



TRAVELLING THR



NOT SO LONG AGO the adjective most often used to describe Macau was “sleepy”. Historically an important China coast trading port – and the first and last European administered settlement in Asia – its glory days seemed over, but the enclave’s relaxed, old fashioned, quasi-Mediterranean atmosphere made a welcome change from hectic Hong Kong, just a short jetfoil ride away.

Nobody calls Macau sleepy now. In 1999 the Portuguese, who had administered the enclave since 1557, formally handed Macau back to China as a Special Administrative Region, and the new government under Chief Executive Edmund Ho came in with big plans for the place.

In less than a decade the city has changed almost beyond recognition. Its casino revenues are now greater than those of the Las Vegas Strip, and it is the highest volume gaming centre in the world. The hotel, conference and entertainment facilities planned for the Cotai Strip connecting the islands of Taipa and Coloane, along with all the land reclamation and fast-tracked construction work, has transformed the sleepy backwater into a modern city.

Many visitors come for the casinos, the designer label shopping and the major show business and sporting events Macau now stages. This rapid pace of development has also created a thriving consumer market and retail scene. Hutchison has played an important part in this trend through Watsons and Hutchison Telephone (Macau) Company Limited (see sidebar).

“The challenge has been to synchronise promotions in Hong Kong and Macau. Consumers in Macau are exposed to Hong Kong TV channels every day and they expect to be offered the same promotions as we launch in Hong Kong. Our store teams have to ensure that they can deliver products to Macau promptly,” said Peter Louie, Regional Manager (Store Operation) for Watsons Macau.

“The customer mix has changed too – most of our customers used to be either locals or visitors from Macau, but now there are also mainlanders who have different needs. We ensure our stores are customer friendly to all, and therefore have unified pricing across the Hong Kong, Macau and Chinese currencies. Travelling customers shop hassle-free and can focus on choosing their favourite items.”

While the new Macau blossoms, the old Macau is quietly



Counter clockwise from top right:
The Largo do Senado, or
Senate Square, is the focal point
of the city's Historic Centre;
Macau's ever-changing cityscape
and the city's famous egg tarts

OUGH TIME

*Macau, a city where the
old and new happily co-exist*
By Robin Lynam

holding its own, and its attractions remain among the best reasons to visit the city. The lovely old waterfront with its winding tree-lined Praia was lost years ago to land reclamation, and many of the elegant colonial style buildings of the old town have given way to more modern structures, but China and the West have met and mingled in Macau for almost half a millennium, and the fruits of that multi-faceted and fascinating interaction have not disappeared overnight.

“For me, Macau is the best city of Asia, where the hospitality of the people is present at all times. Much in Macau has changed, but much remains the same,” says Antonio Coelho, chef-proprietor of Antonio Restaurant on Taipa, who is one of the best known of Macau’s Portuguese restaurateurs.

“There are still areas of Macau, particularly out on the islands, where the old way of life has been preserved, and right here you can certainly find authentic Portuguese cuisine and wine. It’s what many people who live here like, and what many others have been coming here for over many, many years. A whole culture doesn’t simply disappear overnight. In Macau, you can find the mix of cultures and religions that made Macau unique.”

In 2005 the Historic Centre of Macau was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with UNESCO stating that “with its historic street, residential and religious and public Portuguese and Chinese buildings, the historic centre provides a unique testimony to the meeting of aesthetic, cultural, architectural and technological influences from East and West.”

There are still areas of Macau where it is possible to get a truly vivid sense of the city’s long and colourful history, and many of them are within fairly easy walking distance of each other.

Perhaps the best starting point is the A-Ma Temple, from which the city takes its name. There has been a temple on this site in the Porto Interior, or Inner Harbour, dedicated to A-Ma, a Chinese deity thought to protect seafarers, since the 15th century. When the Portuguese landed and asked the name of the place they were told “the Bay of A-Ma”, in Cantonese “A-Ma Gao”. Over time the name contracted to Macau or sometimes Macao.

For an insight into Macau’s history of maritime trade it is only necessary to cross the road to the Museu Maritimo which puts Macau’s Portuguese and Chinese seafaring history nicely into perspective. After that you could flag a taxi to the Guia Fortress



In the words of UNESCO, Macau bears witness to one of the earliest and longest lasting encounters between China and the West based on the vibrancy of international trade



*Clockwise from top left:
The famous A-Ma Temple, casino action; the ruins
of the church of Sao Paulo; a Macau street scene;
traditional cookies; the Macau Tower.*

which dates all the way back to 1622 and look at the lighthouse, completed in 1865 and the first of its kind on the China Coast.

The focal point of Portuguese Macau and the heart of the Historic Centre is the Largo do Senado, or Senate Square, an elegant cobbled public space surrounded by some of the best preserved examples of Macau's colonial architectural heritage, including the Leal Senado, or Loyal Senate building.

Have a stroll around the square, then walk uphill to Macau's most famous monument, the church of Sao Paulo, construction of which began in 1602, and of which only the façade remains since a catastrophic fire in 1835. Built by Japanese converts to Christianity under Jesuit supervision, it remains one of Asia's most remarkable ruins.

Macau's unique atmosphere, however, is not just to do with monuments and buildings. The side streets of the Historic Centre, with their tiny cafes selling fragrant coffee and Portuguese pastries, and shops crammed with supposedly antique Chinese furniture, are a real repository of the old Macau, particularly if you crane your neck to look up from time to time at the rusty wrought iron on the balconies, decaying wooden shutters, and disintegrating pastel plaster. Equally absorbing are the city's gardens and the cemeteries where the history of the town is simply and movingly recorded on the headstones.

The Cemiterio Protestante in the Camoes Garden area is perhaps best known as the final resting place of George Chinnery, the greatest Western painter of South China Coast scenes and portraits of the 19th century, but the epitaphs of the less famous record many early deaths from now curable diseases or accidents aboard ship or ashore. For centuries life here was harsh and often brief, but the cemetery is nevertheless a serenely restful place.

Macau's gardens are also known for their easy tranquillity, and perhaps the finest is the Jardim Lou Lim Ieoc, modelled on classical Chinese lines with its carp ponds, pavilions and bamboo groves, but also including, in the best Macau tradition, elegantly integrated European elements.

The same delicate balance of East and West is nowhere better reflected than in Macau's unique cuisine. Macanese is arguably the world's first true "fusion" food – simmered over centuries like a good stew in which a huge array of flavours and aromas gradually resolve.

No simple combination of just China and Portugal, Macanese food involves home cooking unique to this town, and integrates Chinese kitchen ideas and ingredients with influences from the whole of what was the Portuguese empire, including many exotic herbs and spices. It includes modified specialities from Africa, Goa and Brazil as well as from Portugal and Guangdong Province, including such enduring favourites as intensely spicy African Chicken, Macanese Chilli Prawns and Tamarind Pork.

Two of the best places in town for authentic Macanese food are A Lorcha and Litoral which both serve a combination of Macanese and Portuguese dishes. A Lorcha is known for its curried crab, clams with coriander and a creamy dessert known as Serradura. Litoral's crab speciality is oven baked crab meat,

cooked in the shell, coated with golden breadcrumbs, and served with a couple of black olives set into the crisp crust so as to resemble eyes. Other house favourites include succulent stewed duck and spicy-hot African chicken.

Purely Portuguese cuisine also thrives in Macau, and the perfect setting in which to enjoy it is the restaurant of the Clube Militar de Macau on Avenida da Praia Grande – worth visiting not just for the food but for its immaculately preserved colonial era ambience. Built in 1870 and originally an officer's mess for the Portuguese military, it is now a private members' club but the dining room is open to the general public. The local Portuguese still like to congregate there, particularly for lunch on Sundays. With its lazily rotating ceiling fans and polished wooden floor, the restaurant epitomises a particularly Portuguese style of gracious living.

Today, Macau has a plethora of new, fashionable and up-market restaurants. But behind all the glamour and the glitz, the old Macau remains, and perhaps the real anomaly in its history was that "sleepy" period. In the words of the UNESCO description of the Historic Centre: "It bears witness to one of the earliest and longest lasting encounters between China and the West based on the vibrancy of international trade." 

HUTCHISON IN MACAU

AS A SUPPLIER of both goods and services, Hutchison has a long history in Macau and continues to make important contributions to the city's development. While respecting and complementing the town's traditional heritage, innovation has played a key role in many of the company's successes.

Hutchison Telephone (Macau) Company Limited is well established, offering superior voice, data, IDD and roaming services through its GSM dual-band network and Macau's first 2.5G GPRS high-speed network. Hutchison Telephone connects Macau to more than 180 countries around the world, with state of the art services which include GPRS roaming.

The company was also the first operator to launch a WAP service, Hutchisonworld, which allows mobile users to browse online via their WAP handsets, as well as Macau's first Multimedia Messaging Service.

Watsons was the first international chain to establish itself in Macau more than 20 years ago and now operates a total of eight stores there. In 2006, the company opened a new flagship store on historic Senate Square. The store has set new standards for health and beauty retailing in a rapidly growing market.

