi Hado, 222 rooms
- Novotel Ciputra Hanoi, 300 rooms (2015)

DANANG

- Hilton Danang, 226 rooms
- Ba Na Hills, member of the MGallery Collection, 90 rooms (2014)
- Mercure Danang French Village, Ba Na Hills, 372 rooms
- Mercure Danang Son Tra Resort, 120 rooms (2014)

OTHERS

- Best Western Premier Nha Trang, 200 rooms

- Best Western Premier Oceanami Hotel & Resort, Vung Tau, 150 rooms (2014)
- Best Western Premier Sapaly, Lao Cai, 180 rooms
- MGM Grand Ho Tram, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, 541 rooms
- Hoi An Marriott Resort and Spa, 250 rooms
- Mercure Sam Son, 165 rooms
- Novotel Dalat, 250 rooms
- Novotel Hue, 200 rooms (2015)
- Novotel Phu Quoc Resort, 234 rooms
- Pullman Hai Phong Flamboyant Island Resort, 308 rooms (2015)
- Pullman Vung Tau, 370 rooms
- U Sapa, 57 rooms

New attractions/tourism infrastructure

MGM Grand Ho Tram is a high-end integrated resort opening early-mid 2013. The twin-tower structure will offer luxury suites, convention facilities and a selection of entertainment and recreation activities, including a championship golf course designed by Greg Norman. www.mgmmirage.com

Vietcruiser is a new restaurant and event boat that plies the Saigon River in style. This three-deck, fine-dining establishment hosts dinner programmes from 18.30 to 21.30, and can accommodate conferences, utilising the top deck, a theatre and four meeting rooms that can double up as dining halls. www.vietcruiser.com

Phu Quoc International Airport opens to foreign carriers in December and is being promoted by the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam to bring international travellers to the largely untouched tropical island, known for its beaches and lovely diving sites.

VAT refunds on purchases made in Vietnam are now available for foreign visitors through June 30, 2014. When exiting the country through Noi Bai or Tan Son Nhat in-

Take a peek into some of the many ancient architecture in Hue



ternational airports, visitors may claim back 85 per cent of the value-added tax charged on goods purchased in the country.

Key events and festivals 2013

Danang International Fireworks Competition (April 29-30)

The visual spectacle is held every year to celebrate the country's Reunification Day (also known as Liberation

Day). Tickets will be available to travel consultants. www.danangtourism.gov.vn

The Buffalo Fights of Do Son

Haiphong City's Do Son district draws some 30,000 spectators on the ninth day of the eighth lunar month every year for this event. Held to honour the water god and celebrate the harvest, local community leaders present their buffalos as offerings to the gods before allowing them to lock horns in a giant ring. The buffalos are sacrificed after the fights for a great feast.

The Tet Lunar New Year Festival (February 10)

The Vietnamese will celebrate the upcoming New Year in February, which offers the traveller the chance to spend time with locals, who are all off work and in a festive mood. Cities are decorated with flowers, and street parades are held.

Essentials in the city – Ho Chi Minh City

Food Give the Saigon pho a try. Compared to the version served in Hanoi, the Saigon pho is said to be tastier, boasting extra garnishes, a sweeter soup stock, and more meat.

Tipping policy Tipping is not expected, but leaving small change is appreciated. Most upscale restaurants include a service charge in the bill.

Shopping For traditional *ao dai* dresses, head to the shops surrounding Tan Dinh market, off Hai Ba Trung Street on the border of districts one and three. A custom-fitted outfit, including design and fabric, costs US\$20 for cotton or US\$60 for silk.

How to maximise two hours of free time Don't shy away from the touristy big bus tours, which offer a great way to explore the city. History buffs should also visit the War Remnants Museum.



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Insider's tip for a half-day off Take a taxi, bus or *xe om* (motorbike taxi) out to the tip of Thanh Da Island, some 20 minutes from downtown. Once there, walk among the rice fields, get lost in the duck farms, marvel at pretty lily ponds and enjoy the laidback ambience. If not for the skyscrapers in the distance, one may mistake Thanh Da Island for a far-flung, remote Vietnamese countryside.

Impressive lunch for clients At Com Nieu Sai Gon on Ho Xuan Huong Street, known also as the 'flying rice place', waiters toss your orders of baked rice across the room and perform tricks. One of Anthony Bourdain's favourite spots because, gimmickry aside, it serves some of the best traditional Vietnamese food in town.

Lunch on your own Sample all that Hue cuisine has to offer in Ho Chi Minh City at Nam Giao, a tiny place off Le Thanh Ton Street near Ben Thanh market. It serves everything from the famous *bun bo hue* to the tiny rice-flour snacks central Vietnam is known for.

Late nights To satisfy hunger pangs that strike late in the night, head to the end of Tran Dinh Xu Street, a night market where all households band together in a cooperative that serves rice, noodles, vegetarian *wontons* (dumplings) and spring rolls till 02.00 every morning. This food street is packed during lunar holidays.

Electricity Single phase voltage of 220V and a frequency of 50 Hz, primarily two-pin sockets.

Visa requirements

Most visitors to Vietnam require a 15- or 30-day tourist visa to enter the country, and these can be applied for at any Vietnamese embassy or consulate, either by post or in person. The fee may vary, depending on the issuing country, but is usually around US\$25-US\$40, with one passport-sized photograph required.

Processing generally takes five days, although a two-day express service is available and this application may be faxed. A same-day express service is also available for those staying for less than 15 days, and these generally take an hour to process.

Visas can also be obtained upon arrival at Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and Danang airports.

Citizens of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore are not required to apply for travel visas when visiting Vietnam. As well, visa fees are waived for citizens of Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia.

Important contacts

NTO

Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) operates under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and is headed by general director Nguyen Van Tuan. Enquiries are best handled by VNAT deputy director Tran Ngoc Diep at diepvnat@gmail.com.

Vietnam is now working with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to promote the CLMV region under the banner of *Four Countries, One Destination*. This four is set to become five as Thailand joins in.

Tel: (84-4) 3-942-3760

Fax: (84-4) 3-942-4115

www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn/english

Travel trade associations

PATA Vietnam Chapter

www.patavietnam.org

Vietnam Tourism Association

www.vita.vn (No English version is available)

Compiled by Jon Dillingham. All information is correct at press time

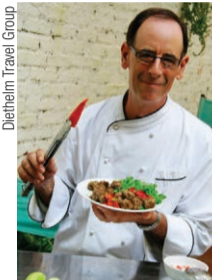


DIETHELM'S HOT PICK

Eat your way through Hanoi on a guided food tour

The vast range of foods in Vietnam can be quite overwhelming for the tourist.

To spare the traveller such angst, Vietnamese gastro guru Daniel Hoyer conducts food tours in partnership with Diethelm, leading food-loving tourists on a highly engaging and insightful journey into the world of Vietnamese cuisine.



Hoyer, also a chef and writer, will take participants to meet traders and vendors in a locals-only food market, while explaining the wide array of ingredients and re-counting Hanoi's food scene in detail. Best of all are the tasting sessions and coffee shop stops in one of the many sidewalk cafes the city is known for.

The trip concludes with lunch at one of the best *bun cha* establishments in town. So successful is this street restaurant that it is open for only a few hours each day. Participants will dine among dozens of *bun cha* aficionados, enjoying the traditional grilled pork and rice vermicelli noodles with fresh herbs and greens like a true Hanoian.



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