



Macau

853 / POP 566,375

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ António (p551)
- ➔ Restaurante Fernando (p551)
- ➔ Clube Militar de Macau (p550)
- ➔ Robuchon au Dôme (p550)
- ➔ Lord Stow's Bakery (p551)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Pousada de São Tiago (p549)
- ➔ Banyan Tree (p550)
- ➔ Mandarin Oriental (p549)
- ➔ Pousada de Mong Há (p549)
- ➔ 5Footway Inn (p549)

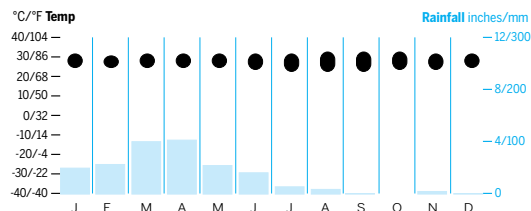
Why Go?

Best known globally as the 'Vegas of China', the Macau Special Administrative Region is indeed a mecca of gambling and glitz. But the city is so much more than that. A Portuguese colony for more than 300 years, it is a city of blended cultures. Ancient Chinese temples sit on streets paved with traditional Portuguese tiles. The sound of Cantonese fills the air on streets with Portuguese names. You can eat Chinese *congee* for breakfast, enjoy a Portuguese lunch of *caldo verde* soup and *bacalhau* (cod) fritters, and dine on hybrid Macanese fare such as *minchi* (ground beef or pork, often served over rice).

The Macau Peninsula holds the old city centre, where colonial ruins sit next to arty new boutiques. Further south are the conjoined islands of Taipa, Cotai and Coloane. Taipa has gloriously preserved Macanese architecture, Cotai is home to the new megacasinos and Coloane is lined with colonial villages and pretty beaches.

When to Go

Macau



Mar–May Celebrate the arts, a sea goddess and a dragon as mist hangs over the harbour.

Jun–Sep Days in the shade of temples and dragon boats; nights aglow with fireworks.

Oct–Feb Music and grand prix in a high-octane run-up to Christmas and New Year.

History

Portuguese galleons first visited southern China to trade in the early 16th century, and in 1557, as a reward for clearing out pirates, they obtained a leasehold for Macau. The first Portuguese governor of Macau was appointed in 1680, and as trade with China grew, so did Macau. However, after the Opium Wars between the Chinese and the British, and the subsequent establishment of Hong Kong, Macau went into a long decline.

In 1999, under the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration, Macau was returned to China and designated as a Special Administrative Region (SAR). Like Hong Kong, the pact ensures Macau a 'high degree of autonomy' in all matters (except defence and foreign affairs) for 50 years. The handover, however, did not change Macau socially and economically as much as the termination of the gambling monopoly in 2001. Casinos mushroomed, redefining the city's skyline, and tourists from mainland China surged, fattening up the city's coffers.

Yet the revenue boost, coupled with government policies (or the lack thereof), also led to income inequality and a labour shortage. Macau residents are also increasingly critical of their chief executive's pro-Běijng stance. In May 2014 thousands in the formerly placid city took to the streets to protest Chief Executive Fernando Chui, who was re-elected three months later.

Language

Cantonese and Portuguese are the official languages of Macau, though few people actually speak Portuguese. English and Mandarin are reasonably well understood, though the former is harder to find here than in Hong Kong.

Sights

Central Macau Peninsula

★ **Ruins of the Church of St Paul** RUINS
(大三巴牌坊, Ruínas de Igreja de São Paulo; Map p540; Travessa de São Paulo; ☑ 8A, 17, 26, disembark at Luís de Camões Garden) **FREE** The most treasured icon in Macau, the towering facade and stairway are all that remain of this early-17th-century Jesuit church. With its statues, portals and engravings that effectively make up a 'sermon in stone' and a *Biblia pauperum* (Bible of the poor), the church was one of the greatest monuments to Christianity in Asia, intended to help the

illiterate understand the Passion of Christ and the lives of the saints.

The church was designed by an Italian Jesuit and completed by early Japanese Christian exiles and Chinese craftsmen in 1602. It was abandoned after the expulsion of the Jesuits



Macau Highlights

- 1 **Taipa Village** (p546) Dining on Portuguese fare and wandering the narrow lanes of this charming colonial village.
- 2 **Venetian** (p553) Wandering the baroque indoor canals of this mind-blowingly huge casino complex.
- 3 **Ruins of the Church of St Paul** (p537) Exploring the ethereal ruins of the very symbol of Macau.
- 4 **Lou Lim Ieoc Garden** (p545) Losing yourself in maze-like spaces at Lou Lim Ieoc Garden.
- 5 **Guia Fortress & Guia Chapel** (p543) Taking the cable car to handsome Guia Fort and its gorgeous chapel.
- 6 **Restaurante Fernando** (p551) Indulging in a long lunch of garlicky clams and crisp suckling pig at this beloved beachside institution in Coloane.