



Melaka

TELEPHONE CODE 06 / POPULATION 759,000 / AREA 1652 SQ KM

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Best Places to Eat

- » Pak Putra (p133)
- » Selvam (p135)
- » Low Yong Mow (p133)
- » Capitol Satay (p135)
- » Howard's (p133)

Best Places to Stay

- » Majestic Malacca (p132)
- » Heeren House (p128)
- » River View Guesthouse (p128)
- » Apa Kaba Home & Stay (p130)
- » Hotel Puri (p129)

Why Go?

Outlined to the west by sandy coastline and filled inland with waves of jungle-carpeted hills, the sultry city-state of Melaka is the cradle of modern Malaysia. While everything from international trade to the country's political system (based on the Malaccan sultanate) began here, the city and state have avoided becoming high-rise metropolises and instead remain low-key enclaves basking in the memory of a majestic past. To many Malaysians, Melaka is where the soul of the country can be glimpsed, and even through Melaka City's rapid development there remains a coastal vibe that demands a slower pace of life. The variations on traditional cuisine, including a regional twist on Malay-Chinese Nonya food, rival what's on offer in better-known KL and Penang; many visitors find the food easier to explore in Melaka as dining is predominantly in restaurants (usually with English menus) rather than at hawker stalls.

When to Go?

Melaka has become an extremely popular tourist destination for Malaysians and Singaporeans and it gets very crowded on weekends and holidays. Weekdays are the best time to visit (when many hotels also offer lower rates) but this means you'll miss Friday and Saturday nights' Jonker's Walk Night Market.

Reserve well in advance for the big, colourful festival times such as Chinese New Year, Festa San Pedro and Christmas. As far as weather goes – it's always hot – but you're less likely to get rained on during October, April and early May.

MELAKA CITY

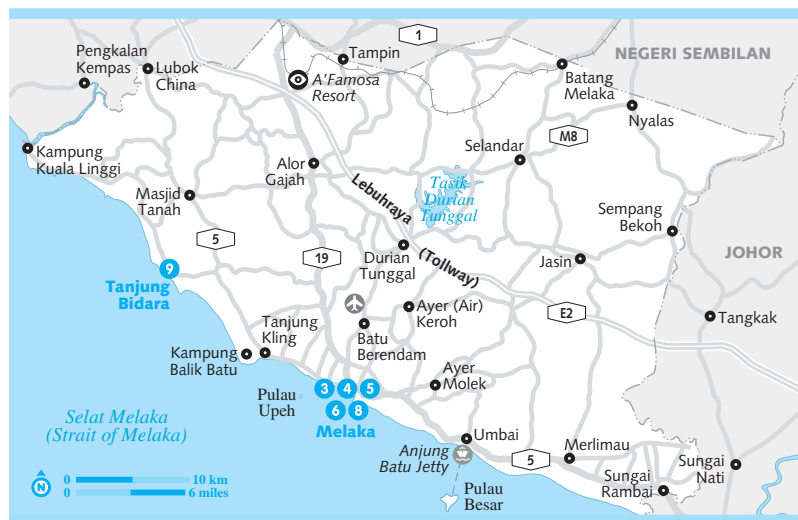
Back when KL was a malaria-ridden swamp and Penang had yet to become the 'Pearl of the Orient', Melaka was already one of the greatest trading ports in Southeast Asia. Today the city is a sleepy backwater compared with its high-rolling cousins, but it's developing quickly, much aided by the Chinatown area's Unesco Heritage Site status, granted in 2008. More than ever Melaka is a hot tourist destination and the pace at which shopping malls and hotels are being built is mind boggling. There's still charm to spare, however, best represented by Chinatown's resident artists, cooks and creative trishaws, which coexist happily alongside the gaudy, modern signs on storefronts and so many photo-snapping tourists.

The quiet power of the Peranakan, Portuguese and Dutch architecture that

made the city famous persists through the surrounding hullabaloo. With the oldest functioning mosque, Catholic church and Buddhist temple in the country, the city today (as it has for centuries) exudes a tolerance that accepts visitors of every creed. And have we mentioned the food? If you're eating local dishes, it's unlikely you'll have a bad meal. From the distinct Peranakan dishes to Eurasian Portuguese cooking and Indian banana-leaf shops, the citywide restaurant aromas add further colour to the cultural mosaic that makes Melaka such an astonishing destination.

History

The history of the city-state of Melaka is a tale that begins with a legend then, as it progresses, becomes filled with tales of colonial battles. However it's told, the story of the state is inseparable from that of the city for which it was named. Historians have



Melaka Highlights

- 1 Savouring the diverse and addicting flavours of **Nonya food** (p133)
- 2 Wandering aimlessly past gorgeous Malay, Chinese and Dutch **heritage architecture**
- 3 Perusing and snacking at the lively **Jonker's Walk Night Market** (p134)
- 4 Strolling the promenade along the eastern bank of the cleaned-up **Sungai Melaka** (Melaka River)
- 5 Getting to know part of the local culture and its history at the **Baba-Nonya Heritage Museum** (p120)
- 6 Shopping the eclectic boutiques, antique shops and galleries of **Chinatown** (p137)
- 7 Taking a ride in a glitzy **trishaw** (p140) and rocking out to the thumping bass of your peddler's stereo
- 8 Hiking to peaceful **St Paul's Church** (p116) for cool breezes and better views
- 9 Driving through villages and farmland to the long white-sand beach of **Tanjung Bidara** (p141)