ABOUT THIS GUIDE

SEATTLE CULTURAL HERITAGE GUIDES are a resource for visitors who want to explore the city’s rich cultural heritage. Learn about museums, historic sites, public art and neighborhoods that will give you an insider’s view of Seattle’s vibrant ethnic communities and unique history.

The guides are produced by the Cultural Tourism program of Visit Seattle, and supported by funding from 4Culture (King County Lodging Tax) and the Office of Arts and Culture.

Learn more about Seattle and access expert travel advice at visitseattle.org. Or stop by one of our Visitor Information Centers at 1st & Pike in downtown Seattle or the main floor of the Washington State Convention Center at 7th & Pike.

Our sincere thanks to all the community members who helped contribute to this project and who preserve and protect Seattle’s cultural legacies.

INTRODUCTION • 介绍 • 導入 • 소개

Asian Pacific Americans have played important roles in Seattle history. Chinese pioneers, often single men seeking economic opportunities, first arrived in the 1860s to work as laborers for railroads, mines, canneries and sawmills. A Chinese quarter was established near the waterfront. Economic downturns triggered anti-Chinese violence, but the Chinese remained a vital part of the growing town. After the Seattle Fire in 1889, the center of Chinatown shifted with the construction of new rooming houses and community association buildings east of Fifth Avenue S.

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President Roosevelt in 1942, forced Japanese Americans on the West Coast into internment camps for the duration of World War II. The impact of this policy profoundly altered both urban and rural communities. Since the 1960s, Seattle has become home to Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Hmong and South Asian immigrants and a fusion of Pacific Rim cultures gives our region a unique flavor and aesthetic. The influence of Asian cultural traditions can be seen everywhere in Seattle – in architecture, garden design, regional cuisine, and the arts. While the International District remains the heart of Seattle’s Asian American community, surrounding communities in such as White Center, Rainier Valley Way and Shoreline boast vibrant multi-ethnic restaurants and stores.
CHINATOWN / INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

Seattle’s Chinatown/International District is located southeast of Pioneer Square, bordered by Yesler Street (N), Fifth Avenue (W), Dearborn Street (S), and Rainier Avenue (E). The historic district within this area was built largely between 1909 and 1929, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Vibrant storefronts are home to restaurants, galleries, gift shops, produce markets, herbalists and other traditional and modern establishments. Buildings which once served as SRO (single room occupancy) hotels catering to immigrant laborers are slowly being restored to serve as housing for new generations of urban residents.

A closer look at this historic district reveals intriguing details of architecture and culture. Dragons perch on light posts, greeting visitors as they enter the neighborhood. Ornamental balconies grace the upper floors of Chinese family association buildings such as the Gee Hoo Tim Benevolent Society at 519 Seventh Avenue S and the Bing Kung Association at 708 S King Street. For decades, these organizations provided housing, a social life and a safety net for immigrants far from home.

Doorway carvings reveal the names of prosperous merchants, such as the Goon Dip Young Building (Milwaukee Hotel) at 668 S King Street. Signs painted on windows and building sides advertise long-lasting establishments such as the Lucky Top Music Club at 512 Seventh Avenue S. A mural commemorates Filipino-American author Carlos Bulosan in the Eastern Hotel at 506 Maynard Avenue S.

One of the grandest buildings in the district is the Chong Wa Benevolent Association at 522 Seventh Avenue S, an important social and cultural center built in 1929. The Nhon Go Gakko at 1414 S Weller Street, now known as the Japanese Cultural and Community Center, is the oldest operating Japanese Language School in the continental U.S. The Danny Woo International District Community Garden and adjacent Kobe Terrace Park provide green space in this dense urban area.

A colorful gate marks the historic western entrance of Old Chinatown, at S King Street and Fifth Avenue S. The traditional design includes upturned eaves, a dragon, a phoenix and other good luck symbols.

“Night markets on summer evenings feature traditional cuisine, shopping and entertainment in an open-air setting.”

Community activists have fought to preserve the neighborhood’s cultural and architectural heritage. In spite of freeway construction and “urban renewal” projects in the 20th century, much of the historic neighborhood remains intact. The area east of 15th Avenue S and S Jackson Street has become known as Little Saigon in recent years, as newer immigrant communities establish a presence in the district.

Night markets on summer evenings feature traditional cuisine, shopping and entertainment in an open-air setting (see cdiba.org for info). The Chinatown/International District website also offers a helpful guide to shops and restaurants in the neighborhood at cdiba.org.

A detailed walking guide is also available at seatltdwalingmap.com.

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
January or February | Streets of Chinatown/International District
This multi-cultural event features lively Lion and Dragon dances, taiko drumming, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Korean dances, arts and crafts booths, and traditional cuisine. cdiba.org

SEATTLE ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL
February | Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Avenue
 Held at Northwest Film Forum, the festival showcases feature-length and short films by and about Asian Americans across North America, with an emphasis on filmmakers from the Pacific Northwest. seattleaaff.org

DRAGON FEST
Early July | Fish Hay Park, 499 Maynard Avenue S
The Northwest’s largest Asian American street fair features Japanese taiko drumming, Chinese martial arts performances, Filipino dancing, Chinese Girls Drill Team, Lion and Dragon dance performances, arts and crafts, and an array of food booths. cdiba.org

BON ODORI
Mid July | Seattle Buddhist Temple, 1427 S Main Street
Bon Odori is a Japanese festival that honors ancestors and celebrates traditions through costumes, music and street dancing. Also known as Obon, it is one of the most important Japanese Buddhist holidays of the year, and has been celebrated in Seattle for more than 80 years. seattlebetsuin.com

PISTA SA NAYON
Late July | Seward Park, 1902 Lake Washington Boulevard W
This “town festival” celebrates Filipino culture, history and community on the shores of Lake Washington. pista.org

CHINATOWN SEAFAIR PARADE
Late July | Streets of Chinatown/International District
The parade features drill teams, marching bands, dancers, Seafair queens and pirates, and a 100-foot long Chinese dragon. seattlechinesechamber.org

SEATTLE DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL
August 6 | Northwest Shore of Green Lake
Held at Northwest Film Forum, the festival showcases feature-length and short films by and about Asian Americans across North America, with an emphasis on filmmakers from the Pacific Northwest. seattleaaff.org

FROM HIROSHIMA TO HOPE
August 6 | Northeast Shore of Green Lake
A solemn and beautiful twilight ceremony of floating lanterns marks the anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. fromhoshaimahopes.org

SEATTLE SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL
October | Seattle Asian Art Museum, Volunteer Park
Taxawer presents this annual series of film screenings, panel discussions, workshops and cultural programming focused on South Asia and its diaspora. taxawer.org
CHINATOWN / INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

ASIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES

A. BURKE MUSEUM
17th Avenue NE & NE 45th Street
Seattle, WA
Explore the university’s long-term exhibit Pacific Voices featuring the arts, stories, and communities of Asian and American cultures and communities around the Pacific Rim.

B. PEACE PARK
NE Pacific Street & NE 45th Street
Located at the northeast corner of University Bridge near the University of Washington, this park honors Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl who survived the bombing of Hiroshima but later died from radiation sickness. Daryl Smith’s statue, Sadako, and the Thouand Cranes, is often draped with garlands of folded paper cranes which symbolize hope for peace in the world.

C. BRUCE LEE’S GRAVE
Lake View Cemetery, 5154 31st Avenue E, Seattle, WA 98112
Often visited by fans wishing to pay tribute to the kung fu legend.

D. SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM
1400 E Prospect Street in Volunteer Park, 206.654.2300
The elegant art deco building in the Capitol Hill neighborhood opened in 1933 as the Seattle Art Museum. The building became the domain of Asian Art in 1994 when SAM opened a new museum downtown. Today, it houses one of the nation’s premier collections of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese art. The Lapis Hisashi sculpture by Isamu Noguchi’s iconic black Sun is located outside the museum.

E. JAPANESE GARDEN, ARBORETUM
1501 East Ravenna Boulevard, 206.684.4271
Located within the Washington Park Arboretum. This 3.5 acre formal garden was created in 1960 by renowned designer Juki Iida, and features hundreds of granite boulders from the Cascade Mountains placed among azaleas, flowering trees and shrubs worldwide. The garden also features stone bridges and lanterns, a traditional tea house, and a koi pond swathed in water lilies.

F. MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY (MOHAI)
Lake Union Park, 660 Terry Avenue N, 206.324.1226
MOHAI’s permanent exhibit True Northwest. The Seattle Journey features Asian American pioneers and stories from diverse immigrant communities, including an examination of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

G. SEATTLE CENTER
Fifth Avenue NE & 8th Street
The Space Needle was the centerpiece of the World’s Fair in 1962 and is now a memorial with the motto Nidoto Nai Yoni, “Let it not happen again.” Islanders are commemorated and remembered.

H. 5TH AVENUE THEATRE
1380 Eight Avenue E, 206.242.1990
Opened in 1994, the theater of the magnificent 5th Avenue Theatre incorporates design motifs from Imperial China’s Forbidden City, Temple of Heavenly Peace, and Summer Palace. Frequent performances as well as free guided tours (all in advance to schedule) provide opportunities for visitors to see the theatre.

I. PIKE PLACE MARKET
First Avenue & Pike Street, 206.682.7473
Seattle’s public market has a long connection to Asian American communities. In the early 20th century, the majority of market stalls were filled by Japanese American farmers, who sold bemes and seasonal vegetables grown on truck farms in the Green River Valley and nearby areas. Today, Hmong and other Southeast Asian immigrants grow and sell summer bouquets and a variety of produce.

J. SEATTLE CENTRAL LIBRARY
3000 Fourth Avenue, 206.386.4030
Asian American pioneer, Dr. George Washington Steele, the founder of Seattle Public Library, named the central library after Boston’s Asian American pioneer, Dr. George Washington Steele, the founder of Seattle Public Library, named the central library after Boston’s.

K. SMITH TOWER 35th FLOOR OBSERVATORY
505 Second Avenue, 206.448.2776
This cultural icon, located on the 35th floor of Smith Tower, offers 360-degree views of Seattle, Mount Rainier, and the Olympic Mountains.

L. JAPANESE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CENTER OF WASHINGTON (JCCW)
2445 Miller Street, 206.564.7234
The oldest operating Japanese Language School (Nihon Go Gakko) in the continental U.S. has transformed into a center to preserve heritage, celebrate culture, and host special events.

M. BEACON HILL PARKS
The Beacon Hill neighborhood is one of Seattle’s most culturally diverse and two parks commemorate aspects of Asian American heritage and offer views of Seattle and the surrounding area.

N. CHINESE GARDEN AT SOUTH SEATTLE COLLEGE
4600 - 56th Avenue S, 206.954.3229
The beautiful garden, located on the campus of South Seattle College, is a place for community gatherings and education. The garden features a traditional Chinese pavilion and views of Mount Rainier.

O. KUBOTA GARDEN
9847 - 35th Avenue S, 206.721.5000
The grand garden, located near the Space Needle, commemorates a challenging episode in the city’s history.

FURTHER AFIELD

GREAT WALLmall - 17310 East Valley Highway, Kent 425.251.3600
A Pan-Asian marketplace that highlights Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Filipino and Taiwanese cultures. Merchants range from an expansive food market to a traditional herb market.

PACIFIC BONSAI MUSEUM - 21635 NW 36th Street, Woodinville 425.353.1740
A collection of contemporary and traditional bonsai exhibits from around the world.

WHITE RIVER VALLEY MUSEUM - 320 H Street SE, Auburn 253.288.7433
Exhibits highlight the history of the region that once flourished in South King County’s rich farmland areas.

YA OARDEN - 2800 Main Street, Bellevue 425.442.2750
Located at the Bellevue Botanical Garden, the Ya Oarden is a Northwest interpretation of a Japanese strolling garden, and was named for Bellevue’s sister city in Japan.

BLOODEL RESERVE - 8810 NE 10th Street, Redmond 425.269.6775
Located on the campus of the University of Washington, the Bloodel Reserve is a unique site that showcases the history of the Pacific Northwest.

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND
JAPANESE AMERICAN EXCLUSION MEMORIAL
4092 Eagle Harbor Drive NE, Bainbridge Island
This memorial commemorates the forced relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II.

TACOMA ASIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES
The Asian Pacific Cultural Center at 4851 South Tacoma Way (253.383.9903) offers exhibits and programs including live music, tea ceremonies, and new year celebrations.

Near the Old Town waterfront, the Chinese Reconciliation Park commemorates a challenging episode in the city’s history.

mohai.org
uwajimaya.com
plopacases.com
nvcfoundation.org
seattle.gov/parks
seattlejapanesegarden.org
smithtower.com
pikeplacemarket.org