



Melaka

Chinatown p143

Catch glimpses of old-time Melaka while wandering through this heritage district dotted with ornate temples and mosques.

Baba-Nonya Heritage Museum p143

Learn about Straits Chinese culture and history at this museum in a beautifully restored residence.

Fabulous Restaurants p146

Eat Chinese dim sum for breakfast, Nonya food for lunch and Pakistani tandoori for dinner.

Jonker's Walk Night Market p149

Peruse the trinket stands and graze on snacks while enjoying this lively weekend event.

Ride a Trishaw p138

Take your pick from the technicolour fake-flower-festooned trishaws for a fun trip around the city.

Explore

Back in the 15th century Melaka was one of the greatest trading ports in Southeast Asia. In the subsequent 600 years its fortunes have waxed and waned but now it's a massive tourist attraction thanks to its 2008 designation as a Unesco World Heritage Site.

You'll need at least two days to view the main historic sights including the Stadthuys, Porta de Santiago, St Paul's Church, the Sultanate Palace, Villa Sentosa and historic Chinatown, where you'll find the Baba-Nonya Heritage Museum. Escape the crowds at Bukit China graveyard, with sunset views of the city. Also don't miss the Jonker's Walk Night Market (Friday to Sunday) and the chance to sample the city's famed Malay-Chinese Nonya food – so delicious that it's reason enough to visit.

The Best...

- ➔ **Sight** Chinatown (p143)
- ➔ **Place to Eat** Nancy's Kitchen (p146)
- ➔ **Place to Drink** Cheng Ho Tea House (p148)

Top Tip

Avoid visiting on the weekends when there are so many photo-snapping tourists that the whole heritage district can feel like front row at a rock concert.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Air** Melaka International Airport, 20km north of Melaka in Batu Berendam, has connections to Kuala Lumpur and Penang.
- ➔ **Bus** Buses from KL (RM17.50 to RM27.50, every half hour, two hours) and Penang (RM50, twice daily, seven hours) arrive at Melaka Sentral bus station off Jln Tun Razak, in the north of town. A taxi into town should cost RM20, or you can take bus 17 (RM1.40).
- ➔ **Taxi** Taxis to KL (RM170) leave from Melaka Sentral.
- ➔ **Train** Tampin, 38km north of Melaka, is on the main north-south line from KL to Singapore. Taxis from Melaka cost around RM60 or take the Tai Lye bus (RM5, 1½ hours), which leaves every half-hour from Melaka Sentral.

Getting Around

- ➔ **Walking/Bicycle** Melaka is small enough to walk around or you can rent a bike for around RM3 per hour from guesthouses around Chinatown.
- ➔ **Bus** Bus 17 runs every 15 minutes from Melaka Sentral to the town centre, past the huge Mahkota Parade shopping complex, to Taman Melaka Raya and on to Medan Portugis.
- ➔ **Trishaw** Taking to Melaka's streets by trishaw is a must – by the hour they should cost about RM50, or RM20 for any one-way trip within the town, but you'll have to bargain hard.
- ➔ **Taxi** Charge around RM15 for a trip anywhere around town with a 50% surcharge between 1am and 6am.

Need to Know

- ➔ **Area Code** 06
- ➔ **Location** Melaka is 144km south of Kuala Lumpur.
- ➔ **Tourism Malaysia** (☎283 6220; Jln Mahkota; ☎9am-10pm) is located at the Menara Taming Sari tower; it has very knowledgeable, helpful staff. The local **tourist office** (☎281 4803; www.melaka.gov.my; Jln Kota; ☎9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm) is diagonally across the square from Christ Church.

History

When Parameswara, a Hindu prince/pirate from Sumatra, arrived at a small Malay fishing village around 1401, he recognised its potential as a major port to attract merchants from all over the East. Not only was it located halfway between China and India, but it also had easy access to the spice islands of Indonesia. A solid foundation for this vision came about four years later with the arrival of the Chinese Muslim Admiral Cheng Ho in Melaka bearing gifts from the Ming emperor and the promise of protection from Siamese enemies.

Chinese settlers followed, who mixed with the local Malays to become known as the Baba and Nonya, the Peranakans or Straits Chinese. Indian traders also intermarried with Malays creating the Straits-born Indian community known as the Chitty. By the time of Parameswara's death in 1414, Melaka was a powerful