



Macau

Macau Peninsula p220

Lying 65km to the west of Hong Kong, Macau is a city of duality. Its fortresses, churches and the culinary traditions of its former Portuguese colonial masters speak to a uniquely Mediterranean style on the China coast. These are intermixed with the customs, alleys, temples and shrines of its Chinese heritage. On the other hand, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Macau is the 'Vegas of the East', the only place in China where gambling is legal.

The Islands: Taipa & Coloane p241

Taipa was once two islands that were slowly joined together by silt from the Pearl River. A similar physical joining has happened to Taipa and Coloane because of land reclamation from the sea. The new strip of land joining the two islands is known as Cotai (from Co-loane and *Tai-pa*). Taipa has rapidly urbanised and it's hard to imagine that just a few decades ago it was an island of duck farms and boat yards. The small island of Coloane was a haven for pirates until 1910. Today it retains Macau's old way of life, though luxurious villas are finding their way onto the island.



TOP SIGHT RUINS OF THE CHURCH OF ST PAUL

Also known as ‘the Gate to Nowhere’, the ruins of the Church of St Paul are the most treasured icon in Macau. Once a Jesuit church in the early 17th century, all that remains of it now are the facade and the stairway. However, with its statues, portals and engravings that effectively make up a sermon in stone, it’s one of the greatest monuments to Christianity in Asia.

The church was designed by an Italian Jesuit and built in 1602 by Japanese Christian exiles and Chinese craftsmen. After the expulsion of the Jesuits, a military battalion was stationed here. In 1835 a fire erupted in the kitchen of the barracks, destroying everything, except what you see today.

The facade has five tiers. At the top is a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, surrounded by stone carvings of the sun, moon and stars. Beneath that is a statue of the infant Jesus accompanied by the implements of the Crucifixion. In the centre of the third tier stands the Virgin Mary being assumed bodily into heaven along with angels and two flowers: the peony, representing China, and the chrysanthemum, a symbol of Japan. Just below the pediment, on the right side of the facade, is a dragon surmounted by the Holy Virgin. To the right of the Virgin is a carving of the tree of life and the apocalyptic woman (Mary) slaying a seven-headed hydra; the Japanese *kanji* next to her reads: ‘The holy mother tramples the heads of the dragon’.

The facade is approached by six flights of 11 stairs each, with an attractive balustrade running up each side.

The small **Museum of Sacred Art & Crypt** (天主教藝術博物館和墓室, Museu de Arte Sacra e Cripta; Map p226; Rua de São Paulo; ☎9am-6pm; 🕒 8A, 17, 26, disembark at Luís de Camões Garden) **FREE** contains carved wooden statues, silver chalices and oil paintings, as well as the remains of Vietnamese and Japanese Christians martyred in the 17th century.

DON'T MISS

- Facade details
- The stairway
- Museum of Sacred Art
- Crypt & ossuary

PRACTICALITIES

- 大三巴牌坊, Ruínas de Igreja de São Paulo
- Map p226
- Travessa de São Paulo
- admission free
- 🕒 8A, 17, 26, disembark at Luís de Camões Garden