

# Macau

## Introduction

Macau - located on the southeastern coast of China, is a former Portuguese colony. Situated at a distance of around 75 km west off Hong Kong and around 150 km off Guangzhou (Canton), it comprises a peninsula and two islands in the Pearl River delta of Guangdong Province. A large trading post of the European colonisers before they discovered Hong Kong, Macau has had an eventful history from the latter half of the 16th century AD to 20th December 1999. It is currently a Special Administrative Region of People's Republic of China that has resumed the exercise of sovereignty over this region. The long and deep contact with Portugal and other European countries has blessed the place with a colonial heritage that blends well with the oriental charm attached to it, due to its physical and cultural proximity with China. This blend of occidental and oriental has made this small but quite busy place interesting enough to recommend a visit.

## What to do

Sightseeing, sea tours, visiting centres of art and culture, enjoying food, and getting exhausted in the nightlife of Macau are some of the options you must consider when visiting this place.

## City at a Glance

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Latitude</b>       | 22°N                  |
| <b>Longitude</b>      | 113°E                 |
| <b>Area</b>           | 23.8 sq km            |
| <b>Population</b>     | 436,000               |
| <b>Language</b>       | Chinese               |
| <b>Religion</b>       | Buddhism, Catholicism |
| <b>Telephone Code</b> | 0853                  |

## History

The Portuguese first discovered Macau when they were looking for a place from where trade between China and Japan could be facilitated. This event took place in 1557 AD when Portuguese sailors discovered a fishing village near South Chinese province of Guangdong in China. The original Chinese name of this place was Amao, which was changed to Amacau by the Portuguese, and finally to Macau. The Portuguese did not have any official control over the island till 1562 AD, when they made a treaty with the Chinese authorities at Guangdong. However, the informal

nature of control ensured the ambiguous status of Macau.

Soon after the Portuguese took over Macau, it grew rapidly, and during later half of 16th century and 17th century, it was perhaps one of the wealthiest places in the world. It facilitated trades of silk, silver, lacquer cabinets, furniture, gold, pearls, porcelain and ivory.

In 1640, trade with Japan was stopped as a consequence of the policy of the Tokugawa Shoguns to extirpate Christian community from Japan. Other European powers were also trying to get a foothold in this trade like Dutch who came here in 1600 AD, and the English in 1699 AD. Internal conflicts of the European countries and policies of Chinese government further weakened the position of Macau in 18th century AD. Modest trade was continued till the first half of 19th century, but transfer of British Superintendence of Trade from Macau to Hong Kong in the year 1842 further declined its position.

Meanwhile, the ambiguity on the status of Macau continued, though China recognised Portuguese control over it in 1887. In 1951, it was declared as an overseas province of Portugal, but after the fall of the Salazar dictatorship in 1974, the situation changed dramatically. In 1979, a new agreement formally recognised Macau as Chinese territory under Portuguese administration. In 1987, Portugal and China agreed on the transfer of the administration of Macau to China and on 20th December 1999, it formally became a part of China as Macau Special Administrative Region.

## **Weather and Best Season to Visit**

The climate of this part of the world is warm and humid and there are good variations in the temperature over the year. Summers from June to September are warm with temperature going over 30°C, while it goes down 10°C from November to February. Weather of this region is also influenced by the tropical cyclones from the South Pacific Ocean during the season of typhoon. Autumn, which last here from October to December, therefore is the best season for visiting this place.

## **Attractions**

### **Barrier Gate**

This is the gate that separates China and Macau and has played an important part in the history of Macau. It was not possible for the foreigners to cross the gate and enter China before 1980, but with the opening of China and inclusion of Macau as a special administrative zone of China receded the importance of this gate.

### **Kun Iam Temple**

A major attraction in the city, this temple, which was built in honour of Chinese goddess of mercy, is one of the earliest structures to be built in Macau. Politically it is significant for being the venue where the famous Mong-Ha Sino - American treaty, was signed.

## **Ruins of St. Paul**

The ruins of this old monument are another place of interest in Macau. The monument has faced three great fires in the past and not much is left except the façade of the Mater Dei College.

## **Guia Circuit**

This circuit comprises places around Guia Hill such as Memorial House of Sun Yat Sen, Guia Fort, Guia Light House, Grand Prix and Wine Museum, and Jai Alai Casino.

## **Lou Lim Iok Garden**

Initially built as the home of a wealthy local, the garden is a major tourist attraction these days, which show cases amongst other things, pergolas narrow winding paths and a wide variety of flowers.

## **Leal Senado**

Leal Senado Square is the busiest place in Macau, and also its architectural and commercial hub. The place is a must for anyone who intends to visit Macau.

## **Museums**

Located in Monte Fortress, next to the Ruins of St. Paul's, Macau City Museum teaches visitors about Macau's history and explains the unique culture of the Macanese community. The Maritime Museum conveys information in an entertaining environment; the Grand Prix Museum and the Wine Museum (the only one in Asia) are other places, worth a visit.

## **Macau's Cyber Fountain**

Placed in the Nam Vam lakes, it is the largest Cyber Fountain of Asia involving a combination of water jets and music controlled by computer. This is also one of the newest introductions that Macau has offered to the tourists.

## **Important Festivals and Exhibitions**

Throughout the year, Macau stages various international events such as the International Fireworks Festival, and the Macau International Music Festival, which attract tourists and locals alike.

Macau also hosts the annual Macau Grand Prix, which attracts over 70,000 visitors. An audience of 220 million viewers across the globe can watch the races and competition involving international drivers pounding the famous Guia Circuit, via satellite.

Other sports events include: the "Macau Golf Open" held every two years, the Dragon Boat Races held in June, the Macau International Women's Volleyball competition held in August and the Macau International Marathon in November.

## Places Nearby

Hong Kong, now a part of Peoples Republic of China and one of the richest market places in the world is at a distance of around 60 km from Macau. Apart from a great shopping destination it is also a good place for sightseeing.

Guangzhou or Canton the capital of the Guangdong Province in China and a historical trading post is another place, worth a visit. Before, it was not possible to visit Guangzhou from Macau, but now it is quite possible by road and by air.

## After Hours

Macau has got a number of discos, pubs, and nightclubs, which can become an important part of your schedule after sunset. One can also try out the Kun Iam Statue area (popularly known as "The Docks"), which is famous for its fun filled nightlife.

## Shopping

Macau is not a shopper's delight like Hong Kong or Singapore. Nevertheless, once here, you should have a look at some Portuguese wine, antiques, books, and other souvenirs. Leal Senado Square is the main market and highly recommended for shopping purpose.

## Where to Stay

There are good accommodation options available in Macau including hotels in different categories, Portuguese - style inns, guesthouses, and hostels. On the major holidays early reservations are required due to heavy rush. On the weekends, tariffs tend to increase by around 20%.

## Where to Eat

When it comes to food and cuisine, Macau does justice to its status of an international city. There are a number of restaurants in Macau that serve some of the most varied and mouth-watering cuisine options from all over the world. Starting from the Chinese, you can try the Indian, Thai, Japanese, and Continental cuisines.

## Travel Information

### Air Travel resources

Macau International Airport is connected to 20 cities, 14 of them being in the Mainland China. Air Macau is the flag carrier of Macau with many other international airlines operating out of here. A regular air service by helicopter is also operational.

**Now there is a 45 minute direct ferry service from Hong Kong Airport.**

## **Land and water**

### **By Sea**

Macau and Hong Kong are connected to each other by one of the busiest waterways in the world. Ships carrying passengers to Macau, anchor at the Macau Ferry Terminal, situated in the Outer Harbour. Inner Harbour connects Macau with Mainland China. **Now there is a 45 minute direct ferry service from Hong Kong Airport.**

### **By Land**

There are long-distance buses that connect Macau with important cities of Mainland China through Barrier Gate.

## **Local transport**

Travelling within Macau is very convenient and easy as the local transport system is modern, efficient and reliable. Yellow coloured taxis are the most common of all the local transport modes. Most of them are metered and radio called. City buses, which ply on most routes in the city, are quite comfortable. Mokes (small jeeps) and pedicabs (tricycle) ferry people from one part of the city to the other and are a good option, for those used to travel with a pinch of adventure. Pull out some extra cash and you can avail the luxury of a chauffeur driven car to travel in the city. Yet, the comforts of travelling within the city can only be enjoyed, if you carry a bilingual map of Macau in your pocket, as majority of the people do not understand English.

## **Travel Resources**

### **Tourist Information Centre**

Macau Government Tourist Office  
9, Largo do Senado  
P.O. Box 3006 Macau  
Tel: 0853 315566, 513355  
Fax: 0853 510104