

TIME OFF AFTER ICA

Singapore lies at a crossroads of Asia, making it the perfect jumping-off point for exploring the region. Changi Airport is a transport hub, but there are also ferries and trains for visitors who want to take things more slowly. So whether you have a couple of days to spare at the end of ICA, or want to spend a week or more exploring this side of the world, here are our suggestions for what to see and where to go. All prices given are approximate, and in US\$.

2 days... on the beach

[Bintan](#) is one of Indonesia's 17,000 islands and lies in the South China Sea conveniently close (less than an hour by ferry boat) to Singapore. Great hotels and beaches, golf courses, jungle, spa treatments and seafood are the main attractions for a few days R&R in the sun.

What to see and do

- The main attractions of Bintan are surfing, swimming, snorkeling and seafood, and of course the golf at Bintan Lagoon Resort.
- Trikora Beach. Famous for its natural beauty, the white-sand Trikora lies on the east of Bintan, 40km from the main city of Bintan.
- Sakerah Beach. Small (1km long) but perfectly formed.
- Mana Mana Beach. Home to several big resorts, good snorkelling.

Where to stay

- [Bintan Lagoon Resort](#) (From \$90.). Two Jack-Nicklaus/Ian Baker-Finch designed golf courses)
- [Angsana Resort & Spa Bintan](#) (From \$130.)
- [Mayang Sari Beach Resort](#) (From \$135.)

How to get there

- [Bintan Resort Ferries](#) runs a regular 45-minute service between Singapore's Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal and Bintan Resorts' Bandar Bentan Ferry Terminal. Make sure you are at the terminal half an hour before the ferry leaves. Hotels in Bintan can arrange transfers.

2 days... in a city

[Kuala Lumpur](#), the frenetic, laid back, crazy, civilized, bustling, relaxed capital of Malaysia is four hours' drive or 40-minutes' flight from Singapore. It is not as easy to get around as Singapore, but makes up for it with a lively lifestyle, a place where the muezzin call sounds over the thrum of Chinatown markets, where the massive twin Petronas Towers dominate the skyline, and great restaurants and nightclubs rule the night.

What to see and do

- Petronas Twin Towers. Standing 452m, they are the world's tallest twin towers. Surrounded by the KLCC (Kuala Lumpur City Centre) with Petrosains, a world-class interactive science and technology museum; the Petronas art gallery; the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra; the Aquarium; and the Convention Centre.
- Chinatown. Bargains galore at the famous night market, although not everything will be original, and not everything will still work a month after you get it home. Haggle for a better price. Pause for reflexology (massaging pressure points on your feet that correspond to parts of your body) or a massage. Pause again for great street food – try a dried, flattened squid barbecued on a stick. Then try something a bit more appetizing...
- Lake Gardens. Built in the late 19th century around an artificial lake, 230 acres of undulating greenery are interspersed with flowering shrubs, shady trees, exceptional botanic gardens, flowers and lakes.

Where to stay

- [Seri Pacific](#) (From \$60.)
- [Crowne Plaza Hotel](#) (From \$80.)
- [Hotel Istana](#) (From \$90.)
- [Berjaya Times Square](#) (From \$100.)

How to get there

- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)
- [Silk Air](#) (More sophisticated, and pricier.)
- [KTM](#) (Keretapi Tanah Melayu) - National Railway. The Malaysian-owned railway station is in the south of Singapore near the Central Business District, and a single track goes up to Malaysia. It is travel from a bygone era – slow, creaking, characterful, with relaxing views of the Malay Peninsula – and up to Bangkok and beyond.

2 days... of culture

[Malacca](#), an old Straits settlement, is a mix of different cultures from Dutch colonialists to the idiosyncratic Peranakans (Straits Chinese). While Malacca has a multi-racial population of Malays, Chinese and Indians reflecting the overall racial make-up of Malaysia, it is the Peranakan culture that is still practised by a few descendant communities that attracts visitors.

What to see and do

- Jonkers Street. Now known as Jalan Hang Jebat, this is the old (19th century) street of Chinese shophouses crammed with antiques and curios, museums and restaurants. Hunt and bargain for antique furniture, Chinese porcelain, brassware, cast iron beds, lamps, coins and money notes, as well as priceless Buddha statues. The night market at the weekends is a big attraction, too.
- Peranakan Culture. The Straits Chinese, a mix of Malay and Chinese culture, produced their own style of living and cooking – Peranakan. The women wear traditional Malay costumes, notably the 'Baju Kebaya' a blouse woven with silk. The Peranakans' most famous legacy is Nyonya food, a fusion of Malay ingredients with Chinese cooking styles.
- Melaka River. Once dubbed 'Venice of the East' by European seafarers, Melaka River is the point where the history of Malacca began. Take a cruise back into history.
- D-Paradise Melaka. Malacca's recreational rainforest is a haven for wildlife and natural scenery. Covering 320 hectares, Ayer Keroh enables you to learn, as you walk through the trails, the diversity of plant life and animals.

Where to stay

- [Hotel Puri](#) (From \$35.)
- [Mahkota Hotel Melaka](#) (From \$50.)
- [Avillion Legacy Hotel](#) (From \$60.)
- [Majestic Hotel](#) (From \$250.)

How to get there

Coaches from Singapore take 3-4 hours to Malacca, and cost around \$20

4 days... on the beach

With more time to spare, head for the legendary tropical island of [Bali](#), in the middle of Indonesia. Kuta beach is lively and loud, Sanur more peaceful. But the real life is inland among temples and volcanoes, jungles and rice paddies. Every house has a temple, sacred trees are draped in fabric, monkeys jump from tree to tree, white egrets flock at sundown, and many travellers make the pilgrimage to the cultural heart of the island, at Ubud.

What to see and do

- Ubud is a remarkable town in the middle of Bali. For more than a century, it has been the island's centre for fine arts, dance and music, and is arguably the best place to use as a base.
- Nusa Dua tourist resort is home to some of the most beautiful and luxurious hotels. The resort is known for its clean white beaches and clear waters. The surf is gentle along the northern side of the peninsula, bigger along the south.
- Kuta is a popular beach for surfing although currents make it less suitable for swimming. Plenty of performances of Balinese music and dance are staged for tourists.

Where to stay

- [Aston Inn Tuban Hotel](#) (From \$50.). An imaginative new three star concept hotel in Kuta, close to the International airport and within easy reach of all of south Bali's attractions.
- [Swiss-Belhotel Bay View](#) (From \$50.). The modern resort is on the top of Taman Mumbul Hill in Nusa Dua, overlooking the Bay of Tanjung Benoa, the islands of Nusa Penida and the sacred mountain Gunung Agung in East Bali.
- [Kupu-Kupu Barong](#) (From \$200.). This 27 luxury villa resort is one of Bali's finest boutique hotels and an amazing resort for the most romantic travellers.

How to get there

- [Singapore Airlines](#) (National carrier.)
- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)

4 days... in a city

Long a byword for the exotic east, [Bangkok](#), the capital of Thailand gets more exciting every year. It is known first for the magnificent Grand Palace, and for the temples that dot the skyline, and increasingly for the nightlife and restaurants, too.

Singaporeans flock there for the shopping, and a popular haunt is the Chatuchak Weekend market. One tip: take a river boat to escape the traffic, and to see the best views in the city.

What to see and do

- The Grand Palace is built in traditional Thai style mixed with European designs. It was once the official home for the Kings of Siam (as Thailand was called) but now half is open to the public. The centerpiece of the complex is the 45cm Emerald Buddha. Carved from just one piece of jade it is the most revered religious object in Thailand.
- Chatuchak Market. For some years now Bangkok's big weekend market has been held on the northern edge of the city. The variety of goods on offer seems almost endless, and as well as the stalls there are restaurants and snack vendors.
- MBK Shopping Center. The multi-storey MBK, or Mah Boon Krong, is probably Bangkok's most legendary shopping mall, popular with both tourists and locals. Eight floors packed with 2,000 shops that sell everything.

Where to stay

- [Sawasdee Hotels](#) (From \$20.). Over 17 hotels ranging from economy to first class.
- [PJ Watergate Hotel](#) (From \$35.). About 15 minutes' walk from Hualampong Station and a short taxi ride from popular bargain hunters spots like the MBK shopping center.
- [Oriental Hotel](#) (From \$300.). The grand old lady of Bangkok hotels, 130 years old and going strong. Expensive, but memorable.

How to get there

- [Singapore Airlines](#) (National carrier.)
- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)
- [JetStar](#) (Value based carrier network.)

4 days... of culture

[Chiang Mai](#) is a gentle city in the north of Thailand. It is cooler and higher, with trails leading into forests all around. The centre is a vast walled city filled with temples and Buddhist monks in saffron robes. Outside the walls is a more modern city with a buzzing night market, restaurants overlooking the river, and arenas for Thai kickboxing. A few miles out of town, the elephant show is always popular.

What to see and do

- The old city is easy to explore on foot. Wander among historic ruins, admire exquisite temples or sit quietly beside the moat and soak up the charm of this sleepy city. Several temples offer a chance to sit and chat with the monks, to learn more about their lives.
- Chiang Mai National Museum, near the historic Wat Jet Yod, is the main museum of northern Thailand and is under the patronage of Their Royal Majesties, the King and Queen. Visitors pass through six sections of exhibits, a journey from Chiang Mai's prehistory to its present and future course.
- Doi Suthep is a constant part of life in Chiang Mai. A Thai saying goes, "If you haven't tasted Khao Soi or seen the view from Doi Suthep, you haven't been to Chiang Mai." This regal mountain overlooks the city from the northwest, providing commanding views from its summit.
- [Thai Ways Magazine](#) has done a feature on the city's main attractions.

Where to stay

- At [Pingnakorn Chiang Mai](#) (From \$30.). Contemporary and stylish, while still retaining a cosy charm, the hotel is a 10 minute walk from shopping, nightlife and restaurants.
- [Baan Saen Doi](#). (From \$85.). A luxury resort and spa, a perfect combination of Lanna architecture with hill tribe and other Asian fine art.
- [Puripunn Baby Grand](#) (From \$140.). In a centuries-old community with lots of antique wooden buildings, its 30 rooms are moulded in a contemporary Lanna style reminiscent of Chiang Mai homes during the colonial era.

How to get there

- [JetStar](#) (Value based carrier network.)
- [Silk Air](#) (More sophisticated, and pricier.)

6 days... on the beach

[Cebu](#) in the Philippines is one of the finest diving centres in the world, and it has fabulous beaches as well, scattered across 166 islands around the largest, [Cebu Island](#) itself. Good underwater visibility means divers see hard and soft corals, mantas and whalesharks (the season ends on June – you may be lucky) tuna, big jacks and reef sharks. There is even a Wall of Death – where the current can be dangerous, so experienced divers only.

What to see and do

- Barili Beaches have the white sand and clear blue waters people dream of. Other top beaches are on Bantayan Island, Nalusan Island, Sumilon Island and the Mactan Islands.
- [Cebu Dive Centre](#) offers diving from \$20, and PADI Diving Courses from \$70.
- [K.I. Marine Sports Centre](#) has diving Packages from \$37.
- [Savendra Dive Center](#) has diving from \$27 and packages from \$125.

Where to stay

- [Cebu Beach Club](#) (From \$85.)
- [Shangri-La's Mactan Resort and Spa](#) (From \$180.)
- [Alegre Beach Resort](#) (From \$195.)
- [Waterfront Hotel](#) (From \$200.)

How to get there

- [Philippine Airlines](#) (Direct to Cebu.)
- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)
- [JetStar](#) (Value based carrier network.)

6 days... in a city

Head to [China](#), the sleeping dragon which has woken with a shout. Cosmopolitan **Shanghai** sits on the coast at the delta of the Yangtze River, and is home of the 1930s style Bund for high living and Yiyun Gardens for old Imperial China. **Beijing** has its heart, some would say, in the hutongs, the side streets which connect the main roads, and where you can see life lived as it has been for hundreds of years.

What to see and do - Shanghai

- Shanghai People's Square (Renmin Guang Chang)
- Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower (Dongfang Mingzhu)
- The Bund (Wai Tan)

What to see and do - Beijing

- The Great Wall of China (90 minutes from the city)
- Forbidden City
- Tiananmen Square

Where to stay - Shanghai

- [Eton Hotel](#) (From \$145.)
- [Pudong Shangri-La](#) (From \$200.)
- [St. Regis Shanghai](#) (From \$240.)

Where to stay - Beijing

- [Holiday Inn Central Plaza](#) (From \$70.)
- [Hotel G](#) (From \$160.)
- [The Opposite House](#) (From \$290.)

How to get there

- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)
- [Singapore Airlines](#) (National carrier.)

6 days... of culture

[Cambodia](#) is open enough to make travelling a pleasure, but still new enough to tourism to make it an adventure. The capital Phnom Penh and the city of [Siem Reap](#) (gateway to the incredible Angkor Wat complex of temples) give a perfect introduction to the country. Take a side trip on Tonle Sap Lake, where fishermen live in houses floating the water.

What to see and do – Phnom Penh

- Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum
- Russian Market (great flea market)
- Learn to cook Khmer style
- The Killing Fields

What to see and do – SIEM REAP

- Angkor Wat (the two greatest temples are Bayon Temple and Ta Prohm)
- Apsara dance performance
- Floating villages at Tonle Sap lake

Where to stay – PHNOM PENH

- [The Pavilion](#) (From \$40.)
- [Blue Lime](#) (From \$50.)
- [Raffles Hotel de Royal](#) (From \$180.)

Where to stay – SIEM REAP

- [Pavillon d’Orient boutique hotel](#) (From \$100.)
- [The Kool Hotel](#) (From \$50.)
- [Vila Kiara](#) (From \$135.)

How to get there

- [Air Asia](#) (No-frills flights at bargain prices.)
- [Singapore Airlines](#) (National carrier.)

More than a week... of beach, city and culture (adventurous)
[Vietnam](#) is a long, narrow country with everything from mountains and hilltribes in the north, glorious beaches halfway down around Nha Trang, ancient history at the old capital of Hue, and nightlife in Ho Chi Minh City. There are traces of Chinese, American and French culture, but the indomitable Vietnamese spirit is evident everywhere. Vietnam is a country in a hurry to catch up, and there is an incredible energy on the streets.

What to see and do – Ho Chi Minh City

- War Remnants Museum
- Cho Ben Thanh Market
- Cu Chi Tunnels

What to see and do – Hue

- Hue Imperial City
- Thien Mu Pagoda
- Brown Eyes Café (good music and cocktails)

What to see and do – Nha Trang

- Coco Dive Center
- Vinpearl Amusement Park
- Sailing Club Nha Trang

What to see and do – Hanoi

- Halong Bay
- Mua Roi Nuoc (Water Puppet Theatre)
- One Pillar Pagoda (Chua Mot Cot)

Where to stay – Ho Chi Minh City

- [Bich Duyen Hotel](#) (From \$20.)
- [Northern Hotel](#) (From \$70.)
- [Park Hyatt Saigon](#) (From \$250.)

Where to stay – Nha Trang

- [Ha Van Hotel](#) (From \$20.)
- [Hotel Novotel Nha Trang](#) (From \$110.)
- [Sunrise Nha Trang Beach Hotel & Spa](#) (From \$125.)

Where to stay – Hue

- [Orchid Hotel](#) (From \$35.)
- [Camellia Hue Hotel](#) (From \$65.)
- [Pilgrimage Village](#) (From \$120.)

Where to stay – HANOI

- [Hanoi Elegance](#) (From \$50.)
- [Hanoi Serenity Hotel](#) (From \$50.)
- [Hanoi A1 Hotel](#) (From \$50.)

More than a week... of beach, city and culture (relaxing)

Thailand has a fine combination of cities (Bangkok and Chiang Mai are the easiest for tourists) and islands such as Phuket and Koh Samui, as well as drama and history at Kancharaburi, the infamous bridge over the River Kwai. Activities include trekking with elephants, Thai cookery courses (watch out for the chillies), Thai massage at spas, as well as a gentle Buddhism that infuses the whole country.

What to see and do – [Bangkok](#)

- Grand Palace
- The Khlongs – a network of canals
- Damnoen Saduak Floating Market

What to see and do - [Phuket](#)

- Coral Island luxury resort
- Phuket Thai Boxing Gym
- Phuket Phuket Scuba Club

What to see and do - [Kanchanaburi](#)

- Erawan National Park (named after a fabulous waterfall)
- Death Railway - Along The Kra Sae Viadukt Section
- JEATH War Museum

What to see and do – [Chiang Mai](#)

- Naga Staircase of Doi Suthep, 309 steps up the mountain
- Night Bazaar on Chang Klan Road
- Pong Yang Elephant Training Camp

Where to stay - Bangkok

- [Chatrium Suites](#) (From \$100.)
- [Park Plaza Sukhumvit Bangkok](#) (From \$110.)
- [Lebua at State Tower](#) (From \$176.)

Where to stay - Phuket

- [Boomerang Village Phuket](#) (From \$45.)
- [Pacific Club Resort](#) (From \$50.)
- [Indigo Pearl](#) (From \$150.)

Where to stay - Kanchanaburi

- [River Kwai Village Hotel](#) (From \$70.)
- [Oriental Kwai Resort](#) (From \$90.)
- [Felix River Kwai](#) (From \$90.)

Where to stay – Chiang Mai

- [Secret Garden Chiang Mai](#) (From \$50.)
- [Fern Paradise](#) (From \$90.)
- [Rimping Village](#) (From \$120.)

List of Tour Operators

Tour Agency	Telephone:
SA Tours	65-6535 2611
Chan Brothers	65-6438 8880
Dynasty Travel	65-6532 5444
Ho Nam Travel	65-62218433
STA Travel	65-6737 7188
Five Stars Tours	65-6533 5555
Luxury Tours & Travel	65-6733 2808 / 6235 1911
ASA Holidays	65-6303 5303
Scenic Travel	65-62263611/ 62263622
Prime Travel and Tour	65-6225 3322
UOB Travel	65-6252 6822
Mustafa Travel	65-62955855
JP International Travel	65-6333 9998
Hong Thai Travel	65-6532 3223
Tradewinds Tours and Travels	65 6438 8822
East Asia Travel	6 223 1131