



Timeless beauties in an age of change

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Southeast Asia, made up of a handful of States, can be described as a land of natural beauty, and historical richness. The Angkor Wat in northern Cambodia, Borobudur Mahayana Buddhist Temple in Indonesia, and the Long Bay, which shines like emeralds amidst thousands of

emerald towers in Vietnam, are just a few of the many natural and historical sites of Southeast Asia. In addition, some of the most recent man-made creations have contributed to the beautification of Southeast Asia by attracting local and foreign tourists.

Golden Bridge (Vietnam)

From the mountains of central

Vietnam, a majestic pair of arms can be seen lifting a passenger bridge that looks like a golden thread in the distance.

It is safe to say that the 'Golden Bridge', which opened to the public in June 2018, has now become one of Vietnam's top tourist attractions. Located at an altitude of 1,000 metres (3,280 ft) above sea level, it was designed by the TA Landscape Architecture Company based in the Ho Chi Minh City.

It is said that the 'Golden Bridge' is designed to reflect how a huge pair of hands between the heavens and the earth pulls a golden thread out of the earth's crust.

Built for the convenience of those who want to enjoy the beauty of the Ba Na Mountains, it is about 5 me-

tres wide and 150 metres in length. The 'Golden Bridge' which is made of gold-plated stainless steel is held by the pair of hands made of a concrete mix.

Gardens by the Bay (Singapore)

The Gardens by the Bay was established in 2012 on a landfill adjacent to the Marina Reservoir in central Singapore. Covering an area of 101 hectares (250 acres), it is a man-made nature park. Launched as part of the Government of Singapore's strategic program to transform Singapore into a hub-centric State, the Gardens by the Bay project aims to increase Singapore's plant population

and bring a higher standard of living to its citizens. The seashell-shaped greenhouse is a unique feature of the Gardens by the Bay.

It consists of 12 models in the shape of a giant tree and houses more than 162,900 plants of species such as ferns, orchids, and tropical plants. It is reported that more than 40 million local and foreign tourists have visited the Gardens which has three major seaside parks.

In Batu Cave, about 12 kilometres north of the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, one finds a huge statue of Lord Murugan, the ruler of war and victory in Hindu mythology. Today, there is a temple dedicated to Lord Murugan in the Batu Caves, which are believed to have been created about 400 million years ago. One has to climb 272 steps to reach it.

Standing at the foot of the stairs, the world's tallest statue of Lord Murugan stands 42.7 metres (140 feet) high. It is reported that 1,550 cubic metres of concrete, 250 tonnes of iron and 300 litres of gold paint imported from Thailand were used to build it.

Built over three years, it was opened to the public at the Thaipusam Festival in January 2006.

Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque (Brunei)

The Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, considered to be one of the most beautiful mosques in the Asia-Pacific region, on the banks of the Brunei River in the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan.

Named in honour of the 28th Sultan of Brunei, Omar Ali Saifuddin III, the Mosque was completed in 1958, and was designed by the Italian Rudolfo Noloi as a fusion of Mughal and Malay architectural techniques. The Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque is built of Italian marble and is decorated with black granite imported from Shanghai, crystal lamps imported from England, and carpets brought from Saudi Arabia. Millions of ornate pieces of glass have been used to decorate the Mosque's main tower, which glows with gold.

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