

MACAU

MACAU [ALSO SPELLED MACAO], A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION [SAR] OF CHINA, WAS FORMERLY AN OVERSEAS TERRITORY OF PORTUGAL AND A MAJOR TRADING PORT. IT IS ON THE SOUTH COAST OF CHINA ON THE PEARL RIVER ESTUARY.



population

- Population: 453,125
- Density: 16,068 per sq km
- 95.7% ethnically Chinese [largely Cantonese speakers]
- 1% Macanese [Eurasian]
- 3.3% Other [Portuguese, Filipino, Thai, Russian, other]

Macau is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Macau City is the commercial and administrative center of the province and is home to more than 80 percent of the total population. The land is 100 percent urban, but does contain some cultivated "green spaces" such as parks.

religions

- Buddhist/Chinese 32.7%
- Non-religious/other 60%
- Christian 7.3% [Roman Catholic 5.2%, Protestant 2.1%]

There is no state religion.

language

Cantonese is spoken by nearly 90 percent of the population. Dialects and other Chinese languages, such as Mandarin and Hokkien, are also spoken. Portuguese is an official language, and Macanese or Patuá, a creole based on Portuguese, Malay, Indian and other languages, was used by the Macanese (people of mixed Portuguese and Asian heritage). Now, with the Macanese

reduced to one percent of all inhabitants, it is the mother tongue of just a handful of citizens.

geography

Macau covers just over eight square miles. It is made up of a peninsula and two islands 40 miles west of Hong Kong. They are joined to each other by a causeway and bridges.

Its border with the Chinese province of Guangdong is marked by the massive Barrier Gate erected by the Portuguese in 1849. It is connected by ferry to Guangzhou and Hong Kong. An airport was opened in 1995 and the islands are being developed, but many parts are rural and peaceful.

Macau is a free port, so all vessels may load or unload there without paying import duties.

climate

Macau has a subtropical climate, with a monsoon from June to August and a typhoon season from May to November. The winters are cool and the summers warm. Annual temperatures average 20°C [68°F].

history

Macau is the oldest permanent European settlement in East Asia. It was established as a trading colony in 1557, after Portuguese navigators first landed in the early 1500s.

But they were not the first to use it as a commercial port. During the Ming Dynasty [1368-1643] fishermen moved to Macau and the area began to be established as a trading center for southern China. The early settlers built a temple to the Taoist sea goddess Matsu or A-Ma, from which it is thought the name Macau may originate.

In the hands of Europeans, Macau was transformed, and it was an asset to the Portuguese empire. Ownership of those eight square miles enabled Portugal to build up its trade with China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia and Mexico. It also led to Macau becoming the East Asian seat of Roman Catholicism, with its bishops controlling missions from Goa to the Moluccas and Nagasaki.

But Portuguese colonial and trading power declined from the mid-1600s and Macau struggled as Japan ceased trading with the outside world and the Dutch took Malacca.

On All Souls Day, 1755, Lisbon, Portugal's capital, was hit by an earthquake, followed swiftly by a tsunami and fire. Over 100,000 people died and the disaster affected European philosophy, Christian faith and the Portuguese empire. Voltaire wrote about it in *Candide* and Kant was prompted to begin the study of seismology.

For Macau, over 8,000 miles away,



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the earthquake initially seemed to have a positive effect. Although it had halted Portugal's colonial ambitions and reduced its wealth, Portugal decided to lift restrictions on the activities of non-Portuguese residents in Macau, which brought economic benefits and prosperity. Macau became the main European trading post in Asia for the next 80 years. However, in 1841 the British took Hong Kong and Macau's importance in world trade began to wane.

By 1900 the harbor was becoming choked with silt from the Pearl River and Hong Kong had grown with the lease of the New Territories to the British. Macau lost its pre-eminence in Chinese trade. It began to gain a reputation for smuggling and gambling.

In 1987 Portuguese and Chinese negotiators reached agreement on the return of Macau to China and it was handed over quietly in December 1999. Macau is now a Special Administrative Region [SAR] of the People's Republic of China and follows the principle of "one country, two systems," a similar status to that of Hong Kong.

The economy is dependent on tourism, including its long history as a gambling center, although older, traditional gambling dens are giving way

to larger casinos and hotels. Shortly before the Portuguese left, they restored the old colonial part of the city, and the sense of quiet, crumbling European heritage is popular with tourists.

Macau is now overseen by a committee of politicians and businessmen, who have to be approved by Beijing. The committee elects a chief executive. Beijing openly looks after defense and foreign affairs.



christianity

During Macau's Catholic heyday, missionaries trained there and Catholic literature was published. Peninsular Macau was said to have more churches per square mile than Vatican City.

Today the Catholic population has dwindled to five percent of the total. Many of the early churches remain, as much tourist attractions as places of worship. The best known, St. Paul's Cathedral, has been described by historians as the finest monument to Christianity in the Far East. Most of the cathedral burned to the ground in 1835, but the façade remains and was restored by the Portuguese in the 1990s.

Macau is also famous for the first Protestant missions to China. The first Chinese convert was baptized in Macau and Robert Morrison, the first missionary to China, translated the first Chinese Bible there. When he died in 1834, he was buried in the city's Old Protestant Cemetery. The evangelical population in Macau has always been small and growth has generally been slow, although it doubled in size between 1990 and 2000.

According to *Operation World*, Macau is one of the least-disciplined communities of Chinese in the world. Although there are several theological colleges, there is also a high turnover of church leaders. Training for local leaders is essential to help the church survive.

OMF's strategic priorities

Missionary work is still permitted in Macau under Chinese rule and OMF continues to have a base there. OMF Macau was officially registered in 1996. Work has included prison visiting, hospital chaplaincy, evangelism, discipleship and church planting, Sunday school teaching and English teaching. At present a small number of OMFers work in evangelism, discipleship, lecturing in the Macau Bible Institute and English teaching.

opportunities available

- Long-term work in all aspects of church life.
- Short-term English-teaching.

how to pray

- Pray for those involved in the gambling industry, which employs 40 percent of the workforce in over 40 casinos. This presents a tremendous challenge to the Macau church in terms of effective outreach as well as discipleship.
- Pray that Christians would work together, presenting a unified witness; pray for trust in ongoing relationships.
- There has been an influx of missionaries from Hong Kong and other lands, most being involved in evangelism, discipling, church planting, drug addiction rehabilitation and Bible teaching. Pray for their effectiveness in Macau.
- The evangelical Christian population doubled between 1990 and 2000. Give thanks for this growth.
- Pray for God's blessing on all evangelistic and discipleship ministries.
- Many Mainland Chinese have moved to Macau. Pray that church-planting movements within the region will spread to Mainland China.
- Pray for effective witness from short-term teams visiting in the summer.