



Melaka

📍 06 / POPULATION: 788,700 / AREA: 1652 SQ KM

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Best Places to Eat

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- » Capitol Satay (p221)
- » Nancy's Kitchen (p220)
- » Selvam (p222)
- » Hainan Food Street (p220)

Best Places to Stay

- » 45 Lekiu & The Stable (p217)
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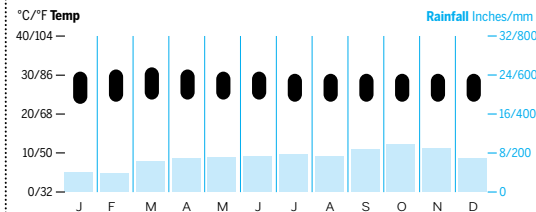
Why Go?

Back when Kuala Lumpur was a malaria-ridden swamp and Penang was yet to become the 'Pearl of the Orient,' Melaka was already one of the greatest trading ports in Southeast Asia. Over time it lost ground to Singapore and became a sleepy backwater compared with its high-rolling cousin. Ultimately this downturn preserved much of the ancient architecture as well as the old ways of life, and today Melaka is hugely back on the tourist radar thanks to its 2008 designation as a Unesco World Heritage Site.

More allure comes from the city's mixed Malay, Chinese, Indian and European heritage and the serene *kampung* (villages) scattered among the state's tropical forests, farmlands and beaches. Over generations, this cultural mix has developed variations on traditional cuisine, including the famed Malay-Chinese Nonya food, which is so delicious that just the food is reason enough to visit.

When to Go

Melaka



Jan–Feb Chinese New Year, high temperatures and little rainfall.

Apr–Jul The coolest temperatures and tons of festivals.

Nov–Dec Christmas and Deepavali are celebrated with great fanfare.

History

However the history of the city-state of Melaka is told, the story of the state is inseparable from that of the city for which it was named. Before the late 14th century, Melaka was a simple fishing village.

Founded by Parameswara, a Hindu prince from Sumatra, and located halfway between China and India, and with easy access to the spice islands of Indonesia, Melaka attracted merchants from all over the East and became a favoured port.

In 1405 the Chinese Muslim Admiral Cheng Ho arrived 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. By the time of Parameswara's death in 1414,

Melaka was a powerful trading state. Its position was consolidated by the state's adoption of Islam in the mid-15th century.

In 1509 the Portuguese came seeking the wealth of the spice and in 1511 Alfonso de Albuquerque forcibly took the city. Under the Portuguese, the fortress of A'Famosa was constructed, and missionaries strove to implant Catholicism. While Portuguese cannons could easily conquer Melaka, they could not force Muslim merchants from Arabia and India to continue trading there, and other ports in the area, such as Islamic Demak on Java, grew to overshadow Melaka.

Suffering harrying attacks from neighbouring Johor and Negeri Sembilan, as well as from the Islamic power of Aceh in Sumatra, Melaka declined further. The city passed into Dutch hands after an eight-month siege in 1641 and the Dutch ruled Melaka for



Melaka Highlights

- 1 Eating Chinese dim sum for breakfast, Nonya food for lunch and Pakistani tandoori for dinner at Melaka's **fabulous restaurants** (p220)
- 2 Catching glimpses of old-time Melaka while leisurely wandering through historic **Chinatown** (p213)
- 3 Snacking and perusing trinket stands at the

Jonker's Walk Night Market

(p223)

- 4 Feeling like a happy fool while rocking out to '80s dance hits in a wacky Melaka **trishaw** (p209)
- 5 Imagining the past and all its intricacies at the **Baba-Nonya Heritage Museum** (p214)
- 6 Spending a day browsing Chinatown's varied **art**

galleries

(p213) and chatting with the artists

- 7 Getting lost in the tangle of the three downtown **shopping malls** (p223) and stumbling upon a local stage show
- 8 Watching freighters move down the Strait of Melaka while lounging on the white sands of **Tanjung Bidara** (p226)