

SPECIAL REPORT: MACAU TODAY

Everything in one day

Visitors can experience the best the city has to offer in a brief visit, writes **Vicki Williams**

Macau has more to offer than gambling. There are heritage sites and architecturally interesting buildings that speak of the past, an array of tasty things to eat, entertainment options and plenty of scenic spots – all of which can be experienced in a day.

8am-noon: Sightseeing
While regular visitors may skip many of the sites, first-time tourists will want to see as much of the city as possible. Due to the sheer number of visitors that pour off ferries each day, catching a taxi can be difficult. The solution, as we accidentally discovered, was to hire a private car with driver (English and Chinese speaking) provided by the Macau Government Tourist Office. A half-day, or four hours, allowed us to go sightseeing in air-conditioned comfort.
First stop, the Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre. In addition to the 20-metre bronze statue of Kun Iam, there is a souvenir counter, library and smaller-scale models of the statue. Two interesting tidbits: unlike many outdoor goddess of mercy statues, this one faces away from the water, and the face is said to be inspired by the Virgin Mary.
While several churches are worth a visit (St Lawrence's Church and St Augustine's Church are both Unesco World Heritage Sites), we went to the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha, a



Lou Kau Mansion is a traditional courtyard house that belonged to a prominent Chinese merchant. Photo: David Wong

simple building with a tranquil ambience. Dating back to 1837, the site holds appeal because not that many tourists go there, and its location on top of a hill offers fantastic views.
Attracting a huge number of visitors is A-Ma Temple, but it is worth a look as part of it merges with the hillside, with large rocky outcrops dramatically juxtaposed with hanging circular incense and water views. It is

noted for its incorporation of different deities, each with its own pavilion, hall or worship area, and it is the oldest temple in Macau, with parts dating back to 1488.
Located in the same square is the quirky Maritime Museum, built on the spot where the Portuguese first landed. The multi-storey museum demonstrates the importance of the sea in Macau's history using

three themes – ethnology, history and technology. We particularly enjoyed the recreation of a Chinese fisherman's home, plus the dioramas and video displays. If time allows, have a drink on the adjoining Esplanade. We managed to also see the Lou Kau Mansion, Senado Square, Leal Senado Building, Ruins of St Paul, and Guia Fortress.

12.30-2.30pm: Lunch
The driver dropped us off in Old Taipa in front of Cozinha Pinocchio – the first Portuguese restaurant in Taipa, which opened in 1977 and got a face-lift in 2009. While there are better dining options for Portuguese cuisine, none can beat this place for old-school kitsch – for example, using Champagne coupes. It also serves food all

day, a plus for those wanting a late lunch. We enjoyed a decent bacalhau croquette and a finger-licking roast pigeon served with fresh lemon. Other recommended options include the high-end Don Alfonso 1890 and Robuchon au Dôme (advanced booking is a must), while La Gondola at Cheoc Van Beach in Coloane serves excellent pizza, good pasta and ice-cold Vinho Verde, along with a terrace and sea views.

2.30-4.30pm: Old Taipa
Walk off lunch by heading to the Taipa Houses-Museum. The charming green and white houses, built in 1921, were once home to senior civil servants and wealthy Macanese. Each house contains something different – for example, one is a furnished home and another holds



St Lawrence's Church is a World Heritage Site. Photo: Dale de la Rey

Portuguese costumes, while another is used for constantly changing exhibitions, which at the time of our visit was a stunning art display. The charming grounds are worth exploring, situated by an enormous lotus pond, which is perfect for photos.
Head back to Old Taipa and wander the narrow food lanes, with shops providing samples of jerky, almond cookies and other tasty snacks.

4.30-6pm: Faux Venice
Catch one of the free casino shuttle buses in front of Pinocchio's and stroll around the surreal faux streets of Venice at The Venetian, as you munch on a warm egg tart from Lord Stow's and are serenaded by renditions of *O Sole Mio*. Then it's time to hit the tables. For

those who want an inexpensive, friendly flutter, the roulette machines are a fun option.
6pm onwards: Entertainment
Enjoy a cocktail and light bite in the Lobby Lounge of the Grand Hyatt before going next door to see *The House of Dancing Water* – but check the schedule first, because the show is not on every night, as we discovered. Those staying overnight should book the value-for-money WOW package from the Grand Hyatt that includes accommodation, two tickets to *The House of Dancing Water* and other goodies.
What comes next depends on available time – a spot of nightclubbing, a game of pool or the ferry back home. All casinos provide a free shuttle to the Taipa ferry pier.

WHEN YOU GO

Car Hire HK\$1,000 for a half-day (for the van, not per person), available from the Macau Government Tourist Office counter at the ferry terminal. Pick up a map from there too.
Information and addresses for sights of interest, gardens, other attractions and restaurants en.macaoutourism.gov.mo
Grand Hyatt macau.grand.hyatt.com



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