

Contents

- 4 This Guide
- 6 Country Profile
 - Map
 - Country
 - Climate
 - Population
 - History
 - Religion
 - Language
 - Currency
 - National Holidays
- 24 Visa Requirements
- 28 An International Career in Singapore
- 32 To Start With...
- 38 Management Culture
- 42 Organisational Structure
 - Hierarchy
 - Strategy
- 44 Decision Making Process
 - Meetings
 - Negotiations
 - Decisions
- 46 Conception of Time
 - Time Perception
 - Appointments
- 47 Business Behaviour
 - Meeting & Greeting
 - Dress Code
 - Wining & Dining
 - Gifts
 - Use of Business Cards
 - Communication in Singaporean Culture
- 54 Labour Mobility ABC
- 62 Self-assessment Test
- 64 Questions to Ask Yourself
- 66 Key facts: The Singaporean Graduate Labour Market

67	Important Sectors Top 5 of the Largest Companies in Singapore	106	Test: Successful Expat Qualities!
72	What will I earn?	108	More Information Useful Addresses Internet Sites Further Reading Expertise in Labour Mobility Career Consult Looking for Work in ... Guides
78	Taxation matters General information First Steps Double Taxation Where do I pay taxes?	116	Quiz on Singapore
86	An International Career in Singapore	122	About the Authors
90	Main Routes to Employment General Advice on Job Hunting Strong Employability Skills for the Singaporean Market Application Letter Curriculum Vitae Application Procedure On-line Recruitment Sample CV	123	Acknowledgements
100	Checklist for an International Move		

This Guide

Working abroad sounds like an adventure to many people. However, without thorough preparation and starting with a successful application, it is bound to fail. Therefore, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) has prepared a set of country guides describing the main routes to employment in over 40 countries. Are you interested in working in Australia, Turkey or Japan? Has your partner accepted a job in Russia, China, or Brazil? Are you looking for an internship possibility in Spain, Sweden or Switzerland? The Looking for work in... guides from ELM will help you with accurate information and practical tips on working cultures and differences in job hunting in over 40 countries.

As an extra addition to the series – following many requests – ELM introduced a new guide: Looking for work in International Organisations which explains how to successfully look for work in for instance the institutes of the European Commission, UN institutions and NGOs.

This guide contains information on Singapore. It tells you how to apply for a job in Singapore and the cultural differences that you will come across when looking for a job in Singapore. Do not underestimate those national differences. What is common in one country might be very unusual in another country. Despite globalisation, to find a job abroad you need to be aware that national differences manifest themselves not only in different languages, but also in different recruitment practices.

Thus, looking for work in another country involves more than writing your CV/résumé in another language.

No matter the country in which you are looking for work, the key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview. Accordingly, your CV should be regarded as a marketing tool, adapted to the market in which you intend to use it. The information in this guide, together with the sample CV, will help you to adapt your application for the Singaporean job market. However, make sure your application remains a reflection of your personality. Working abroad is one thing, but having a job that does not suit you will definitely cause homesickness!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nannette Ripmeester', with a horizontal line underneath.

Nannette Ripmeester, M.A.

Managing Director

Expertise in Labour





Country Profile

Country

The Republic of Singapore is a small city-state, situated on an island located in Southeast Asia and includes around 60 small islets (some half of which are inhabited) in its surrounding waters, lying just South of the Malaysian Peninsula and less than 150km North of the equator. Covering an area of some 700 square kilometres, the main island is relatively small in comparison to its economic importance in trade and manufacturing, being one of the largest contributors to the electronics market in Asia. Singapore has quite a flat terrain, and has little in the way of mountains or hilly landscapes; indeed the highest point is Bukit Timah Hill, standing at only 540ft/166m. Most of the business is carried out in the Central Business District, a bustling hub of activity involving all different kinds of business and a mixture of both Western and Eastern business influences.

The culture of Singapore is hard to define in general terms; such is the large mixture of cultures and ethnicities which make up the population. Furthermore, the mix of both Western and Eastern cultures is clearly visible in a nation which is heavily influenced by factors such as religion, ethnic heterogeneity and globalisation. In order to decipher what defines Singapore, one must look with an open mind towards several aspects, rather than focus upon a specific few. A kaleidoscopic culture, one can expect a variety of colours, languages, music and commerce when visiting Singapore, due to its history as a country which has an abundance of mixed ethnicities.

Climate

Singapore's climate is warm and humid throughout the entire year, with hot temperatures and large amounts of rainfall. Due to its position on the earth, the weather and subsequent temperatures remain very stable, rarely dipping below 22°C (72°F) and occasionally exceeding 30°C (86°F). There are no particular wet and dry periods, however in the Northeast of the island there is a monsoon season lasting from November to January in which large amounts of rain fall. Humidity is often found to be around 75% in general. Buildings are almost all air conditioned, so do not worry too much about the heat in an indoor environment. Furthermore, due to the island's location, the solar cycle remains very constant, rising around 7am and setting at around 7pm.

Population

Singapore is very densely populated, with some 4,700 individuals per square kilometre; it is ranked as one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Singapore also has a very young population, with around 70% being 40 years of age or younger. Because of this, there is still potential for solid growth in the coming decades, particularly with the increased value placed upon the electronics industry in combination with the well-educated workforce which can be found on the island. Exactly how people living in Singapore class themselves is an interesting topic; despite the variety of ethnicities present, there remains a certain sense of unification amongst the people. This is most easily witnessed with the younger rather than the older generations. There are some disparities between members of the population however. Some Malays believe that they have been overwhelmed by the Chinese influence, and as a result have been alienated into a small, insignificant part of the population. This is despite the fact that Malay is an official language of Singapore and the Malay people still make up a notable percentage of the population. The population as whole is generally harmonious and often each region is quite diverse in its ethnic makeup.

History

The history of Singapore in terms of civilisation is largely unknown in the concrete sense. However, there are mixed opinions over since

when exactly it has been occupied, by whom, and why. Some say that a town of some form has existed on the Singaporean island for 1,500 years. In fact, there are accounts which highlight its existence as early as the 3rd century, where Chinese documents have described a place called, Pu-luo-chung ('Island at the End of a Peninsula'). Furthermore, others believe that Singapura (or 'Lion City') was founded in 1299, by an Indian prince named Rajendra, who was ruler of the Indian Cola Empire around this time, when it is said that he saw a tiger and mistook it for a lion. Most historians and writers opine that Singaporean history dates back around 1,000 years, despite the fact that people had migrated to the Malaysian Peninsula which it is situated upon around 1,000-1,500 years before this. Beneath the Westernised capitalistic influence, the Asian continent and religions such as Confucianism and Buddhism have also shaped modern society, highlighting the existence of the differing cultures which Singapore hosts.

It is commonly believed that Singapore has in the past been a haven for pirates, who plundered the nearby shipping lanes. Fishermen have also used the island as a source of income, due to the high level of biodiversity which was found at the time, and is still found presently. The land was also used as a station for the Sumatran Empire of Srivijaya, acting as an outpost – its unique position offering both a strategic advantage in terms of trade, as well as its welcoming climate and rich natural resources.

Despite the existence of previous populations, Singapore lay

unknown to much of the Western world until more recent times, around the beginning of the 1800s. At differing times within this period of several hundreds of years, numerous accounts of travellers and emissaries in the geographical area suggest that there were populations and settlements in what are now major cities in the Malaysian Peninsula. Due to its location on the Malay Strait, Singapore has historically been in a key position and has witnessed battles over strategic trade and commercial positions on numerous occasions throughout history. This culminated in battles between the Dutch and British over the spice trade, which was booming around the time of the 1700-1800s. After being left almost totally uninhabited for a lengthy period, Singapore later became a trade post, being established by the British in 1819 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles. Seeing the potential of the area, he quickly formed relations with local tribal chiefs – paying them and flattering them to give up the land which he desired to build a trade post. This was no easy task though, as other local tribes had been bickering amongst each other over which segment of land belonged to which tribe.

However, there is some debate as to whether Raffles was the true founder of Singapore, since he only agreed with the local chiefs that a trade post could be established. Some believe that the actual founding of Singapore was achieved by Sir John Crawfurd. Crawfurd managed to establish the land for the British in 1824 through a treaty. Despite this, it is reflected in popular culture in