

## The Chalmers Student's Travel Guide to:

# SINGAPORE

Singapore is a bustling port town in the midst of Asia where Western and Asian cultures blends together into something both familiar and exotic. Glistening skyscrapers rise high beside ornately decorated temples and you're about as likely to come across a 7-Eleven as a Noodle shop. The city resides at the southern tip of Malaysia and is home to about 5.4 million people, many of which can trace their lineage to China, Malaysia or India. The official language is English, as Singapore was once a British colony, but most people also speak a secondary language based on their heritage. When visiting the diverse and multicultural Singapore you can experience any part of Asia without even leaving the city!

This travel guide exists to give you a short introduction to the Singaporean culture and also collects answers to common questions about living in Singapore.

## Travel

### How do I travel with public transport in Singapore?

Singapore has a terrific public transport system with a subway and a plethora of buses. You pay using a "EZ-card" that you show to a machine when you enter and exit the vehicle. The charge is based on the distance traveled. The EZ-card is available for purchase at any 7-Eleven shop and at some metro stations. Keep in mind that the public transport system generally only runs until around midnight. To find out what buses or subway lines to take, most people use Google Maps as it's fully integrated with the cities timetables.

### How do I get from/to the airport?

The airport is easily reached at the end of the green line. If you have a lot of luggage, you might want to take a cab though, as it's fairly inexpensive and much more comfortable.

### How much is a taxi?

It's fairly cheap relative to Swedish rates. Generally it's 3-4 SGD basic charge and about 0.5 SGD per kilometer. Going from Changi Airport to the National University of Singapore (at the other side of town) by taxi is about 30 SGD or 170 kr.

### What kind of electrical outlets do they have in Singapore?

Singapore uses Type G electrical sockets, the same as in the UK, Ireland or Malta.

### Can I use my Swedish phone in Singapore?

Yes you can, but to make it affordable you need to get a local sim card.

### How far is it from coast to coast in Singapore?

About 50 km from east to west, and 26 kilometers from north to south.

### Is my Swedish drivers licence valid in Singapore?

For visitors staying less than 12 months your Swedish license will be valid if you also carry an [International Driving Permit](#).

### What timezone is Singapore in?

+8 UTC/GMT (Sweden is in +2 UTC/GMT)

### What is Singapore's telephone code?

+65

### Will I have to apply for a new visa if I leave the country?

No, it won't be necessary to reapply.

### What kind of visa do I need to get?

A Trainee visa.

## Culture

### Will I understand what people are saying?

The national language of Singapore is English, so you should be able to get along fine. However, native Singaporeans tend to speak a local variant of English called Singlish with words borrowed from Mandarin, Malay and Tamil (the other major languages in Singapore). It can be very hard to understand Singlish, but most people will speak "proper" English if they notice that you're a foreigner.

### What are some places I should visit during my stay?

- **Sentosa** is an island just off the coast of Singapore which you can get to by walkway, bus, monorail or cable car. The island houses a plethora of tourist attractions and theme parks, as well as restaurants, hotels and an expansive beach.
- **Arab street, Chinatown & Little india** are three cultural enclaves within the city. They all offer unique buildings, temples, food and markets.
- **Gardens by the Bay** is a huge garden area just by Marina Bay in the center of the city. It's free to walk around the garden but tours and special greenhouses are offered for a charge.
- **Pulau Ubin** is a big island to the north east of Singapore. It's an area which has been fairly well preserved from Singapore's fast modernization and is a great place to see some nature and to get an idea of what Singapore might have been like in the 1960's.
- **Walking trails** have been established in several parts of the city connecting parks and reservoirs.

- **Hawker centers** are essentially big food courts where you can get some great local food for a tiny sum.

### Should I tip at restaurants?

No, you are actually not expected to tip anywhere.

### Should I dress formally at school?

If you want to, but most people dress casually in shorts and a t-shirt. Casual attire is accepted in most places and situations.

### Is the Singaporean culture more or less conservative than Sweden?

Singapore has generally more conservative values than Sweden. For example, homosexuality is not as widely accepted and couples tend to marry before moving in together. Singapore also have rather strict regulations of alcohol and drugs.

## Health

### Is it safe to eat the food/ drink the water in Singapore?

Yes, both tap water and food should be safe to ingest.

### Where do I turn with medical concerns?

In a non-emergency situation you should contact a [General Practitioner](#) which can refer you to a hospital if necessary.

### What's the emergency number in Singapore?

Singapore has one phone number for Fire and Ambulance Emergencies (**995**) and another for Police Emergencies (**999**).

### Do my insurance cover me for my stay in Singapore?

Most likely not. Medical expenses will not be covered by the Swedish government and the usual home insurance will probably not be applicable for such a long duration. So you will need to contact your insurance company and sign a specific travel insurance for your stay in Singapore.

### Do I have to get any vaccinations before going to Singapore?

There are no mandatory vaccinations when traveling to Singapore from Sweden but it's recommended that your common childhood vaccinations have been taken and that you're vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B. More information about vaccinations in Swedish can be found [here](#).

## Economics

### Is it more or less expensive in Singapore, as compared to Sweden?

Singapore is roughly as expensive as Sweden but some things are considerably cheaper, such as local food

or taxis.

## Can I use my credit card in Singapore?

Yes, you can use VISA or MasterCard most places.

## What is the currency in Singapore?

Singapore uses Singaporean Dollars (SGD). 1 SGD is about 5.7 SEK (oct 2014).

# Living

## Do they use western toilets in Singapore?

Yes, western style toilets are most common but you might see the occasional squat style toilet as well.

## What is the weather like in Singapore?

Singapore doesn't have the distinct seasons we're used to in Sweden but a generally uniform weather, loosely organized into a Dry and Wet season. The temperature is usually between 25-31 degrees Celsius and there's often high humidity in the 70-80 % range. It rains all year round but it's most common from October through February. There are also thunderstorms about 40 % of all days.

## What kind of clothes should I bring?

Mostly shorts and t-shirts. It's very common to wear flip-flops or other shoes that dry easily after getting soaked in a rain shower. A foldable umbrella is also something you should always have with you (you can find really tiny ones most places in Singapore). Many young people in Singapore also carry a fashionable backpack such as Fjällräven Kånken.

## Where can I get internet access?

You'll most likely be able to get access to the internet at home but many coffee shops also feature free wifi or you can actually use Eduroam on the NUS campus.

## Is the city safe after dark?

Naturally, you'll have to use your own judgement, but Singapore is one of the safest cities of the world.

## Are there any unfamiliar laws I should be aware of?

Singapore has a practice of putting common sense and courtesies into law and as such you'll see plenty of signs threatening heavy fines for littering or smoking in restricted areas or similar. You should however be aware of some of the more unusual laws:

- After a big wave of littering involving **chewing gum**, all gum has been banned in the country unless it's prescribed by a doctor.
- **Drugs** are banned in most places but the issue is taken especially seriously by Singapore. Being in possession of any amount, however tiny, is subject to the death penalty.
- Even though Singapore has an active homosexual community, **homosexual acts between males** is technically illegal and the law sporadically enforced.
- **Failure to flush a public toilet** can lead to severe fines.

- **Connecting to an unsecured WIFI** network without permission is considered hacking in Singapore and can lead to a number of punitive measures.

### Are there any customs, short of law, that I should be aware of?

Showing public affection is generally discouraged in Singapore so avoid hugging or anything more affectionate when about town.

### How do I find accommodations for my stay?

You'll have to find accommodations for your stay in Singapore yourself. NUS can help with information on where to look, but to get you started, you can look at <http://easyroommate.com.sg>. You can also search for rooms on Google or pay an agent to help you. If you go with an agent there's of course a fee associated. The two most common landlords in Singapore - the Housing and Development Board and Condo. HDB is generally cheaper.