Connexions module: m12624

SINGAPORE FACTS*

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Abstract

Some useful facts and background information for Singapore. Compiled by NUS for the delegates of the INNOVATE 2005 conference in Singapore and Tokyo.

1 Singapore Facts

1.1 Full Country Name

Republic of Singapore

1.2 History

The name Singapore is derived from the word "Singapura" or "Lion City" as legend has it that a Sumatran prince sighted a beast that looked like a lion when he first set foot on the island in the 14th century. In the year 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles established a British trading station on this island. Singapore gained its independence as a sovereign and democratic nation on 9 August 1965. It was admitted to both the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations in the same year.

1.3 Area

Singapore has a total land area of 692.7 sq km (267.45 sq mi), comprising one main island and a number of islets scattered off its northeast and southern coasts.

1.4 Climate

Singapore is an equatorial country with relatively uniform temperature, high humidity all year round and abundant rainfall particularly during the Northeast Monsoon from November to January. It has relatively high temperatures with a daily average of 26.7 °C and a high daily relative humidity of approximately 84.4%.

1.5 Population

4,35 million (July 2004 est.)

1.6 People

Singapore's people are largely descendants of immigrants from the Malay Peninsula, China and the Indian sub-continent. The population is comprised of 76.7% Chinese, 13.9% Malay, 7.9% Indian and 1.5% others.

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1.7 Language

There are 4 official languages - Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English. Malay is the national language and English is the language of administration as well as the medium of instruction in schools and other educational institutions. The National Anthem is sung in the Malay language.

1.8 Religion

31% Taoist, 28% Buddhist, 18% Muslim, 10% Christian, 4% Hindu

1.9 National Symbols



Figure 1: The lion head is the national symbol of courage, strength and excellence.



Figure 2: Vanda Miss Joaquim is the national flower which epitomises Singapore's quest for progress and excellence in all aspects of life.



Figure 3: The colours of the Singapore flag represent red for brotherhood and equality; white for purity and virtue. The crescent moon represents a young nation on the rise. The five stars stand for Singapore's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

For more information on Singapore's national symbols, please visit Singapore Infomap¹.

1.10 Government

Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government based on the Westminster model. The organs of state comprise:

The Executive: Head of State and Cabinet

- Head of State: President S R Nathan, elected on 1 Sep 1999 (The President is elected for a fixed term of 6 years.)
- Cabinet: Led by the Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong (since 12 Aug 2004)

Parliament

Parliament is elected by general election every five years. The first sitting of Parliament was held on 8 Dec 1965. The first general election for Parliament was held on 13 Apr 1968. There are 23 registered political parties. The current Parliament, elected on 3 Nov 2001 has 82 People's Action Party (PAP) Members of Parliament (MPs), 2 Opposition MPs and 1 Non-Constituency MP. In addition there are 7 nominated MPs.

The Judiciary: The Supreme Court and the Subordinate Courts

The Judiciary administers the law independently of the Executive and this independence is safeguarded by the Constitution.

For more information, visit: $SINGOV^2$.

1.11 Education

General Literacy rates (15 years and over) (2002): 93.7% Literacy in two or more languages: 56%

1.12 Economy

Singapore, a highly developed and successful free market economy, enjoys a remarkably open and corruptionfree environment, stable prices, and a high per capita GDP. The economy depends heavily on exports, particularly in electronics and manufacturing.

• GDP (purchasing power parity): \$109.4 billion (2003)

 $^{^{1}}$ http://www.sg/explore/symbols.htm

²http://www.gov.sg/index.html

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• GDP – real growth rate: 1.1% (2003)

• GDP – per capita purchasing power parity: \$23,700 (2003)

• GDP - composition by sector: (2003)

Agriculture: negligible
Industry: 32.2%
Services: 67.8%

Major industries: Shipping, banking, tourism, electrical & electronics, chemicals, and oil refining.

Trade (2002)

Sectors	Amount S\$ (billions)
Total trade	432
Total imports	208
Total exports	224

Table 1

Major trading partners: US, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan

1.13 Employment

Labour force: 2,128,500

Employed persons: 2,017,400 (Males: 1,137,100; Females: 880,300)

Unemployment rate: 4.4%

Central Provident Fund: A social security savings scheme in which all employees and their employers contribute a percentage of their salary. Employees below 55 years contribute 20% while employers contribute 13%. Employees 55 years and above contribute at lower rates. In addition to providing security for old age, this fund can also be used for healthcare, home ownership and asset enhancement.

There are 3 million CPF members and their CPF balance stood at S\$100.28 billion (as at 30 June 2003) Wage policies: The National Wages Council made up of representatives from the government, employers groups & trade unions advises the government on wage policies, and issues guidelines in line with long-term economic objectives. There are 70 registered employees' trade unions and 3 employer unions and one federation of employee trade union, National Trade Union Congress (NTUC). NTUC works closely with the government and business sector to look after workers' interest.

1.14 Transportation

Port statistics (2002): Total no. of vessels calling at the Singapore port is 142,745 Airport statistics (up to 2002):

Total no. of aircraft movements: 174,820Total passenger movements: 29 million

Total number of vehicles in Singapore (2002): 706,956 (of which 406,589 are cars and rental cars)
Forms of public transport: MRT, LRT, Bus, Taxi services

1.15 Communications

Forms of communications (June 2003):

• Total no. of mobile phone users: 3,336,400 (80.1%)

• Total no. of pager subscribers: 222,100 (5.3%)

• Residential telephone lines: 1,915,700 (45.9%)

Total no. of Internet dial-up subscribers: 2,025,700 (48.7%)

1.16 Mass Media

- No. of local newspaper: 10 dailies with an average combined circulation of about 1.5 million (as of Oct 2001)
- No. of foreign publications, journals & magazines: 5,500
- No. of TV broadcasters: 2 groups (MediaCorp, SPH MediaWorks)
- No. of radio broadcasters: 6 (MediaCorp Radio, UnionWorks, SAFRA Radio, National Arts Council, Redifussion and BBC World Service)
- No. of TV cable operator: 2 (Singapore Cable Vision, StarHub)
- No. of radio channels (domestic): 18
- No. of free terrestrial TV channels: 3
- Cable TV subscribership: 341,907 persons of 31.83% of all cabled homes (as at 31 Oct 2002)
- Internet dial-up penetration rate: 48.7% (as at June 2003)
- Cable modem subscribers: 93,967 (Those who subscribed to SCV MaxOnline service to access Internet) (as of 31 Oct 2002)
- ADSL subscribers: 108,600 (as at 31 Oct 2002)
- No. of broadband users: 34% or 950,000 Singapore residents, 10 years or above (Survey on Broadband Usage, 2001)

1.17 Festivals

As a melting pot of many cultures, Singapore enjoys many colourful festivals. The Chinese celebrate Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid Autumn Festival with mouth-watering delicacies created just for those occasions. The Muslims look forward to Hari Raya Puasa & Hari Raya Haji and the Hindus have Thaipusam and Deepavali. These festivals are occasions for all Singaporeans to come together to share their culture and traditions - visitors are welcome to join us! To find out more about festivals in Singapore, please visit Singapore Infomap³.

1.18 Arts

Singapore is a City for the Arts. We have a burgeoning arts scene and there are drama, music and dance performances all year round at various locations, culminating in the Singapore Arts Festival in June. Catch some of our free road shows and performances at the local gardens and parks.

The National Arts Council, the national agency spearheading the development of the arts in Singapore, manages Kallang Theatre (1,744 seats), Victoria Theatre (904 seats) and the Drama Centre (326 seats). The other major arts venue is the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay. Opened Oct 2002, the arts centre is managed by The Esplanade Co Ltd and comprises a 1,600-seat Concert Hall (with 200 additional seats in the Gallery), a 2,000-seat Theatre, a 250-seat Recital studio, a 220-seat Theatre Studio, a rehearsal studio, outdoor performing spaces and Esplanade mall.

There are currently 3 National Museums, namely the Singapore History Museum and the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum. The Singapore Philatelic Museum is a subsidiary museum.

³http://www.sg/explore/people festivals.htm

Other museums maintained by various private and para-governmental agencies include: Fort Siloso and Images of Singapore in Sentosa, The Battle Box at Fort Canning, Lee Kong Chian Art Museum and Ng Eng Teng Art gallery at the National University of Singapore, Changi Chapel & Museum, Fuk Tai Chi Museum at Telok Ayer Street, Sports museum, Sun Yat Sen Nanyang memorial Hall, Civil Defence Heritage Gallery, and Chinese Heritage Centre.

To find out more about Singapore arts performances and activities, please visit Singapore Arts Festival⁴

1.19 Food Paradise

Singapore is indeed a gourmet's paradise, offering a cosmopolitan range of cuisines ranging from Mongolian to South African and Japanese to a host of European choices. Of course, you should not miss Singapore's famed local specialities, Chilli Crab and Hainanese Chicken Rice. You should also try Laksa (rice noodles in coconut curry gravy with shrimp, egg and chicken as garnishing) and Nasi Padang (rice with various spicy dishes). For casual dining, eat at a kopitiam, which is a traditional type of coffee shop serving a large variety of local food. For breakfast, order some Kaya (sweet coconut egg jam) on charcoal-toasted bread and enjoy with a cup of local coffee. Another great combination is roti prata (Indian pancake) and teh tarik ("pulled" tea). Find out more about these interesting culinary delights from Unique Singapore⁵.

1.20 Shopping Paradise

Besides being a food paradise, Singapore is also a shopper's paradise. Have fun buying everything from arts and crafts, antiques, gold-plated orchids, electronic goods, computer software to the hottest fashion! Check out the shopping list from Planet $Gypsy^6$.

1.21 Places of Interest

There are many places of interest including Chinatown, Little India, Jurong Bird Park (with the world's largest Southeast Asian bird collection), the Night Safari, the Singapore Zoological Gardens and the Singapore Science Centre. Sentosa Island is a resort island, which is accessible by bus, cable car or ferry. It has a lot of attractions including Underwater World (Asia's largest tropical oceanarium), and Volcano Land. For more information, please visit OTAH⁷.

1.22 Time

GMT/UTC+8

1.23 Electricity

220-240V, 50 Hz

1.24 Country Code

+65

1.25 Mobile Phone Network

GSM 900, GSM 1800

⁴ http://www.singaporeartsfest.com/

⁵http://members.tripod.com/unique sg/food.htm

⁶http://www.planetgypsy.com/destinations/singapore/sh singapore.html

⁷http://otah.tripod.com/placesoi.htm

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1.26 Weights & Measures

Metric with local variations