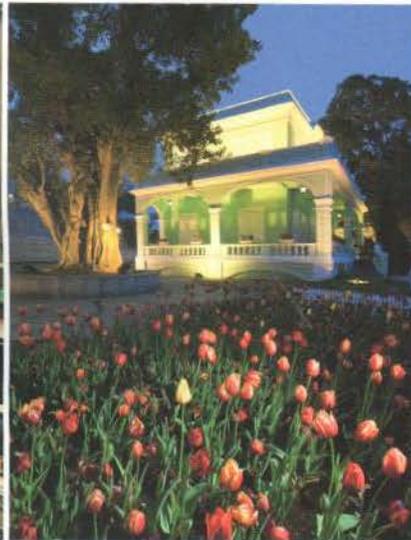


IBERIAN FLAVORS From top: The enclosed tunnel staircase that leads up to the Pousada de Sao Tiago; starters at A Petisqueira.

THE REAL MACAU

YOU MAY THINK THAT MACAU IS ONLY FOR GAMBLERS, BUT **HANA R. ALBERTS** WILL WAGER THAT YOU'LL FIND PLENTY TO LIKE IN THE ISLAND'S ARCHITECTURE, ART, DINING AND SHOPPING. **PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID HARTUNG**



PORTUGUESE PLEASURES
Clockwise from above: At Albergue 1601; Hea Deco, a boutique in Old Taipa; colonial splendor at Taipa Houses Museum; egg tarts at Margaret's Café.

I'M ALWAYS BAFLED WHEN FRIENDS TELL me they don't like going to Macau. "If you don't like to gamble," they say, "what else is there to do?"

It's easy to be misled. After all, about 80 percent of Macau's visitors each year hail from mainland China and Hong Kong, and the vast majority is content to while away weekends at the baccarat tables. Gaming makes up the lion's share of Macau's economy—it soared 42 percent in 2011 from a year earlier to US\$34.47 billion—and Macau's casinos have been raking in more dollars than the Las Vegas Strip since 2007. It's no wonder, then, that visitors fail to realize they can trade in the gilded casino floor at the Venetian for a quaint cobblestoned lane in

Taipa Village, one that's lined with Portuguese-style pastel houses. The two locations, in fact, are less than two kilometers from each other.

The former Portuguese colony has a rich, tangled history; its allure lies not only in its mixed heritage and culinary offerings but also in some contemporary developments, like an up-and-coming art and fashion scene. Here, the traditional and the modern stand side-by-side. During my visits I take the same photograph again and again—framing a Chinese-style residence, or a row of ceramic tiles, against some glittering casino in the background. In a city this richly layered, even the aisle of a basic grocery store can be of interest to travelers, as a run-of-the-mill reflection of the zone's diversity.

That's why this place is an ideal weekend-long antidote to Asia's shiny skyscrapers and crowded sidewalks. I set out to find enough gems to prove those naysayers wrong.

First stop: Albergue SCM, a peaceful square to eat, shop and peruse some art. This area, formerly populated by lepers, was earmarked for revitalization about a decade ago. After renovations at the hand of architect and Macau native Carlos Marreiros, Albergue Santa Casa da Misericórdia (or SCM for short) formally reopened in 2009 as a creative hub.

In the shade of two enormous camphor trees, yellow buildings with wooden shutters house an intimate gallery, a European restaurant called Albergue 1601 and an exquisite new boutique that imports Portuguese goods. At The Portuguese Corner Shop, browse sweet-smelling soaps and creams, jams, hand-painted tiles, wines, canned sardines and jewelry specially chosen by friendly owner Margarida Vila-Nova.

Nearby you'll find one of the territory's best-known design houses. Lines Lab is where creative duo Manuel CS and Clara Britto turn out avant-garde fashion—sleek black-and-white dresses and oversized wool collars—and furniture.

Next to it, 10Fantasia is an art space that's home to an eclectic mishmash of local creative work. Climb the stairs into the cozy circular atrium to see everything from trendy clothing collections to old-fashioned etchings to modern interpretations of Macau's landmarks in sculpture and painting.

For a taste of art from abroad, I head to Tap Seac Gallery. Despite a striking red-and-yellow façade, inside it has an industrial feel, with blocky concrete columns punctuating the space. Recent

shows have featured the work of artists from Taiwan, South Korea, France, Denmark and the Czech Republic.

In search of a late lunch, I wander the narrow alleys of Taipa Village. I've heard good things about A Petisqueira, a longtime staple of the Portuguese dining scene. But because I miss their lunch hours by about three minutes—who knew the Portuguese were such sticklers for punctuality?—I cautiously step into Lopes, a newer restaurant next door. An all-Portuguese station blares from the TV above the bar—evidence of authenticity, I think—and I ask for a table. A Portuguese lager in hand, I await tender stewed beef with potatoes and African chicken. Over bottles of Super Bock beer proprietor Lourenço Lopes tells me his story. Though he arrived in Macau in 1995, only four years before the handover to China, he's stayed on even as the city has grown to revolve around the gambling industry because small pockets of laid-back village life remain.

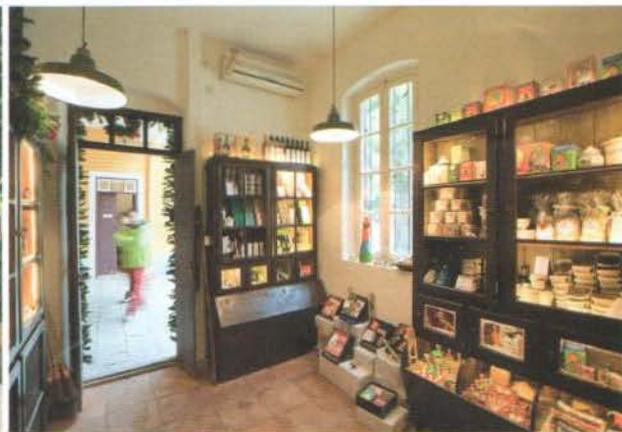
"Casinos, for me, are not Macau," he said. "We have two Macaus now. The real Macau is the small streets, the small shops."

After lunch, I amble through the sleepy village, past Camoes Square, where kids ride their bikes »

Pockets of laid-back village life remain. 'We have two Macaus now. The real Macau is the small streets, the small shops'



10Fantasia art gallery space, left. Right: The Portuguese Corner Shop at Albergue.



in front of the Pak Tai Temple as caretakers look on. Further along, a makeshift painted shrine holds a gaggle of porcelain statues of Chinese gods. I peek into Old Taipa Tavern, a popular pub for expatriates, and Hea Deco, a good spot to shop for offbeat furniture and knickknacks for the home.

I happen to peer into the office of António Coelho, who leaps up to give me a tour—and a lecture in Macanese culture. A dapper, portly chef who initially came to Macau because of Portugal's compulsory military service, he returned here a decade ago. He now runs António, which has earned a Michelin star and counts Portuguese dishes like gratinated goat cheese and duck rice among other specialties, as well as a coffee shop across the street. Coelho recruits staff—and even imports the bottled water he serves—straight from Portugal. His café's homemade pastries and desserts are best enjoyed with a strong, hot coffee, consumed amid furnishings made out of old wooden wine boxes.

At the end of a long day, I retreat to a Portuguese-style inn. My favorite place to stay is Pousada de Coloane in Macau's southernmost district. Rooms, decorated with dark wood furniture and blue-and-white tiles, are basic, but each has a balcony and an oversized bathtub. The hotel also has a large terrace overlooking the beach, a pool and a restaurant serving Portuguese classics. The nearby village of Coloane—and its famous egg tart shop, Lord Stow's—is also worth a visit.

The biggest rival of Lord Stow's in the egg tart department is Margaret's Café e Nata, where I go for breakfast the next day. Tucked down a back alley near the Grand Lisboa, this decades-old

eatery attracts long queues and dishes out tray after tray of the signature Macanese treat, which arrives steaming, its moist, eggy interior encased within a flaky, buttery crust.

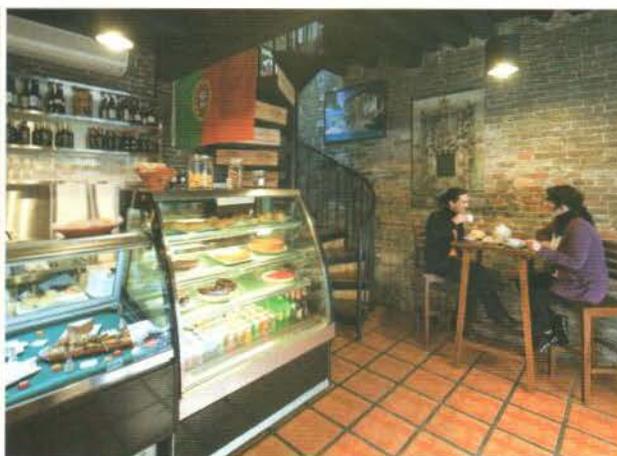
Next, to see how Macau's elite once lived, I visit the Taipa Houses Museum. Five two-story houses, lovingly touched up with fresh coats of sea-green paint, contain furnishings, clothing and curios typical of the early 20th century, as well as old photographs. The row of houses, with an adjacent garden and small lake, is surrealistically set against the biggest casino in the world, The Venetian.

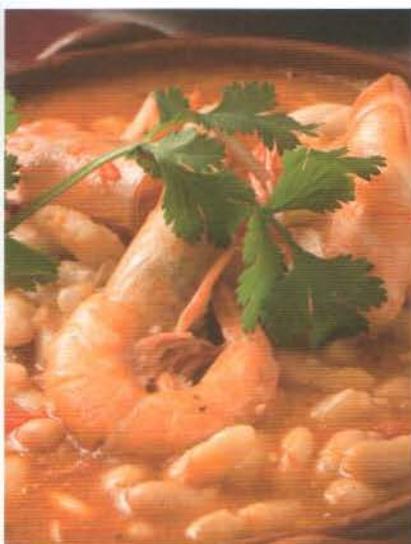
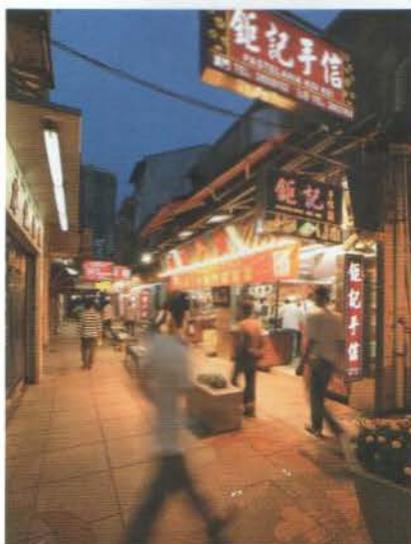
Back in the main part of Macau, Mandarin's House offers another glimpse into the lives of the territory's ancestors. A recently reconstructed complex of 60 rooms, it's a Chinese residence typical to the region, containing rooms centered around courtyards, round portholes and distinctive tiled trim.

As for shopping, even I had thought Macau was merely a place to pick up brand-name goods, or to buy peanut candy and dried meat. But offbeat boutiques are starting to spring up. At homegrown label Ribs Clothing, four local designers produce cheeky T-shirts and hooded sweatshirts that often feature trendy depictions of retro institutions (70-year-old ice cream parlor Lai Kei) and pastimes (like table tennis).

Though it's not far from Senado Square, the crowded epicenter of Macau's old town, Massala manages to feel like an oasis. Vibrantly patterned clothes, textiles, accessories and housewares from China, Southeast Asia and India fill the racks of this narrow shop, which is furnished with handmade pieces made from recycled wood.

Tap Seac Gallery, left.
Right: Antonio's
Coffee Shop in Old
Taipa Village.





ART AND SOUL
From far left: An evening stroll through Old Taipa Village; local fare at A Petisqueira; artwork at 10Fantasia.

Massala sells vegetarian snacks and occasionally hosts film screenings. "I am a native of Macau," said Deborah Costa, one of Massala's co-founders, "so for me it's sad when foreign people talk about Macau and they just talk about casinos. It's more than that."

Inspired by Costa's passion for her hometown, I seek out the A-Ma Temple, dedicated to the goddess of seafarers. I find a maze of Taoist prayer halls, pavilions and gardens, hazy with smoke from incense coils. Avoid massive tour groups by coming early in the morning or at dusk when it's cooler.

Eager to find a place to wind down, I walk alongside the Barra Fort to Pousada de São Tiago.

The 12-suite hotel is built into the 17th-century fort; entering the hotel requires walking up an atmospherically dim passage of stone steps. High tea on the hotel's picturesque terrace, complete with scones as well as Portuguese pastries, is a treat. Alternatively, sip some cocktails while watching the sun set over the harbor, with China in the distance.

At Coelho's recommendation, before my ferry home I stop at City Square, a grocery store with a large selection of Portuguese wine that is easy on the wallet. I pick up a couple of bottles of *vinho verde* and rush to catch my ferry home. They'll have to tide me over until my next visit. +

MACAU ADDRESS BOOK

EAT

António 3 Rua dos Negociantes, Taipa; 853/2899-9998; antoniomacau.com; lunch or dinner for two MOP1000.

Lopes 15B Rua de São João, Edifício Tsui Lam Garden, Taipa; 853/2882-7632; lunch or dinner for two MOP500.

Margaret's Café e Nata Edifício Gum Loi, Rua Almirante Costa Cabral; 853/2871-0032; breakfast or lunch for two MOP75.

Old Taipa Tavern 21 Rua dos Negociantes, Taipa; 853/2882-5221; lunch or dinner for two MOP400.

A Petisqueira 15 Rua de São João, Taipa; 853/2882-5354; dinner for two MOP700.

SHOP

10Fantasia 10 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lázaro; 853/2835-4582; 10fantasia.com.

City Square 191-227 Dr. Sun Yat Sen Avenue, Shop B-E, Edifício Royal Ascot, Taipa; 853/2830-3310.

Hea Deco 19 Rua dos Negociantes, Taipa; 853/2882-7118.

Lines Lab 8-A3 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lázaro; 853/2892-2159; lineslab.com.

Massala 86B Rua da Alfândega; 853/6658-9219.

The Portuguese Corner 8 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lázaro; 853/2856-2708; merceariaportuguesa.com.

Ribs Clothing 7A Patio de Ho Chin Sin Tong, Tai Res-Do-Chao A; 853/2835-6358; ribsclothing.com.

Tap Seac Gallery Tap Seac Plaza, 95 Avenida do Conselheiro Almeida Ferreira; 853/2836-6866; macauart.net/ts.

STAY

Pousada de Coloane Praia de Cheoc Van, Cheoc Van Beach, Coloane; 853/2888-2143; hotelpcoloane.com.mo; doubles from MOP1,280.

Pousada de São Tiago Avenida da República, Fortaleza de São Tiago da Barra; 853/2837-8111; saotiago.com.mo; doubles from MOP2,680

SEE AND DO

Albergue SCM 8 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lázaro.

A-Ma Temple Rua de São Tiago da Barra.

Mandarin's House 10 Travesso de António da Silva; 853/2896-8820; wh.mo/mandarinhouse.

Taipa Houses Museum Avenida da Praia, Taipa; 853/2882-7103; housesmuseum.iacm.gov.mo; admission MOP5.