

The 2 Idiots Travel Blog
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Ultimate Kid-Friendly Itinerary for 1 or 2 Days in Macau, China

Why do The 2 Idiots recommend Macau?

We hate when we read travel websites that do nothing but rave about how wonderful every destination is. It's misleading. We want to be honest about our experiences, and we honestly don't recommend families visit Macau. It is a nice enough place, super new and super clean, and one of the only places in China you can gamble. Unlike Las Vegas, however, it just doesn't have the same energy and things to do with kids. Unless you want to visit to gamble and play games in the casinos, which are nice and super expensive (more expensive than Las Vegas!), it's just not on our list of cities to visit with kids.

CREATING AN IDEAL ITINERARY

Although most people visit Macau for a day trip from Hong Kong, as it's just an hour by ferry across the Zhejiang River Estuary, we have created a 2-day itinerary, should you like to see more of the city. We both loved discovering the older districts of Macau, which was formerly under Portuguese control. It's a wonderful blend of Portuguese and Chinese culture — a bit of east meets west — so if you have the chance to explore more than the new Macau and its brand-new, beautiful casinos, take the time to do so.

Logistics

Macau's newest and biggest resorts are Sands Cotai Central and the sister properties of the Las Vegas casino resorts, the Venetian and the Parisian. It was Natasha's birthday when we visited, so we splurged and booked a beautiful suite at the Parisian. If you are spending a night or two, we highly recommend spending the night in newer Macau, as this is where the restaurants, shops and casinos are located.

If you are visiting Hong Kong and want to ferry to Macau, the ferry is 171 Yen on weekdays, 186 Yen on weekends, and 211 Yen at night. Free shuttles from the ferry, as well as the airport, are available to the resort casinos, and you do not need a rental car or a taxi to get around. (In fact, we tried a taxi and found one driver to drive very unsafe.)

Vacation days	Itinerary
Day 1	Visit Old Macau <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ruins of St. Paul ● Senado Square ● St. Dominic’s Church ● Walk around Historic Centre of Macau Do the Eiffel Tower Experience Enjoy shopping and dinner in the Parisian
Day 2	Visit Taipa Village Visit Giant Panda Pavilion Spend the evening in the Venetian Macau

Explore China’s Little Portugal

The best part of our trip to Macau was by far discovering its Portuguese background. Macau was a Portuguese settlement from the 16th century until it was released to China in 1999. Because of this, Portuguese is also spoken in Macau, and restaurants, shops, architecture and style still reflects Portuguese roots. It’s really cool to explore Portugal while in China!

Make your way to the Historic Centre of Macau and visit the Ruins of St. Paul’s, where you will climb 68 stairs to get to the ornate architecture of the former Catholic Church of St. Paul, where all that remains is the façade of the building. Built in 1640, the building was destroyed by a fire in 1835, but the city has conserved the remains ever since. It’s an important face of the city and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. (Aarav loved visiting the Ruins because he loved climbing up and down the stairs!) This is *the* place to snap photos; totally one of the most recognizable buildings in Macau, although it has no interior.

Another church in the area, still operating and offering services, is the Baroque 16th century St. Dominic’s Church, located in Senado Square. Part of Historic Centre, Senado Square is a tourist-filled area filled with Portuguese shops and restaurants. We really enjoyed this area of town, despite the fact it was made for tourists. If you like beauty products, Natasha loved the selection, and we all loved grabbing street food here, including Portugal’s infamous egg tarts that will melt in your mouth. When you are done roaming the markets and alleyways, taking in the ambience, grab authentic Portuguese food for lunch. (See our recommendations in the Tips section below.)

After your visit in the Historic Centre, return to modern Macau’s casinos and resorts. AJ had dreamed of visiting Macau as he loves to gamble. We unfortunately found that there isn’t a ton

to do for kids and families, unlike Las Vegas, and that the casinos were very expensive. AJ did spend a little time inside the casinos, watching the high rollers, but as one of the only places to have a casino, the limits are much higher than he wanted to play. Still, he loved watching Baccarat, finding the energy amazing, even though he didn't play. As a family, we visited the Parisian and enjoyed the Eiffel Tower Experience. Like Las Vegas, you can ride to the top of Macau's own Eiffel Tower, which offers observation decks on levels 7 and 37. Built at half the size of the original Eiffel Tower – 525 feet tall – we tried an evening visit, expecting to see lights over the city, but the views weren't as good as we expected; Macau is just not on par with Vegas — yet. One day it will get there, but it's two new right now to provide the same ambience.

Into the evening, enjoy shopping and dinner at the Parisian. There is a variety of restaurants, just like in Las Vegas, from French to Chinese to international foods. The shopping at the Sands'-owned casinos is offered as one large mall, touted as “the new fashion capital in Macao” and the mall features 850 duty-free shops — plenty to keep you busy for a full night!

Mingle With Panda's

On your second day in Macau, explore deeper into the city with a visit to Taipa Village. Just steps from the casinos, the historic village is well preserved and offers museums, art galleries, more shopping and a bit of Macau's old-fashioned character. Not as ancient as the previous day's Historic Centre, you'll find charming and colorful buildings, colonial churches and more restaurants offering an east-meets-west vibe.

If you want to understand the history of Macau, pop into the Museum of Taipa and Coloane History, found in a two-story building from the 1920s. And be sure not to miss the Pak Tai Temple, which was dedicated to the Taoist god of the sea and is a beautiful and old-school Chinese temple.

After seeing Macau's history, your kids will love a visit to the Giant Panda Pavilion, a zoo located in Seac Pai Van Park, Macau's first country park. While it is a full zoo with a variety of animals, it is the pandas who are the stars, as pandas come from China. Featuring both the giant panda and red pandas, your kids will see pandas in their home country.

After a full day, return to the casinos and spend the evening in the Venetian Macau, which is connected to the Parisian, giving you a chance to visit some of those aforementioned 850 shops you may not have been able to see all of on your first night. Restaurants at the Venetian include Italian, Indian and Chinese offerings to enjoy one last dinner in Macau before departing back to Hong Kong or other parts of China, such as Beijing.

KID-FRIENDLY TIPS

- Take your [good stroller](#) everywhere because there is a lot of walking around.

- The casinos have pools so make sure you take swim clothes and puddle jumper.

OTHER TIPS

- Take the free shuttle service to the casinos. The hotels (Venetian, Parisian and Sands Cotai Central) offer shuttle service from the airport, ferry terminals and border gates.
- Our experience with cabs was pretty bad — super-aggressive driving that made us feel unsafe. If you do take a taxi, make sure they use the meters.
- Macau is different from mainland China, with generally more relaxed Visa requirements. Sixty-six countries are exempt from a visa to Macau, and six countries are required to obtain visas: Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.
- If you want to play in the casino, just realize it can be super expensive. Minimums are anywhere from \$25 to 50 a bet. If you want something cheaper, go to the historic center.

Foods we enjoyed:

- Portugal's wonderful egg tart, known as the Pateis de Nata or Pateis de Belem in Portugal, is available in Macau's old city. If you haven't been to Portugal – or even if you have and love these creamy tarts – have one here. They sell them near the Ruins of St. Paul.
- Try a Portuguese restaurant near the ruins, as well. We had a fabulous meal at Mariazinha, a family-owned restaurant serving up traditional Portuguese dishes. We found the restaurant based on TripAdvisor reviews, and were the last customers to arrive before they closed before dinner, so it felt like we were enjoying a family meal with the owners.