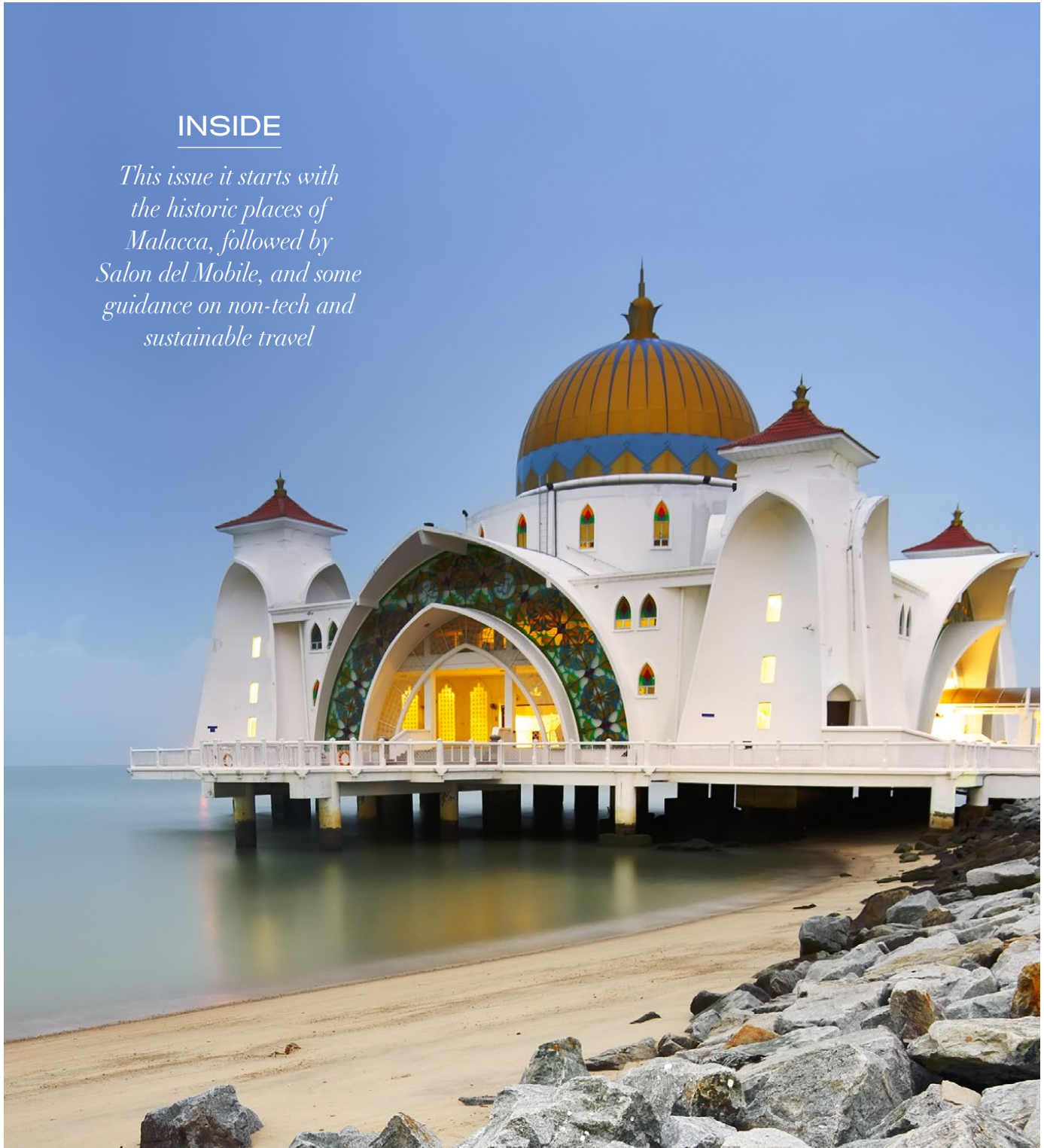


INSIDE

*This issue it starts with
the historic places of
Malacca, followed by
Salon del Mobile, and some
guidance on non-tech and
sustainable travel*



MALACCA MAGIC

Who's dreamt of fighting pirates in the straits of Malacca? Here is a story about the town that gives the straits its name. Here is a town that will cast a spell over you as nights are spent on the riverbank and days are spent wandering ancient alleys.

WORDS CHRIS PARRY

IN MY LAST STORY FOR JUST URBANE, I mentioned how saying 'Singapore' was so evocative as a destination renowned for its colonial era and modern-day culture and extravagances. It got me thinking about other places that are evocative just by their name alone. Immediately to the west of Singapore is the Malacca Strait and just to the north of Singapore is Malaysia, where on the west coast you will find a sea faring history similar to that of Kerala, on the south western coast of India. Just like Kochi in Kerala, Malacca on the west coast of Malaysia has a heritage heavily influenced by Dutch, Portuguese, English sea farers and spice traders. From architecture to religion and food, the influence of those who came from the sea creates a tapestry of diversity that is rich and intriguing.

Malacca for me is evocative because of the Malacca Strait, such an important trade route for centuries and still a shipping lane that is one of the busiest in the world. Historically, it was the rise of the maritime empire of Srivijaya that established spice trade routes between India, China and traders from Arabia and the importance of the Malacca Strait led to the rise in prominence of Singapore as a trading post.

The attraction of so many cargo carrying ships led pirates to infest the Strait and many battles have taken place to protect the trade routes from pirates with swords in sailing ships and pirates with guns in motorboats.

So, what do we need to know about Malacca before going there? I think as long as you trust me that it's safe to explore Malacca then this is truly a destination you shouldn't go crazy planning an itinerary for your stay. Malacca deserves to be discovered by walking up a street and then deciding to go up a little laneway just to see what's there, or knock on a door to what you hope is a hidden bar and not a pirate's lair!

While it's important to understand how architecture represents Malacca's culture and heritage, let's start with food in Malacca. While variety is the spice of life, in Malacca it is the Peranakan food that is most dearly cherished. Also known as Nyonya, this food style fuses the traditions of Malay and Chinese food and creates sweet and spicy flavours.



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The other food you will be drawn to in Malacca is the satay celup which means 'steamboat satay', where you select from a variety of vegetables and meats and dip them into hot pots of spicy peanut sauce. From vegetable skewers to fried bean curd and fresh tiger prawns and mushrooms, there is a skewer for everyone and is a signature of Malacca's culinary heritage.

To walk off your bowl of Peranakan laksa or plate of satay celup, let's take a walk around the streets of Malacca. When you're in Malacca it is best to orient yourself with wherever you need to go based on what direction it is from Jonker Street.

Jonker Street runs through the middle of Chinatown and lots of bargains can be found in stores and stalls selling locally produced arts and craft, clothing and, of course, food. On Friday and Saturday evenings the Jonker Walk Night Market is renowned in Malaysia as being as lively as it is diverse. Music and food come together with everything else imaginable that can be sold from a stall, creating a vibe that is friendly and hassle free.

As you walk the streets, don't walk past the Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum. Located in the UNESCO Heritage area of old Malacca town, these three buildings take you back to a time when entrepreneurial traders boasted and displayed their wealth with opulent fittings and furnishings.

Nearby shops in this quiet area include the remarkable Bound Feet Shoe Shop where the ancient practice of binding the feet of Chinese girls was common in the 1920s. The shop is still open for shoe repairs and manufacture but thankfully the clients aren't looking to bind feet anymore.

Before leaving these quiet and historical streets keep a look out for the very cool Orangutan House which has a huge mural out the front of an orange orangutan and is the quirkiest shop and art gallery I found in Malacca. Local artist, Charles Cham, has a store filled with his contemporary art that tell all sorts of stories, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. While you can buy the art on display it is the range of tshirts with messages that locals and travellers love the most, including the famous, 'To lah or not to lah'.

One of the iconic architectural images of Malacca is the Christ Church Malacca and it's just a short stroll from Jonker Street. Built in 1753, this Dutch built church was later reconsecrated by the British East India Company in 1838. Originally painted white, the church was repainted red in 1911 to reflect the Dutch era heritage of Malacca.

MALACCA IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUT YOURSELF IN A WORLD OF HISTORICAL CULTURE AND MODERN CULTURE. THERE IS ART EVERYWHERE



MALACCA'S BEST ATTRACTIONS IS ITS WATERWAYS, SPECIALLY ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MALACCA RIVER WHICH WINDS ITS WAY THROUGH THE CITY



Going back further in time you'll come across A'Famosa, the remains of a fort and settlement that was built in 1511 by the ruling Portuguese who had defeated the Sultan of Malacca and is one of the oldest European built buildings in Asia.

Nearly as old as the A'Famosa but regarded as the oldest church building in Southeast Asia is St Pauls Church, which is at the top of a short hill adjacent to the A'Famosa. Built in 1521, the church has a burial vault that contains the remains of distinguished local people. In 1552, St Francis Xavier died and was temporarily buried at the church until being relocated to Goa in India. The church still displays the open grave where St Francis Xavier was buried. Old Portuguese tombstones found in an old burial vault of the church have, in recent times, been fixed to the walls of the church and make interesting reading as you walk through the building.

One of Malacca's best attractions is its waterways, particularly its relationship with the Malacca River which winds its way through the city. Sometimes known as the River of Bridges and sometimes as the 'Venice of the East', the river travels through the city for 10 kilometres and the best way to see the waterfront on each side is by a river cruise which by night lets you see how each bridge lights up, creating dazzling displays of reflected neon lights on the water.

As well as the bridges, there are full wall murals along the waterfront. The murals were designed and completed by local artists, including graffiti artists, to produce colourful



and look down at the old shop fronts and street below, I'm reminded of a line in the song 'Africa' about hearing 'wild dogs cry out in the night' but there's nothing so dramatic here, just the red paper lanterns hanging above the street and swinging lazily to the slow beat of Malacca's sleeping heart.

Before you leave Malacca, take a ride in one of the rickshaws which are resplendent with colour and gorgeously over decorated. Take your pick from rickshaws themed as Hello Kitty, Pokemon, Despicable Me Minions and many other pop culture characters. You'll find them all day and all night and they're available for short joy rides and longer treks to reach your destination.

Malacca is an opportunity to put yourself in a world of historical culture and modern culture. From old churches to neon lit bridges on wonderful waterways, from clever t-shirts to vibrant murals the art is everywhere and in between the art are hidden bars, busy restaurants and the scent of spices in the air, reminding you that not just are you hungry, but that Malacca was one of the most important spice trading destinations in the world. You can't get more evocative than that! 🇲🇾



representations of old life and new life on the river. Some of the life I'm looking for on the river can't be found by boat. Along the waterfront and on dark streets lit only by red paper lanterns, night-time is when the search begins for one of my favourite past times, hunting for hidden bars. I've previously written for Just Urbane about my love for speakeasy and hidden bars and Malaysia is one of the best countries where you will find them, if you look hard enough. The Old Merchant is Malacca's first speakeasy bar and has that early 20th Century oriental feel about it and is in a waterfront building that used to be a private bank in the 1920s. There's no sign out the front. It has the wrought iron shutters closed together and big red Chinese letters that identify it as a bank. If you've tied up your pirate ship to the riverbank you can enter The Old Merchant through the rear entrance and find a dark corner to sit and sample creations that will make your eyes pop, like ginger flavoured rum concoctions with smoking cinnamon sticks or the Chasing Sang Kancil which positions chilli's as devils horns on your glass and is a hectic mix of rum, lemon juice and chilli flakes. This is a drink that will put the wind your sails! Another enjoyable venue is the Geographer Café which has a flair for displaying old maps and books and lots of greenery that reminded me of the Toto music clip for 'Africa', one of my favourite songs. The building is an old two storey shop house and on my visit with a friend we were there near upon closing but were allowed to sit upstairs. As we sip on a couple of beers

