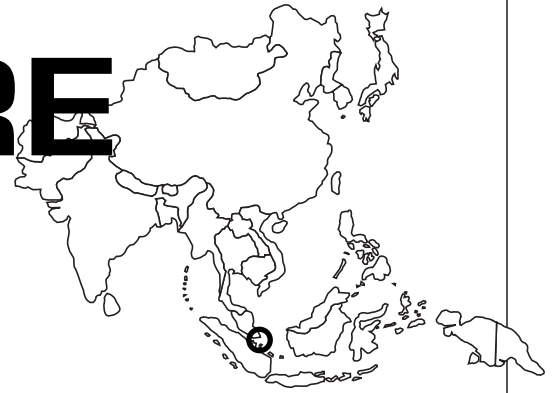


# SINGAPORE



THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, A GARDEN CITY WHERE EAST MEETS WEST, IS AN INDEPENDENT CITY-STATE AND ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL CENTERS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

## population

- Population: 4.5 million
- Density: 6,580 per sq km

The population is ethnically diverse and consists of Chinese [76.8%], Malay [13.9%], Indian [7.9%] and other [1.4%] peoples.

The majority of the population is concentrated on the southern part of the island. Most people live in public-housing tower blocks.

## religions

- Buddhist 42.5%
- Muslim 14.9%
- Non-religious 14.8%
- Christian 14.6%
- Taoist 8.5%
- Hindu 4%
- Other 0.7%

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. There are Religious Harmony laws which ensure that each of the main religions are treated equally [each has two public holidays, for example] and that members of one religion don't try to convert members of another.

## language

The different ethnic communities continue to preserve their respective cultural identities and separate languages.

The country has four official languages: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. English is widely spoken and

is the language of education and administration. A further 20 languages are also used.

## geography

Located just 1° north of the equator at the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore's 402 square miles occupy a crucial place in the cross-currents of Asia. Additional land near the city center has been reclaimed from the sea to enlarge the country.

Once primarily jungle and swamps, the land is now fully utilized for residential, commercial and industrial use. It is around 90 percent urban, with the remainder mostly forest and woodland or arable land.

## climate

The country has a wet tropical climate, with an average annual temperature of 27°C [81°F]. Thunderstorms occur on nearly 150 days each year on average, with November to January being the wettest months. Humidity is very high.

## history

Singapore was part of the Malacca sultanate [one of the Malay kingdoms] in the 15th century.

The modern city was founded in 1819 on the site of a fishing village by the British colonial administrator, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, and ceded to the British East India Company in 1824 by the Sultan of Johor.

Its advantageous location on the

narrow passage between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea and its free-port status soon turned Singapore into a major commercial center. Chinese immigrants soon settled, drawn by the trade. After the First World War, Britain designated the island its principal naval base in East Asia and undertook extensive military construction. During the Second World War Singapore was captured and occupied by the Japanese. In 1946 Singapore was made a separate crown colony, and 13 years later a self-governing state in the Commonwealth.

In 1963 Singapore joined Malaya to form Malaysia. The union, however, was unsuccessful. Economic and political disputes led to separation and Singapore became a sovereign state. The Republic of Singapore, a parliamentary republic, was founded on August 8, 1965.

From 1959 to 1990 the country was led by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. He shepherded the country with a firm hand, fostering astounding growth and progress. President S. R. Nathan was first elected in 1999 and began his second term in 2005.

Singapore has one of the highest standards of living of any country in the world. It is a key trading center for Asia, with the world's busiest harbor. Industry is strong, and its commercial influence continues to grow.



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## christianity

Shortly after arriving in Singapore, Raffles gave some land to the London Missionary Society. The expatriates also asked for a chaplain, and in 1834 a small Presbyterian-Anglican work was begun.

The Roman Catholic church in Singapore dates back to 1819 and the Armenian Orthodox church was also established there from the early 1800s.

Initially the Protestant missionaries reached out to the Chinese population and, together with other denominations, began to plant churches.

Outreach to schools was an early



and ongoing emphasis and this has had a significant impact on society.

Since the end of the Second World War, many people have turned to Christ. The church matured considerably as Bible schools were set up and as Christians focused on reaching students. Large

numbers of students and professionals such as doctors and teachers claim to be Christians and Christians have more influence than their national percentage would indicate. But many of the working class and those living in the high-rise concrete jungles have not heard the gospel.

Today many young people go to church. However, intense pressures from work and culture mean that they often fade from congregations when their careers get under way and their zeal is sapped by materialism.

OMF first came to Singapore in 1951 when it moved its international headquarters following the evacuation from China. From the start, strong links were formed with the Singapore Bible College [founded 1952]. OMF also started a graduate training center and a college to train Christians from across Asia to take the gospel cross-culturally, and continues to supply theological lecturers and other personnel for these institutions.

OMFers have also been involved in the local English-speaking and Chinese-speaking churches, giving training, teaching and counseling. Some also work with ethnic minority churches and are involved in evangelism.

Increasing numbers of Singaporeans are working in cross-cultural missions, with OMF and other agencies. Singapore is strategically placed and endowed with spiritual and material resources to have a major influence on East Asia. The lure of a comfortable and successful lifestyle, and responsibility to parents within the culture's strong family ties, make such service a real and costly sacrifice.

## how to pray

- Church growth was very strong from 1970 to the 1990s. The responsiveness of Singaporeans, active evangelism of churches and agencies and the concentration of committed, giving Christians played a big part in this. Church growth has since slowed.
- Major challenges facing the church:
  - Coping with affluence, materialism and commercialism.
  - Handling restrictive government legislation limiting outreach.
  - Maintenance of adequate family life and witness.
  - Unity among the various churches and denominations.
- Young people are open to the gospel and a significant number of students are Christians, yet the dropout rate is high. Pray for the effective integration of young people into local churches and for their mobilization for world evangelisation.
- The less-reached:
  - The Malay population.
  - There is little consistent outreach to the older Indian community.
  - The lower-paid and non-English-speaking Chinese.
  - Migrant workers: Filipinos, Thai, Indians, and others. There are some lively congregations of Koreans, Filipinos and Indonesians.
  - Drug addiction is a growing problem with young people, notably among the Malay population.
- Singapore's seminaries and missions training schools are becoming a key ministry for Christians all over Asia. Many churches run their own theological training programs. A high number of churches run an active missions program.
- Christian books are widely available, and much Christian literature is printed in Singapore for worldwide distribution.

## OMF's strategic priorities

- To assist in training full-time workers and church leaders
- To facilitate, mobilize and equip Asian cross-cultural missionaries

## opportunities

- Missionary trainers, seminary lecturers and other staff
- Skilled computer and finance staff for OMF's international headquarters