



TimeOut

Little
India

Singapore Little Black Book

Bras Basah
& Bugis

Tiong
Bahru

Chinatown

4TH EDITION



Editor's note

Welcome to the 2015 edition of the Time Out Singapore Little Black Book. We've revamped this edition to present not only the very best of Singapore's eating, shopping and nightlife, but a number of new expanded area guides to help you get off the beaten path and show you what really makes this island nation so strangely wonderful.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to get lost in Singapore (with the help of this guide, of course) and go beyond what you think you know about this Little Red Dot. Go exploring around any of the ten areas detailed in this guide and you may come across a unique playground shaped like a dragon (p32), discover a stock market-inspired bar with rising and falling beer prices (p44), or even find yourself arguing with a local about the best way to eat chicken rice (p42). These are just a few things that make Singapore special - find out what makes it truly wonderful for you.

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TimeOut



Welcome to the Little Red Dot

Think you know Singapore? Here are ten strangely wonderful facts about the Lion City



Singapore skyline

Singapore is a place with many nicknames. Some call it the 'Little Red Dot' due to the city-state's size and appearance on world maps; others 'Singapour' due to its humidity and wet season rain showers. Some have also dubbed it 'Singapore' for its allegedly sterile environment – while we can't deny the first few, this last name is one we hope to dispel.

Singapore is a city full of strangely unique and wonderfully diverse experiences around every corner, where shophouses exist alongside skyscrapers, hawker food gets cooked up streets away from restaurants helmed by celebrity chefs (see Eat, p38), and nearly every month features a massive event (see Calendar, p8). In recent years, the government

has made big investments into the tourism industry, from the opening of two casino resorts at Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa, to converting the former army base of Gillman Barracks into an international art cluster and developing sustainable green areas around the island. The local creative scene has also been flourishing, with the presence of more indie musicians and fashion designers.

Whatever experience you're looking for, Singapore has it. You may think you know the 'Lion City', but scratch beneath the surface, and you'll discover a wealth of experiences that you never realised this small island could hold. As a quick introduction, here are ten fun facts about Singapore's history and culture.



Enjoying the rich dining culture

1 Singapore's original name – Singapura – meaning 'Lion City' in Malay, was given when the city's 13th century founder, Srivijayan Sang Nila Utama, reportedly saw a lion when he first arrived on these shores. However, since no lions ever lived on the island, it is most likely that what he saw was a tiger. Harimaupura – 'Tiger City' – could be a more fitting name.

2 While English, Chinese, Tamil and Malay are Singapore's four official languages, its national language – and the one its national anthem bears – is Malay. But if you really want to blend in with the locals, try learning a few phrases of Singlish (see p7).

3 While Changi Airport has won numerous accolades for being one of the world's best, it may also boast one of the world's most unique runways: the East Coast Parkway (ECP) was designed to be converted into a landing strip by removing the potted plants in the middle.

4 The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve has more tree species than the whole of North America. For more about Singapore's green areas, see p33.

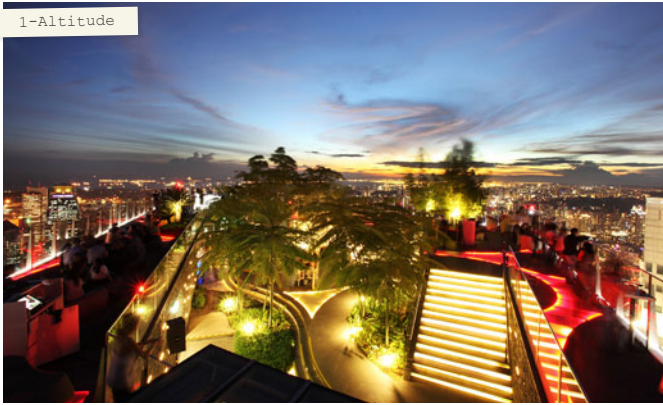


Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

5 The Singapore Flyer observation wheel (one of the largest in the world) had its direction changed a few months after the official opening, as feng shui masters believe that it should draw the sea water (symbolic of wealth) into the land rather than away.

6 The city's tallest buildings – a title shared by United Overseas Bank (UOB) Plaza One, Republic Plaza and One Raffles Place – are capped at 280m due to nearby air bases. While that may limit Singapore's standing amongst the tallest skyscrapers of the world, it still holds the record for having the world's highest alfresco

1-Altitude



bar: 1-Altitude, which sits on the top of One Raffles Place (see Play, p43).

7 Singapore also set the world record for the longest karaoke session – it was held at the Bukit Batok Community Centre and lasted 60 hours. 750 residents participated (for more on life in the Heartlands, see p30).

8 Singapore was the first city in the world to manage road congestion by implementing an electronic pricing system. So if you hear a beep go off

when you're in a cab, that's what it is!

9 More than 90 per cent of the city's population live in government housing known as HDB (Housing Development Board) flats – some of the newer HDB apartments, such as Duxton Pinnacle near Chinatown, are among the most covetable places to live on the island.

10 Singapore is one of only three surviving city-states in the world (the other two being Monaco and Vatican City).

Got Singlish?

A brief guide to Singapore's own pidgin English

Singlish draws heavily from Chinese grammar translated back to English, spoken with the cadences and the speed of Malay, and peppered with a slew of dialect expressions. Sentences are shortened to their maximum efficiency – asking if someone can do something becomes 'can or not', with an equally curt response: 'can' (yes) or 'cannot' (no). Locals often add 'lah' to the end of sentences of exclamations for emphasis, such as telling an impatient person to 'Wait, lah!'. Here are a few key terms.

"Ah beng" A pejorative term to denote a male of little class or education, who acts in an overly loud fashion (basically, a bogan).

"Chope" To reserve something. Locals chope their seats at hawker centres by putting tissue packets on seats while going off to get their food.

"Ah lian" A female ah beng.

"Isit?" Interchangeable with the English expression 'Really?' or 'Is that so?'

"Aiyah/Aiyoh" Chinese equivalent of 'Oh no!' or 'Oh dear!'

"Kena" An expression to mean 'got' i.e. 'I kena sunburned' means 'I got sunburned'.

"Ang moh" Literally means red hair. A common term used to describe Caucasians.

"Kiasu" (pronounced kee-ah-soo) To be afraid of losing or missing out on something. It's a defining characteristic of many Singaporeans, who will buy up early-bird event tickets, reserve opening-night tables at new restaurants or exploit any other opportunity to get ahead.

"Atas" (pronounced ah-tus) To describe superiority, often used in reference to people who are arrogant.

"Aunty/Uncle" The terms are used as a generic form of address for middle-aged or elderly women and men.

"Kopitiam" Neighbourhood canteen, literally means 'coffee shop'.

Referring to older Singaporeans in this way will give an ang moh added credibility. Remember to smile.

"Makan" Malay term for eating.

"Bo pian" Hokkien term to mean that there is no other choice.

"Neh mind" The English equivalent of 'never mind'.

"Catch no ball" Signifies a lack of understanding i.e. 'I don't get it.'

"Shiok" An expression conveying top quality or extreme pleasure.

"Cheem" Hokkien term meaning something is profound or too intellectual.

"Spoil market" Someone who does his work so well that he makes everyone look bad.

Events Calendar

Plan your visit around Singapore's festive seasons



Chingay Parade

Jan-Mar

Singapore Art Week

Coinciding with Art Stage Singapore, the biggest contemporary art fair in Southeast Asia, Singapore's gallery scene goes into overdrive with major shows and art openings in all the major art districts around town. (www.artweek.sg) Jan

Chinese New Year

The biggest celebration of the year. Activities take place all around town but centre around Chinatown, with street-lighting ceremonies, music, performances and a street market hawking decorative items and traditional snacks. Associated events include the wonderfully kitsch Chingay Parade, lion dance competition and plenty of fireworks. (www.chingay.org.sg) Jan-Feb

Apr-Jun

The Great Singapore Sale

Shoppers go into overdrive during this annual event, with hundreds of shops and malls offering big discounts. (www.greatsingapore.com.sg) May-Jul

Baybeats

This annual three-day alternative music festival organised by the Esplanade – now into its second decade – is known for its showcase of up-and-coming local indie bands, who audition for a slot on stage alongside international acts. (www.baybeats.com.sg) Jun

Singapore Food Festival

An annual celebration of local cuisine featuring a range of alfresco food stalls around Marina Bay with the city's best hawkers and star chefs offering locally-inspired dishes. Jun-Jul



New year at Marina Bay

Jul-Sep

Hari Raya Puasa

In celebration of the end of the month-long Ramadan fasting period, the streets of Kampong Glam come alive with roadside bazaars and stalls peddling traditional Malay food and goods. Jul

National Day Parade

Singapore's independence is celebrated every 9 August with much pomp and hullabaloo. The official parade at Marina Bay involves patriotic Singaporeans dressed in red and white watching a series of decorated floats, military marches and painstakingly synchronised dances, culminating with fireworks. Aug

Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA)

Rebranded from the annual Singapore Arts Festival, this six-week festival is an annual celebration of performing arts, presenting international works in the theatre, dance and music. (www.sifa.sg) Aug-Sep

Mid-Autumn Festival

This Chinese festival in honour of the full moon is celebrated with colourful paper lanterns and street lights. Mooncakes – the food of the festival – abounds in Chinatown as well as in hotels and Chinese restaurants across the island. Aug-Sep

Grand Prix Season Singapore

Expect high-speed night time action on the Marina Bay F1 street circuit, replete with a host of international headliners, world-class entertainment and high-glam parties. (www.singaporegp.sg) Sep

Oct-Dec

Deepavali

Little India's Serangoon Road is artfully illuminated for this Hindu festival of light, symbolising the triumph of good over darkness. Oct

Christmas

Orchard Road and Marina Bay are dressed in Yuletide finery and lights as Christmas carols play on loop at supermarkets, shops and malls – the weather stays nice and balmy, of course. Dec

Year-end parties

There's no time for parties like the end of the year. In early December you've got the beach-side dance festival ZoukOut, then on New Year's Eve there are countdown parties galore at Marina Bay and Siloso Beach. Dec-Jan



Deepavali

Want more?

Head to YourSingapore.com for more events and festivals

Area Guides

Does size really matter?

Even with Singapore's relatively small scale, it's packed with diverse areas, each with its own distinct flavour and charm. Here are ten key areas to help you dig a little deeper into this strangely wonderful island – get out there and discover a side of Singapore you've never seen.

Singapore By area

Bras Basah & Bugis (p12)
Arts district with red-light history

Chinatown (p14)
F&B hotspot with Chinese culture and heritage

Dempsey Hill (p16)
Dining in leafy colonial chic

Kampong Glam (p18)
The Malay and Arab quarter

Katong & Joo Chiat (p20)
Multicultural food and flavours

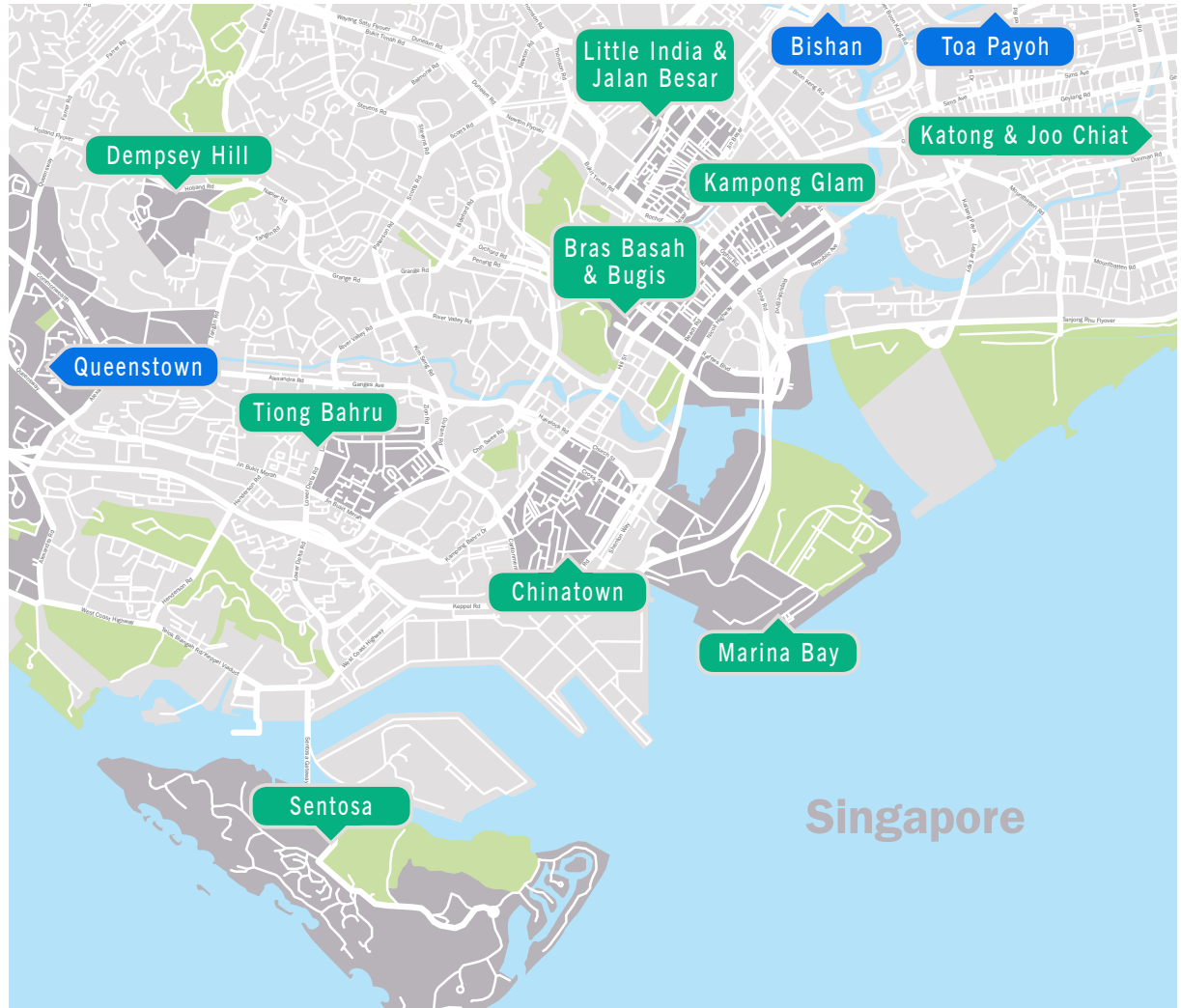
Little India & Jalan Besar (p22)
Indian shops and temples

Marina Bay (p24)
The CBD and major attractions

Sentosa (p26)
Beaches and resorts

Tiong Bahru (p28)
Art Deco charm and cafés

Heartlands (p30)
Bishan, Queenstown & Toa Payoh



Bras Basah & Bugis

New Bugis Street, Waterloo Street, Singapore Art Museum and the National Museum of Singapore



Bugis Street shops

Once Singapore's most colourful and infamous red-light district, Bugis was cleaned up and rehabilitated in the '80s into its modern version, with shopping complexes galore and a new heritage district featuring Singapore's top museums. **Bugis Street 1** (3 New Bugis St, +65 6338 9513, www.bugisstreet.com.sg) itself has been turned into a covered market, housing close to 800 stalls hawking cheap souvenirs and street food, while the original cobblestone stretch has been incorporated into **Bugis Junction 2** (200 Victoria St, +65 6557 6557, www.bugisjunction-mall.com.sg) across the street, which features four floors of shopping, a food court and restaurant level, a movie theatre and more, all built over the Bugis MRT station.

Further down Victoria Street is the 16-storey, glass-walled **National**

Library 3 (100 Victoria St, +65 6332 3255, www.nlb.gov.sg), built in 2005. In addition to the extensive main collection in the basement, there are spacious reference sections on the upper floors that offer quiet study spots and great views of the city. Rounding out the complex are several small exhibition spaces and the **Drama Centre 4** (Lvl 5, 100 Victoria St, +65 6837 8400, www.dramacentre.com), which hosts regular performances from local theatre companies.

The museums are clustered around the Bras Basah arts district, which is home to the **National Museum of Singapore 5** (93 Stamford Rd, +65 6332 3659, www.nationalmuseum.sg) and the **Singapore Art Museum 6** (71 Bras Basah Rd, +65 6332 3222, www.singaporeartmuseum.sg), both housed in grand colonial-era



Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

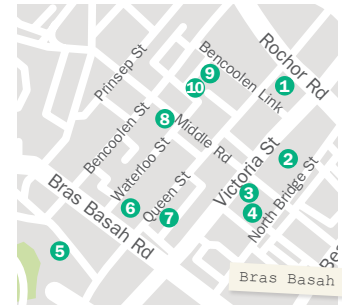


Singapore Art Museum

buildings, plus a number of other local art galleries along Queen and Waterloo Streets. **SAM at 8Q 7** (8 Queen St, +65 6332 3222, singaporeartmuseum.sg) is the Singapore Art Museum's newest contemporary art extension, showcasing modern installation works, video and photography, performance art and sound art.

At the top of Waterloo St, be sure to peek into **Artichoke Café 8** (161 Middle Rd, +65 6336 6949, www.artichoke.com.sg), which offers Middle Eastern-inspired sharing plates whipped up by chef-owner Bjorn Shen (a returnee from Australia), whose approach is represented best by the eggs shakshouka – tender, fall-apart chunks of fresh lamb in a lightly tart tomato stew scented with cumin and turmeric, and topped with a dollop

Sri Krishnan Temple



of homemade labneh. Their bakery overdoughs (www.overdoughs.com), at the entrance, bakes up tasty pastries, cakes and baklavas.

From there, cross Middle Road onto the pedestrian stretch of Waterloo Street, where you'll come across floods of worshippers at the **Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple 9** (178 Waterloo St, +65 6337 3965), evidence that not everything is completely modernised here. Built in 1884, the Buddhist temple is dedicated to the goddess of mercy and was used as a refuge for the sick and destitute during the Japanese occupation. Next to it is the **Sri Krishnan Temple 10** (152 Waterloo St, +65 6337 7957), which began in 1870 as a banyan tree with a few deities placed next to it and has evolved into this vivid, colourful Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Krishna.

Chinatown

Temple Street, Smith Street, Ann Siang Hill,
Club Street and Keong Saik Road



Since Chinatowns usually spring up in cities where Chinese people are a minority, it's a bit strange that Singapore – a country where the Chinese outnumber all other races by far – should also have one. The reasons date back to colonial times, when Sir Stamford Raffles organised the influx of immigrants based on their cultural origins. He gave the Chinese one of the largest portions of land, just southwest of the Singapore River. Still, the area quickly became overcrowded; after World War II, Chinatown became a centre for political agitation and rioting. Gradually, as Singapore established the Housing Development Board, residents were moved to housing estates in other parts of the island, and the 'big clean up' of slums and crime improved conditions.

Today, a few of the old shophouses remain, although many have been restored – in recent years, Chinatown has seen the rise of several rapidly transforming F&B stretches, mainly along Keong Saik Road and Club Street, with international chefs and bartenders staking their claim on the scene. On the weekend, the nexus of Club Street and Ann Siang Road is blocked off from cars, and restaurants set up tables right on the street, establishing the area as a hip alternative to the traditional nightlife hotspots of Boat and Clarke Quays.

Among the superstars here are **Oxwell & Co 1** (5 Ann Siang Rd, +65 6438 3984, www.oxwellandco.com), started by Gordon Ramsey protégé Mark Sargeant, which has a number of creative drink concepts at their bar,

Sri Mariamman Temple



including kegged cocktails, and casual diner **The Study 2** (49 Keong Saik Rd, +65 6221 8338, www.the-study.sg), from British chef Jason Atherton (another Ramsey protégé), which also leads to the password-protected speakeasy bar The Library.

Other key bars in the area are **L'Aiglon 3** (69 Neil Rd, +65 6220 0369, www.barlaiglon.com), **Jigger and Pony 4** (101 Amoy St, +65 6223 9101, www.jiggerandpony.com), and **The Cufflink Club 5** (6 Jiak Chuan Rd, +65 9694 9623, www.thecufflinkclub.com), all of which serve well-crafted and inventive cocktails (expect to pay around \$20/drink).

Still, there's plenty of traditional culture and cuisine on hand as well, particularly at the pedestrianised **Chinatown Food Street 6**, which takes up half the length of Smith Street, allowing you to dine alfresco on traditional dishes like fishball noodles and char kway teow (a noodle dish fried with fresh cockles). If that's not enough, you can hop across the road to one of the most popular hawkers centres in town, **Maxwell Food Centre**



7 (1 Kadayannallur St), which hosts over 100 stalls, including Tian Tian Chicken Rice (stall 10), considered by some to be Singapore's best.

Around Chinatown's bustling central area (including Smith Street, Pagoda Street and Temple Street, plus their adjoining alleys) – are shops filled with Chinese 'antiques' and all manner of cheap souvenirs. For some insight into the area's history, visit the **Chinatown Heritage Centre 8** (48 Pagoda St, +65 6325 2878, chinatownheritagecentre.sg). At the end of the same street is the city's largest and oldest Hindu temple, **Sri Mariamman Temple 9** (244 South Bridge Rd, +65 6223 4064). Built in 1863, it's famous for its staggeringly detailed gopuram (tower gateway). It's also the site of Theemidhi, a remarkable fire-walking ceremony held a week before Deepavali in October.

Dempsey Hill

Cafés, restaurants,
gourmet groceries and colonial chic

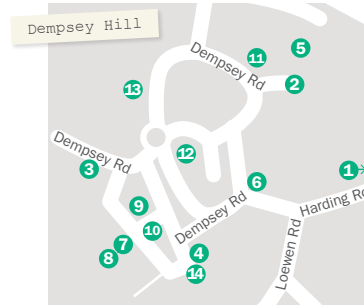


Tucked away near the Botanic Gardens and just a few minutes from Orchard Road, Dempsey Hill served as the British army barracks in colonial times and more recently as a base for the local military. These days, however, the refurbished enclave is filled with tropical trees and hosts some of the city's top restaurants, gourmet shops and galleries.

As the sun begins to set on the Hill, winers and diners pour into the neighbourhood. Standout restaurants include the **White Rabbit 1** (39C Harding Rd, +65 9721 0536, www.thewhiterabbit.com.sg), housed in the repurposed Harding Chapel and serving up modern European cuisine, and **Disgruntled Chef 2** (26B Dempsey Rd, +65 6476 5305, www.disgruntledchef.com), where

creative cocktails can be paired with small dishes like the crispy lamb short-ribs. For an experimental twist on classic Singaporean dishes (also known as Mod-Sin fusion cuisine), try **Pidgin Kitchen & Bar 3** (#01-04, Blk 7, Dempsey Rd, +65 6475 0080, www.pidgin.sg), run by local chef-owner Adrian Ling.

Chop Suey 4 (#01-23, Blk 10, Dempsey Rd, +65 9224 6611, www.pscafe.com) features Westernised Chinese food made popular by overseas diners, such as sweet and sour pork. Share a tower of Monster Green Lager at **RedDot Brewhouse 5** (25A Dempsey Rd, #01-01, +65 6475 0500, www.reddotbrewhouse.com.sg), Singapore's first local microbrewery where acoustic acts perform regular live shows.



The lush green setting is great for a relaxing weekend brunch. **PS.Café 6** (28B Harding Rd, +65 9070 8782, pscafe.com) is a popular spot, with traditional eggs Benedict or their signature Brunch Burger topped with Camembert – make sure you get a side of their truffle fries as well. Another early-afternoon weekend dining option can be found over at **House 7** (8D Dempsey Rd, +65 6475 7787, www.dempseyhouse.com). Try the Asian sliders made with pork belly in steamed buns; this can be followed by some serious unwinding right upstairs at the Spa Esprit's **Beauty Emporium 8** (Lvl 2, 8D Dempsey Rd, +65 6479 0070, www.spa-esprit.com). The spa pays tribute to its verdant surroundings with a range of treatments that make use of natural ingredients.

Gourmet grocery shopping can also take place in this neck of the woods. Shop for organic ingredients from around the world at **Culina 9** (8 Dempsey Rd, +65 6474 7338, www.culina.com.sg) or wander into the cheese room at **Jones the Grocer 10** (#01-12, Blk 9, Dempsey Rd, +65 6476 1512, jonesthegrocer.com) next door. A few blocks down, top cuts of meat and sausages are on display at **Huber's Butchery 11** (18A Dempsey Rd, +65 6737 1588, hubers.com.sg). All have great lunch specials as well.



Dempsey is full of antique shops that offer furniture, masks and trinkets from around the region and throughout China. **Woody Antique House 12** (#01-05, Blk 13, Dempsey Rd, +65 6471 1770, www.woodyantique.com) has old Chinese chests, Indian doors and Burmese teakwood. **Asiatique Collections 13** (Blk 14A, Dempsey Rd, +65 6471 3146, www.asiatiquecollections.com) handpicks modern and vintage jewellery, homewares and art from around the world. **Red Sea Gallery 14** (Blk 9, Dempsey Rd, +65 6732 6711, www.redseagallery.com) showcases ceramics, sculptures, paintings and glass works from Vietnam, Indonesia, India and New Zealand.

Kampong Glam

Sultan Mosque, Malay Heritage Centre and hipster culture on Haji Lane



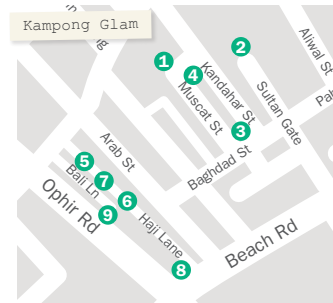
East of Little India is an enclave of streets and landmarks between Rochor Canal Road and Beach Road that is the Malay/Arab area of Singapore. It is still referred to by its original name, Kampong Glam (pronounced 'Kum-pong Glum'), named after the *gelam* trees that grew in the area ('kampong' in Malay means 'village'). It was designated by Raffles as the site for Sultan Husain Shah's palace after the Sultan had relinquished the island to the Brits, and soon became a gathering point for Malays, Indonesians from Java and merchants from the Middle East. The street names in the area reflect this: you'll find yourself wandering down Arab Street, Kandahar Street and Baghdad Street, which are lined

with shophouses selling carpets and textiles, as well as Middle Eastern-influenced lounges offering kebabs, shawarmas and shishas.

The focal point of Kampong Glam remains the impressive **Sultan Mosque 1** (3 Muscat St, 6293 4405/4043, www.sultanmosque.org.sg) – if you look closely at the base of the dome, you'll see it's made from glass bottles donated during the mosque's reconstruction. To dig further into the history of the area, there's also the nearby **Malay Heritage Centre 2** (85 Sultan Gate, +65 6391 0450, www.malayheritage.org.sg), which tells the story of Singapore's place in the Malay world. There's been an influx of new

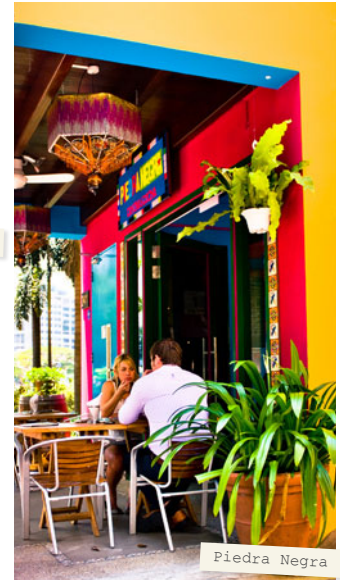


Sultan Mosque



restaurants and boutiques to the area, giving it a heady mix of old and new – amongst the plethora of Malay and Middle Eastern restaurants, **Cicheti 3** (52 Kandahar St, +65 6292 5012, www.cicheti.com) is a welcome palate cleanser. Tuck into rustic regional Italian small plates and authentic Neapolitan pizzas baked in their wood-fired oven. For a drink, stop by Japanese-inspired café **Maison Ikkoku 4** (20 Kandahar St, +65 6294 0078, www.maison-ikkoku.net), which opens up its rooftop bar to quench your thirst with artisan cocktails after sundown.

Haji Lane is a rich hunting ground for off-beat designer labels, vintage clothing stores and a handful of vibrant bars and cafés. There's **WanderWonder 5** (65A Haji Ln, +65 6396 8621,



Piedra Negra

www.facebook.com/wanderwondersg), a hip local menswear label aimed at the modern gentleman, street wear store **Sup 6** (34 Haji Ln, +65 6297 9384, www.supclothing.com), and **Going Om 7** (63 Haji Ln, +65 6396 3592, www.going-om.com), one of the few local establishments serving booze and something of a spiritual haven for the city's minuscule hippy community set up along the alley.

At the end of the street, **Piedra Negra 8** (241 Beach Rd, +65 6291 1297, www.piedra-negra.com) does solid Mexican food. Right around the corner, the same owners' **Blujaz Cafe 9** (11 Bali Ln, +65 6292 3800, www.blujaz.net) is one of the best venues in town for live music, local DJs and comedy nights: the three floors are full of warm, rootsy, experimental flavour.

Katong & Joo Chiat

East Coast Road, Joo Chiat Road
and Katong Laksa



328 Katong Laksa



The Katong district is a microcosm of what Singapore is all about. It's a melting pot of cultures – from Malay and Indian to Chinese and Peranakan (descendants of 17th-century Chinese immigrants who married into the local communities) – and this 'hood is heaping with heritage. It's home to the island's largest remaining assemblage of Baba architecture; the junction of East Coast Road and Joo Chiat Road is the heart of Katong, and a leisurely amble along the surrounding side streets will reveal colourful shophouses adorned with Peranakan touches like handcrafted ceramic tiles and engraved statues of dragons, flowers and crabs. You'll also find sprawling bungalows built by Singapore's elite Peranakan and Eurasian communities who could afford what was then a seaside view. Katong is also known for its plethora

of good local food – in particular, its laksa (see Eat, p38). Four laksa stalls claim to be the original and/or the best; for starters, pull up a plastic stool at corner favourite **328 Katong Laksa** ❶ (51 East Coast Rd, +65 9732 8163) and go from there. Early morning wanderers should also stop by for a traditional kaya toast breakfast at **Chin Mee Chin Confectionery** ❷ (204 East Coast Rd, +65 6345 0419), which has been serving up sweets for over 80 years.

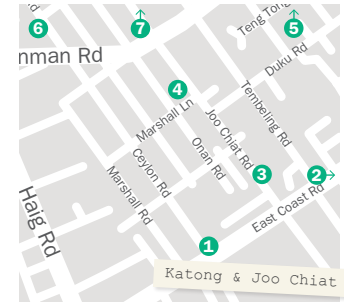
There are pubs aplenty in Joo Chiat, but for something with a more local touch, try **Immigrants** ❸ (467 Joo Chiat Rd, +65 8511 7322, www.immigrants-gastrobar.com), which pairs an impressive list of beers and spirits with tapas-style Peranakan and Eurasian dishes, courtesy of local



Peranakan architecture



Chin Mee Chin Confectionery



chef Damian D'Silva. Don't miss the popular sambal buah keluak fried rice (note: it's spicy!). Also worth stopping by is **Cider Pit** ❹ (#01-03, 328 Joo Chiat Rd, +65 6440 0504), a no-frills, laid-back pub with an extensive list of craft beers and ciders – flavours run the gamut from toffee apple to pear, strawberry and ginger.

To learn more about the rich heritage of the Peranakans, visit the **Intan** ❺ (69 Joo Chiat Tce, +65 9338 2234, the-intan.com), a private museum filled with owner Alvin Yapp's collection of artefacts, including a century-old

bridal bed and over 100 embroidered wedding shoes. Tours are conducted by Yapp himself by appointment. For more on local European-Asian heritage, visit the **Eurasian Heritage Centre** ❻ (139 Ceylon Rd, +65 6447 1578, www.eurasians.org.sg), which traces the genealogy of prominent Eurasian families and recounts the community's experience during the Japanese Occupation in World War II. Finally, **Betel Box** ❼ (200 Joo Chiat Rd, +65 6247 7340, betelbox.com), in addition to being a hostel and bistro, also organises historical and food tours of the neighbourhood.

Little India & Jalan Besar

Serangoon Road, Race Course Road and Jalan Besar's coffee revival

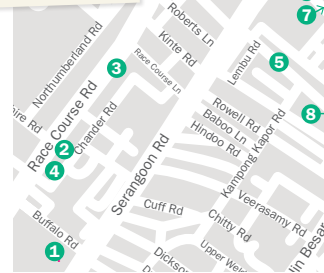


Enjoying a meal

Under colonial rule, the area east of the Singapore River was designated a settlement for Indian immigrants and workers, a legacy that has been enshrined in the district's more recent name, Little India. Today, it's one of the most distinctive places in Singapore, a bustling, chaotic, sensory overload of people, shops, traffic, colours, smells and tastes, and largely unchanged for decades. To some extent it has retained its status as cultural centre for the Indian and Hindu community in Singapore – the majority are Tamils from South India – but there are other races and religions in Little India. A day spent wandering its streets will confirm how rich and fascinating this area is.

Start by strolling around the streets that surround **Tekka Centre 1** (664 Buffalo Rd), an unmistakable landmark between Serangoon and Race Course Roads that has been a go-to community resource – hawker centre, wet market, custom tailor shops, Indian fashion boutiques – for over half a century. While you're here, don't miss the opportunity to eat: Race Course Road is full of some of the neighbourhood's best options, including the famous **Banana Leaf Apolo 2** (54-58 Race Course Rd, +65 6293 8682, thebananaleafapolo.com), often tied with **Muthu's Curry 3** (138 Race Course Rd, +65 6392 1722, www.muthuscurry.com) down the block for the best fish-head curry.

Little India & Jalan Besar



For something different, **Mustard 4** (32 Race Course Rd, +65 6297 8422, www.mustardsingapore.com) serves Punjabi and Bengali fare; try the prawn creamy curry served in a coconut.

Farther up along Serangoon Road is the 24-hour behemoth shopping complex **Mustafa Centre 5** (145 Syed Alwi Rd, +65 6295 5855, www.mustafa.com.sg), stretching across the length of several blocks and offering 14,000 sqm of just about anything you could be looking for, along with a rooftop restaurant, travel agency, pharmacy and supermarket. Try visiting at night, when it's not uncommon to see local shoppers walking out with a new TV or pet food at 3am.

Meanwhile, at the eastern edge of the area is Jalan Besar (which literally means 'large road' in Malay), which has become something of a café and coffee hotspot in recent years. While you're in this neighbourhood, make the pilgrimage to **Chye Seng Huat Hardware 6** (150 Tyrwhitt Rd, +65 6396 0609, www.cshhcoffee.com), the headquarters for local Third Wave coffee pioneers Papa Palheta. Formerly a hardware store, the two-storey building has been converted into a full-on coffee complex, housing a roaster, coffee school and retail



Tekka Centre



Muthu's Curry

space on the second floor, and a full inventory of coffee gear in its ground floor café.

On the main road, there's also **Suprette 7** (383 Jln Besar, +65 6298 8962, www.facebook.com/Suprette), a laid-back restaurant-bar inside the refurbished Kam Leng Hotel, or for some no-frills local food, try **Beach Road Scissor-Cut Curry Rice 8** (229 Jln Besar, +65 6292 3593), it has a fair share of fans dedicated to its hearty one-plate rice, meat and vegetable combinations, drenched in a classic sloppy sweet curry gravy.

Marina Bay

Hot waterfront architecture and attractions, CBD venues and the Merlion

Gardens by the Bay

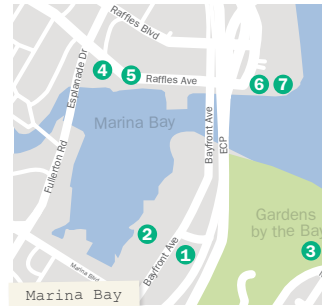


In the 1970s, land reclamation was carried out at Marina Bay, forming what has become one of the most architecturally exciting parts of town – the many skyscrapers support the island's Central Business District (CBD), but new mega-developments including a hotel-and-entertainment hub, a futuristic garden and a state-of-the-art cruise centre also make it a must-visit destination with plenty of attractions for visitors.

Among the notable additions to the skyline, the enormous **Marina Bay Sands** ① (1 Bayfront Ave, +65 6688 8868, www.marinabaysands.com) became an iconic part of the Singapore skyline before construction was even complete in 2010. That's largely due to the extraordinary SkyPark, which looks like a ship sitting atop three high-rise buildings – the view from its 200m-high observation deck is just as surreal. Though the

infinity pool is for hotel guests only, you can still indulge in venues like Sky on 57 and Ku De Ta (see Eat and Play, p38). On the ground floor, signs point the way to a glitzy mall, restaurants, theatre and casino complete with a 7-tonne Swarovski chandelier.

Those not interested in cocktails or shopping can visit the on-site **ArtScience Museum** ② (10 Bayfront Ave, +65 6688 8868). Some say it looks like a hand, others a lotus; everyone agrees that the Moshe Safdie-designed museum's striking silhouette is instantly recognisable. The galleries set inside the protruding 'petals' feature large-scale touring exhibitions that bridge art and science. Across the highway from MBS is another new skyline addition, the large-scale modern garden, **Gardens by the Bay** ③ (18 Marina Gardens Dr, +65 6420 6848, www.gardensbythebay.org.sg), which opened mid-2012 and



Singapore Flyer

owes its futuristic look to a grove of 'Supertrees' – giant vertical gardens, planted in man-made palms up to 16 storeys in height. These mimic their organic cousins by harnessing solar energy and collecting rainwater for irrigation and fountain displays. Walkways lead to the largest Supertree, a 50m-high behemoth complete with a restaurant in its upper branches. There are also several themed gardens showcasing the best tropical horticulture and garden artistry, along with two armadillo-shaped conservatories – the Flower Dome and the Cloud Forest, veiled in mist and containing the world's largest indoor waterfall.

On the other side of the bay sit the dramatic, spiky durian domes of Singapore's main performing arts centre, **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** ④ (1 Esplanade Dr, +65 6828



Marina Bay Sands



ArtScience Museum

8377, www.esplanade.com). It has its own mall, of course, with a selection of casual restaurants; adjacent, there's also the open-air hawkker centre **Makansutra Gluttons Bay** ⑤ (8 Raffles Blvd, +65 6336 7025, www.makansutra.com) – a collection of the best food stalls handpicked from around the city.

From there, the pedestrianised Marina Promenade is ideal for a stroll or a waterside picnic – you can head east towards the giant 165m observation wheel **Singapore Flyer** ⑥ (30 Raffles Ave, +65 6333 3311, www.singaporeflyer.com), which also has the '60s-themed hawkker centre **Singapore Food Trail** ⑦ (Lvl 1, 30 Raffles Ave, +65 6338 1328, www.singaporefoodtrail.com.sg), specialising in classic Singaporean dishes – or continue west towards the Merlion and into the heart of the CBD.

Sentosa

Resorts World Sentosa, Universal Studios, Siloso Beach and Sentosa Cove



Once a fishing village, Sentosa served as a British military fortress from the 1800s to 1967 when it was known as Pulau Blakang Mati ('Island of Death from Behind'). In 1968 it became a holiday resort with several man-made beaches, leading to further development of Singapore's HarbourFront precinct (the gateway to Sentosa, just 15 minutes from the city centre and accessible by MRT), which now holds the country's largest mall (Vivocity), biggest nightclub complex (St James Power Station) and only cable car system, connecting Sentosa's Imbiah Lookout to the peak of Mount Faber.

In recent years, Sentosa has undergone a facelift that has amped up its attractions – most

notably with the development of the hotel-and-entertainment hub of **Resorts World Sentosa** ① (8 Sentosa Gateway, +65 6577 8888, www.rwsentosa.com), which hosts Universal Studios Singapore (home to several rollercoaster rides), the elaborate water theme park Adventure Cove, and one of the world's largest oceanariums, the Marine Life Park – not to mention a casino, numerous restaurants (including L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon, the Michelin-starred chef's Singapore outpost), swanky boutique shops and six on-site hotels.

Aside from the RWS complex, there are several fun beach-side adventure activities, such as the **Sentosa Luge** ② (Imbiah Lookout, +65 6274 0472, www.sentosa.com.sg), a furious



Tanjong Beach Club



toboggan ride down a long, paved, curving track, the popular simulated surf experience at **Wave House** ③ (36 Siloso Beach Walk, +65 6377 3113, www.wavehousesentosa.com), which also entices bikini-clad booty-shakings with its lively DJ bar action, lo-fi poolside revelry and the chance to shoot the curl Singapore-style, and indoor skydiving at **iFly** ④ (43 Siloso



Beach Walk, +65 571 0000, www.iflysingapore.com), the world's largest indoor skydiving wind tunnel. For kids, there's the **Port of Lost Wonder** ⑤ (54 Palawan Beach Walk, 1 800 736 8672, www.polw.com.sg), which features a pirate ship water playground and a 'Curiosity Island' for learning.

To make it a day by the beach, head to **Tanjong Beach Club** ⑥ (120 Tanjong Beach Walk, +65 6270 1355, www.tanjongbeachclub.com), a popular brunch spot for both families and beach-side ravers. For nourishment, there's an all-day menu available, or just lounge by their pool sipping on their signature cocktails.

At the other end of the island at the recently developed Sentosa Cove, the action centres on the luxury hotel **W Singapore – Sentosa Cove** ⑦ (21 Ocean Way, +65 6808 7288, www.wsingaporementosacove.com), which lures people in to drink cocktails and enjoy local DJs at Woo Bar or sink their teeth into prime beef at chic steak grill Skirt. Next door is the F&B complex **Quayside Isle** ⑧ (31 Ocean Way, Sentosa Cove, +65 6887 3502, www.quaysideisle.com), featuring 20 waterfront restaurant outlets, ranging from casual café Kith to alfresco seafood bar Sabio by the Sea and fine-dining stalwart Saint Pierre.

Tiong Bahru

Coffee shop culture old and new, indie boutiques and pre-war art deco surroundings



Public housing in Tiong Bahru

If there is one place that best reflects Singapore's vibrant contrasts, Tiong Bahru would have to be it, with its quirky shophouses, nostalgic hawker stalls and plethora of sweet and savoury eateries yielding a fascinating juxtaposition of old and new, local and foreign, lost and found. Located just over the Central Expressway (CTE) from Chinatown, the area was established in the 1930s as one of Singapore's first housing estates. The pre-war low-rise apartment blocks – still well-preserved today – are an attractive mix of art deco and Straits Settlement styles, with flat rooftops, rounded balconies and spiral staircases. Originally an upper-class housing estate, it fell out of favour in the following decades after World War II, but a recent wave of gentrification has filled the area with hip cafés and boutiques, and the refurbished flats are now among the hippest housing options for young homeowners.

The charming neighbourhood is perfect for strolling around during the day, with third-wave coffee joints and posh restaurants, such as **40 Hands** ① (#01-12, 78 Yong Siak St, +65 6225 8545, www.40handscoffee.com), a graffiti-walled café producing specialty coffee, and **Open Door Policy** ② (19 Yong Siak St, +65 6221 9307, odpsingapore.com), offering a Modern European menu along with an extended wine list, existing next to old-school canteens.

Several businesses have even begun utilising old spaces as time-share rentals, giving them new life at night, such as with **Two Face Pizza & Taproom** ③ (#01-48, 56 Eng Hoon St, +65 6536 0024, www.twoface.sg), which as the name suggests, has dual personalities: by day, it's an aged kopitiam with vendors selling yong tau foo (stuffed tofu) and mee pok (yellow noodles). By night it becomes

Tiong Bahru Market

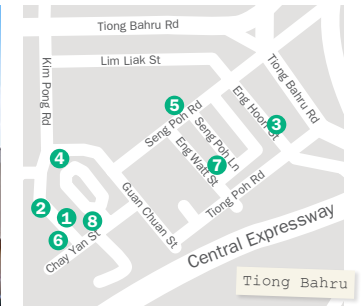


BooksActually



a casual chic pizzeria with the help of some strategically-placed chalkboards. Do try the kiam he (salted fish) thin crust pizza. **Bincho** ④ (#01-19, 78 Moh Guan Terrace, +65 6438 4567, www.bincho.com.sg), which cleverly incorporates a trendy Japanese yakitori joint at the back of a 70-year old noodle stall (look for the original Hua Bee sign). During the day, Hua Bee is still in action, while Bincho serves up lunch and yakitori sets for dinner.

But to really get a slice of local life, a must-visit is the long-standing two-storey **Tiong Bahru Market** ⑤ (30 Seng Poh Rd), which features a wet market below and some of Singapore's best hawkers on the spacious, breezy upper deck – try the selection of dim



sum-esque offerings at Tiong Bahru Pau (#02-18/19), a local institution.

Aside from the eating options, there's the quirky independent bookstore **BooksActually** ⑥ (9 Yong Siak St, +65 6222 9195, booksactually.com), which has a wide spread of titles, whimsical stationery and tchotchkes, as well as several vintage clothing boutiques, such as **Flea and Trees** ⑦ (68 Seng Poh Ln, +65 8139 1133, www.facebook.com/fleatrees), where you can peruse pre-loved clothing and furniture. More old-school treasures can also be uncovered at **nana & bird** ⑧ (#01-02 Tiong Bahru Commons, 79 Chay Yan St, +65 9117 0430, nanaandbird.com), a hole-in-the-wall offering totes, accessories and frocks.

The Heartlands

The Heartlands is a term used to refer to Singapore's suburban areas. Primarily residential areas, heartland housing estates or satellite towns were developed by the government's Housing Development Board (HDB). While they may be farther from the typical tourism track of Marina Bay or Sentosa, they offer a slice of local life. And thanks to Singapore's well-planned urban development, each area is accessible by public transport (by MRT or bus), with built-in amenities nearby (including of course, a neighbourhood hawker centre and shopping mall).

Bishan

Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and Upper Thomson Road

Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park



Located in north-central Singapore and bordering MacRitchie Reservoir to the west, Bishan is home to the award-winning **Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park** (www.nparks.gov.sg), one of the largest parks in Singapore, which acts as both a natural flood plain and a local recreation area.

In the area are also several notable religious centres, including the **Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery** (88 Bright Hill Rd, +65 6849 5300, www.kmspks.org), Singapore's largest Buddhist temple, and the An-Nahdhah Mosque, which features the two-

storey **Harmony Centre** (9A Bishan Street 14, +65 6478 4310, www.harmonycentre.sg), offering exhibitions and programmes centred around Singapore's Muslim community.

Upper Thomson Road marks the western edge of Bishan, and features a number of popular local shop brands such as **Fatboy's The Burger Bar** (187 Upper Thomson Rd, +65 6252 8780, www.fatboys.sg) and **Udders** (246D Upper Thomson Rd, +65 6452 0803, www.udders.com.sg), which serves up local-inspired ice creams (including several pungent durian varieties).

Queenstown

Singapore's first satellite town



A leisurely day of games in Queenstown

Once a swampy village known as Boh Beh Kang – meaning 'the endless river' because locals couldn't determine its source – Queenstown was given its name in 1953 in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation and developed by the Singapore Improvement Trust (which later became HDB) as a testing ground for their public housing programme. The first housing estate, the Princess Estate, was completed in 1956, followed by schools, police stations, hospitals, sports complexes and other social facilities, and the district went down in history as Singapore's first satellite town.

Though many of its original buildings and structures have since been demolished, the area is now a suburban commercial centre,

with several factory outlet malls, such as **Anchorpoint Mall** (370 Alexandra Rd, +65 6475 2257, www.fraserscentrepointmalls.com), which hosts factory outlets of brands like Charles & Keith, G2000 and Cotton On with discounted prices, and **Queensway Shopping Centre** (1 Queensway, www.queenswayshoppingcentre.com), which specialises in sporting goods.

Also in the area is Wessex Estate along Portsdown Road, a residential area with colonial-style black and white bungalows, which now houses several artist studios, which host the annual **ArtWalk@Wessex** (www.facebook.com/ArtWalkWessex) and neighbourhood pubs such as **Colbar** (9A Whitchurch Rd, +65 6779 4859).

Toa Payoh

Housing estate with a town centre and park



Toa Payoh
Town Park



Toa Payoh Hub



Dragon Playground

Located in central Singapore (just south of Bishan), Toa Payoh means 'big swamp' in Hokkien, referring to its state before HDB developed the area into Singapore's second satellite town. A key difference with Queenstown is the layout, which includes a town centre to serve as a focal point for the area's key lifestyle services – it's now the site of the Toa Payoh MRT station and **Toa Payoh HDB Hub** (www.toapayohshoppingmall.com).

Also notable is **Toa Payoh Town Park** (originally designed as a landscaped garden), a mandated green area

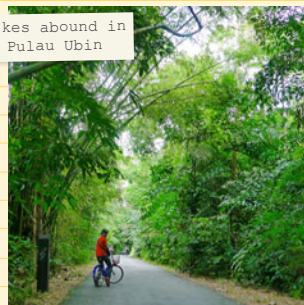
for the estate – an element which has continued in Singapore's urban development.

On the outskirts of the estate, you'll still be able to find several nostalgic features from past eras, such as the iconic **Dragon Playground** at Blk 28 Toa Payoh Lorong 6 – one of the last of its kind. Designed in 1979 by HDB designer Khor Ean Ghee, these sand-based playgrounds (featuring a range of different tiled animal designs) were popular throughout the '80s, but were largely phased out by the mid-'90s due to safety concerns.

Green Singapore

Get lost in the great Singaporean outdoors

Bikes abound in Pulau Ubin



3 Bukit Timah Reserve

One of the largest patches of primary rainforest remaining in Singapore, this reserve has four walking routes – try the unpaved forest trail, which goes by caves used by Japanese soldiers in World War II.

4 Sungei Buloh Wetlands

This wetland reserve of mangrove swamps, ponds and secondary forest is home to 140 species of birds. Visit during the early morning for the best bird-watching opportunities.

1 Pulau Ubin

A reminder of old Singapore, this boomerang-shaped island off the northeast coast is covered in trees and dotted with beaches and characterful old Malay houses. The best way to explore is by bike; bikes are available 8am–6pm, and cost \$3–\$8 to rent. There are three cycling trails (on paved and dirt roads), which will lead you past old fruit and rubber plantations, mangrove swamps, water-filled quarry pits and old wooden houses.

5 MacRitchie Reservoir

Singapore's oldest and most popular nature park is a haven for joggers, families and weekend strollers. In addition to the reservoir, a popular attraction is the TreeTop Walk, a 250-metre aerial free-standing suspension bridge spanning the two highest points in MacRitchie. Occasional free concerts are held here.

2 The Southern Ridges

Stretching west from Mount Faber near HarbourFront, this series of parks includes Telok Blangah Hill, HortPark and Kent Ridge Park, connected by several pedestrian bridges offering great vistas, including the undulating Henderson Waves. A Forest Walk also leads down to Labrador Park, which provides the perfect seaside setting for a scenic skirmish with wartime history.

6 Singapore Botanic Gardens

Potentially Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, housing the National Orchid Garden and much more. During weekends, tours to its rainforest patch are available, while concerts are often held at Symphony Lake.

7 Kranji Countryside

Located in northwestern Singapore, this area is home to several local farms, including Bollywood Veggies and D'Kranji Farm Resort, where you can learn the trade and spend the night in rural bliss.

Shop

From futuristic malls to indie boutiques, Singapore's retail scene is the stuff of legend



ION Orchard

First-time visitors will be astonished by the sheer amount of retail opportunities on this tiny island, in particular the many ultra-modern shopping malls. While many would argue that shopping is a national pastime (along with eating), it's clear that fashion is indeed a growing obsession, especially among the young, with a plethora of indie boutiques carrying homegrown brands popping up in edgier locations, and pretty much any international fashion label you desire found in many of the malls across the island.

The nerve centre for shopping in Singapore is along Orchard Road. The road's name was derived from the nutmeg, pepper and fruit plantations

found here in the 19th century. The first malls appeared back in the 1970s, and it's been non-stop development ever since – now the four-lane one-way street is flanked by tree-lined walkways with malls side-by-side along its entire 2.2km stretch.

It's here that you'll find some of the largest branches of international labels, such as a three-storey Forever 21 at **313@Somerset** (313 Orchard Rd, +65 6496 9313, www.313somerset.com.sg), which also houses Zara, Uniqlo and a smattering of local fashion retailers selling cute shoes and more for a steal. Next door, **Orchard Central** (181 Orchard Rd, +65 6238 1051, www.orchardcentral.com.sg) holds



Charles & Keith



Jo Soh

the title of 'tallest vertical mall' in Singapore, with a roof garden on levels 11 and 12, complete with sculptures, waterfalls, bamboo groves and alfresco cocktail lounges.

A visit to Orchard wouldn't be complete without passing through **ION Orchard** (2 Orchard Turn, +65 6238 8228, www.ionorchard.com), which claims to be the 'centre of gravity' of the Singapore retail scene – and with its jaw-dropping futuristic frontage, cutting-edge design, and more than 300 stores, it makes a good case. Apart from the obvious reason for coming here – shopping – there are some extra attractions such as the observation deck on the 56th floor and the ION Art gallery worth checking out.



Hansel

While many visitors only make it as far as the Orchard nexus, there are more shopping areas chock-a-block with character in Chinatown, the Arab Quarter and other further-flung, edgier locations as local designers blossom on their own turf. Singapore's own fashion scene may not be big compared to the giants of Milan and Paris, but there's a healthy number of world-class design talents here. Among these, Jo Soh is possibly the freshest, most fun and unpredictable designer in Singapore. Her label **Hansel** (02-14 Mandarin Gallery, 333A Orchard Rd, +65 6836 5367, www.ilovehansel.com) – named after her Jack Russell terrier – is a big hit in the Western world, especially Australia. Her designs are quirky, vibrant and varied, often



Raoul

inspired by trivial topics – candles, for instance, or pet camels.

Priscilla Shunmugam's womenswear label **Ong Shunmugam** (B1-36 Hong Leong Building, 16 Raffles Quay, 6223 4804, www.ongshunmugam.com) makes use of traditional batik fabrics to use in creating a range of Western and Asian silhouettes. Kimono-sleeved jumpsuits, suit jackets with kebaya-influenced lapels and high-waisted peplum skirts in Javanese batik are among the unique offerings available.

On the men's side, FJ Benjamin launched **Raoul** (www.raoul.com) in Singapore in 2002 as a men's shirt label, branching out to womenswear in response to the demand. The homegrown brand has since added accessories to its stable, including

bespoke bags and belts, with outlets in Paragon, Raffles City and the Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands. For something made to order, try **Kevin Seah Bespoke** (55B/C Boat Quay, +65 6532 2018, www.kevinseah.com). Run by bespoke tailor and designer Kevin Seah, custom-made suits are his specialty, but look for a range of ties, polo shirts, jeans and more.

A seven per cent Goods & Services Tax (GST) is charged on most items. Foreign visitors can claim this back (minus an administration fee) when leaving Singapore at Changi Airport, so hold on to your receipts (refund is not applicable for those departing by land or sea). And if shopping's your main goal, plan your trip around late May to July to get the best of bargains in the annual Great Singapore Sale.

Local buys

Five products with Singaporean pride

Chapalang Tote Bag



Makan Magnets



Singlish Perpetual Calendar



Kan Cheong Spider Watch



1 Kan Cheong Spider Watch

Designed by Farmstore for Singapore Souvenirs, this watch's simple design features the words 'kan cheong' and a little spider – referring to the Singlish term describing someone who's always anxious (and thus, always looking at the clock). www.farmstore.sg

– as pictured on one side of this canvas tote bag in various designs. But if you're feeling more mysterious, just show off the other side, which is plain black. www.naiise.com

2 Singlish Perpetual Calendar

Created by Donn Koh of Farm, this cheeky flip-styled calendar was inspired by Chinese almanac calendars – as you flip to your month, date and day, you get a different combination of auspicious notes for the day. www.farmstore.sg

4 Fancy Gem Biscuit Tote Bag

Show your love for these popular Singaporean snacks of old – little bite-sized biscuits with a dollop of bright-coloured icing on top – with this silkscreened canvas tote bag. www.wheniwasfour.com

3 Chapalang Tote Bag

'Chapalang' in Singlish means a collection of random things

5 Makan Magnets

From The Little Drom Store, this magnet series replicates the stall signs of some of the best hawker brands in town, from Maxwell Hainanese Chicken Rice to Katong Laksa. www.thelittledromstore.com

Eat

Discover why Singapore is one of the most exciting culinary destinations on the planet



Singaporeans love to eat – this is a country where food reigns supreme and eating is a local pastime (some say obsession), where locals often greet each other not with 'Hello' but instead 'Makan already?' ('Have you eaten yet?').

It's hardly surprising given the sheer variety of food available, from a treasure trove of local dishes to a myriad of international cuisines, with some of the world's best fine-dining restaurants and venues boasting the names of some of the biggest international celebrity chefs. And it's all available in an array of eateries to suit all budgets – from \$2 hawker fare to four-figure fine dining meals – ensuring that during your stay, you'll never go hungry for long.

Go hawker

The starting point for Singaporean cuisines is at the humble neighbourhood hawker centre, where the food is fantastic and made to order; prices are rock-bottom (a dish plus drink costs about \$5); and they're noisy, vibrant and bustling warrens of local life – an antidote to the sanitised, manicured side of Singapore. Hawker centres are a melting pot of taste sensations, gathering a world of cuisines under one roof – Chinese, Malay, Peranakan, Indian and Eurasian.

Hawker centres have been around since the late 1950s, often attached to wet markets selling fresh produce. But it wasn't until the government clamped down on street food (mainly

Maxwell Food Centre



for hygiene reasons) in the early 1980s that they became ubiquitous, each neighbourhood having its own designated centre. There are around 120 hawker centres in Singapore, each sheltering anywhere from 50 to 100 or more food stalls, often family-run and each specialising in a few dishes, drinks or desserts. All stalls get a cleanliness rating (A to D) posted on the front of their stall.

Among the best hawker centres are **Maxwell Food Centre** in Chinatown, **Tekka Centre** in Little India, Telok Ayer Market (more commonly known as **Lau Pa Sat**) in the CBD, and **Tiong Bahru Market** (see Area Guides for details). For some notes on hawker centre etiquette and what to expect, see sidebar, right.

The fine art of ordering at a hawker centre

1 No reservations

Find your table before you order. Note that table sharing and communal seating is the norm here, so there'll be no 'table for two'. You could have someone from the group sit at the table while others go to order, or do as locals do and reserve (or 'chope') your seat by leaving a packet of tissues. Take note of your table number before you head to a food stall to order.

2 Decisions, decisions

Do a scout of all the stalls to see what takes your fancy according to menu and price. By all means order from more than one stall. It's not a bad idea to check out the cleanliness rating on the front of each stall. If you're still not sure, just pick the one with the longest queue.

3 The waiting game

To place your order, join a queue and wait for the cook's assistant to call you.

4 Help yourself

If the stall bears the sign 'self-service' it means you need to take your plate to your table yourself. Other stalls will ask for the number of your table and deliver the food to you.

5 Cash on delivery

If it is being delivered, you pay when your food arrives.



Waku Ghin

The restaurant scene

If you fancy a cooler temperature and some nicer digs, most of the local cuisines can be found for slightly higher prices in indoor food courts and mid-range restaurants around the island, but beyond that, Singapore's restaurant scene has been making headlines with some big names and amazing eating experiences.

Local chefs have gotten in on the action, with chef Willin Low – the father of modern Singaporean, or Mod-Sin, cuisine – and his recently renovated **Wild Rocket** (10a Upper Wilkie Rd, +65 6339 9448, www.wildrocket.com.sg) at the forefront of giving classic Singaporean dishes a modern, multi-textured twist. Meanwhile, LG Han offers his take on Mod-Sin with fine-dining tasting menus at his Chinatown-area **Labyrinth** (5 Neil Rd, +65 6223 4098, www.labyrinth.com.sg); nearby, award-winning chef André Chiang continues to mix French

cooking and art at **Restaurant André** (41 Bukit Pasoh Rd, +65 6534 8880, www.restaurantandre.com), a perennial placeholder in numerous 'Best of Asia' restaurant lists.

Singapore's penchant for top fine dining and bold new tastes has attracted plenty of international chefs as well. Be sure to book a table at **Catalunya** (The Fullerton Pavilion, 82 Collyer Quay, +65 6534 0188, www.catalunya.sg), where ceiling-high glass windows show off Marina Bay, and Spanish chef Alain Devahive Tolsa – who spent a decade at elBulli – presents tapas-focused Catalan cuisine; or at **Burnt Ends** (20 Teck Lim Rd, +65 6224 3933, www.burntends.com.sg), where bearded Aussie Dave Pynt cooks up all cuts of meat on his custom-made adjustable grills. British chef Jason Atherton has made his mark on Singapore, setting up his fine-dining bastion **Pollen** (#01-09 Flower Dome, 18 Marina Gardens Dr, +65 6604 9988, www.pollen.com.sg)



Tippling Club



Pollen



Burnt Ends

inside the Flower Dome at Gardens by the Bay, featuring a garden-inspired Mediterranean menu. Locally-based Brit Ryan Clift has upgraded his acclaimed **Tippling Club** (38 Tanjong Pagar Rd, +65 6475 2217, www.tipplingclub.com) to a sleek new CBD location offering tasting menus of his radical creations (\$160/seven courses), with a bar area serving up brilliant cocktails and an experimental 'food lab' on the second floor.

For the highest concentration of celebrity chef imprints, head to Marina Bay Sands, which features an outpost of Iron Chef America's Mario Batali's **Osteria Mozza** (#B1-42/46, +65

6688 8522, www.osteriamozza.com), serving up perfectly-made pizzas for a pretty penny with a mozzarella bar and other drool-worthy Italian classics, as well as acclaimed Japanese chef Tetsuya Wakuda's only restaurant outside of Australia, **Waku Ghin** (Casino Lvl 2, +65 6688 8507, www.marinabaysands.com), where you can splurge \$400 on a lavish and memorable modern Japanese dinner that's as much about the food as it is about the experience. And don't forget the Singapore-inspired menu from the only local celeb, Justin Quek, at **Sky on 57** (Tower 1, Lvl 57, +65 6688 8857), featuring panoramic views from the Skypark.

Ten strangely wonderful Singapore dishes



Bak Kut Teh

While its direct translation (meat bone tea) leaves a bit to be desired, this Chinese soup is far more delicious than it sounds, consisting of meaty pork ribs simmered in a delicious broth infused with star anise, cinnamon, fennel and garlic.



Black Pepper Crab

It's difficult to go past the world-famous chilli crab, but you'd be missing out if you didn't also sample the black pepper crab, butter crab or crab bee hoon.



Carrot Cake

No, this isn't a dessert - also known as chai tow kway, this savoury white-radish dish doesn't actually contain any carrot, but is fried up with eggs, garlic and spring onions.



Chicken Rice

This simple dish sparks endless debate for local foodies over which is the best. The rice is cooked with chicken stock and paired with succulent poached chicken, with chilli or soy on the side.



Laksa

Egg noodles, prawns, fishcake and cockles swim in a bowl of spicy coconut broth. It's creamy enough to temper the chilli's heat, but that may not stop the sweat from rolling.



Durian

Nothing smells quite like a durian. No other fruit is as pungent - it's even banned on public transport in Singapore. Yet despite all this, many adore the spiky-shelled fruit for its creamy texture and rich, bittersweet flavour.



Fish Head Curry

Singaporean fusion in action: Indian immigrants thriftily plonked fish heads - hoping to attract Chinese, who considered them to be delicacies - into their spice-rich gravies and created this now-iconic local dish.



Kaya Toast & Soft Boiled Eggs

This local breakfast favourite is a little like Singaporean soldiers: delicious coconut jam is spread on toast to dip in the accompanying soft-boiled eggs.



Ondeh Ondeh

This popular Malay sweet snack comes in the form of bite-sized glutinous rice balls filled with palm sugar and covered with shredded coconut.



Scissors Cut Rice

It's not the rice that's cut - the scissors are used to cut everything else, resulting in a familiar snipping sound. Usually served with curry on top, making it a gooey, delicious mess.

Play

When night falls, get ready to party with Singapore's booming bar and nightclub scene



28HKS

From chic, sofa-laden lounges to secret alleyway bars and velvet-rope dance clubs, there's plenty of action in Singapore after the sun goes down.

For watering holes, take your pick from a mix of digs: chillout lounges, casual pubs, glam hotel bars or hidden cocktail bars. Among the best are **28HKS** (28 Hongkong St, +65 6533 2001, www.28hks.com), marked only by the street number and giving off a speakeasy vibe; while the sophisticated bar at the **The Cufflink Club** (6 Jiak Chuan Rd, www.thecufflinkclub.com) concentrates on shaking up the perfect tippie.

For something even more underground (literally), try **Operation Dagger** (7 Ann Siang Hill), which can only be found by descending down a cryptically-marked staircase to a dark, tiny basement bar space co-founded by Luke Whearty of the nearby Oxwell & Co - both among the cluster of other up-and-coming drinking spots around Chinatown (see Area Guide, p14).

Also below ground is **The Secret Mermaid** (Basement, Ocean Financial Centre, 10 Collyer Quay, www.thesecondmermaid.com), along a busy MRT walkway in the CBD, which features plenty of hearty spirits (and doubles as a Japanese joint by day).



1-Altitude



Loof

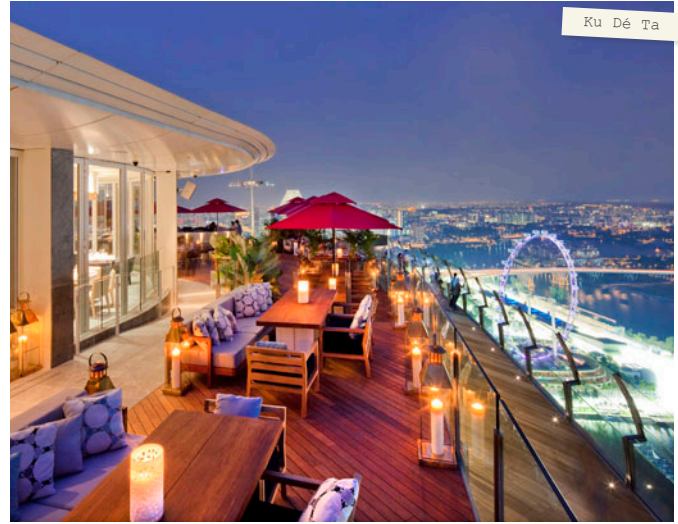
Above ground, the tropical heat cools down after sunset, so evening tipples on breezy rooftop bars are particularly atmospheric and popular – if the weather is on your side. Among these, there's of course the highest of them all, **1-Altitude** (*Level 63, One Raffles Place, 1 Raffles Pl, +65 6438 0410, www.1-altitude.com*) at 282m high, which features an unobstructed 360 degree view of the surrounding city lights. **Ku Dé Ta** (*Marina Bay Sands SkyPark, 10 Bayfront Ave, +65 6688 7688, www.kudeta.com.sg*), likewise, offers a stunning vantage point from the top of Marina Bay Sands, with an unbeatable view of the classic Singapore skyline across the bay. For something a bit more laidback,



Zouk

try **Loof** (*#03-07 Odeon Towers, 331 North Bridge Rd, +65 6338 8035, www.loof.com.sg*), which overlooks the Raffles Hotel and serves up Southeast Asian-driven food and cocktails. All three regularly feature DJs and parties pumping late into the night.

Stretching along the riverfront and canopied by space-age umbrellas, the ever-popular Clarke Quay area remains a popular choice if you like to bar hop furiously with everything under one roof. Start off at the stock market-inspired **Beer Market** (*Bik 3B #01-17/02-02, 3B River Valley Rd, +65 9661 8283, www.beermarket.com.sg*), where the price of beer goes up when the demand is high, and dips



Ku Dé Ta

when interest wanes. Each alcoholic beverage is 'listed' and displayed on LCD screens, with prices updated every half-hour and daily specials.

Further down the river lies **Zouk** (*17 Jiak Kim St, +65 6738 2988, www.zouclub.com*), the grand dame of Singapore's clubbing scene. Despite some recurring eviction scares, it's now in its third decade of pushing the boundaries of electronic dance music with their lineup of the biggest international and local DJs.

Newer clubs have also staked their claim on the nightlife scene, such as **Kyo** (*#B1-02 Keck Seng Tower, 133 Cecil St, +65 6225 6001, www.clubkyo.com*), a stylish underground CBD-area nightclub featuring local DJs and art; and **Bang Bang** (*Pan Pacific Singapore, 7 Raffles Blvd, +65 8127 2808, www.bangbang.sg*), which hosts hip hop, house and nu disco nights.



Beer Market

Finally, if live music is more your speed, try **Timbre @ The Substation** (*45 Armenian St, +65 6338 8030, www.timbregroup.asia*), which features a rotating roster of local musicians. Though most places with live music will keep things limited to acoustic cover songs, look out for Timbre's Singapore Originals night for a showcase of original songwriting.

Stay

Find stylish accommodation to suit your circumstances



The Fullerton Bay Hotel

Business is booming for the hospitality industry – as tourist numbers continue to rise, new accommodation choices are proliferating to cope with the influx. From cosy hostels to stylish boutique hotels and lavish, five-star rooms, Singapore has no lack of options to suit every taste and budget.

If you're traveling on a shoestring, your best bet is Chinatown, where backpacker hostels abound. **Matchbox the Concept Hostel** (39 Ann Siang Rd, +65 6423 0237, www.matchbox.sg), takes its inspiration from Japanese capsule hotels and features sleeping pods designed like matchboxes. It has a ladies-only 12-bed dorm, a two-bed private room and an 18-bed mixed

dorm, all housed in a three-storey conservation shophouse. For more basic accommodations, look out for **5footway.inn** (63 Pagoda St, +65 6221 5832, www.5footwayinn.com), named after the covered sidewalks commonly found outside of shophouses, which also has four- to ten-bed dorm rooms with Wi-Fi.

Chinatown is also a hotspot for cosy boutique hotels, with the **New Majestic Hotel** (31-37 Bukit Pasoh Rd, +65 6511 4700, www.newmajestichotel.com), **Hotel 1929** (50 Keong Saik Rd, +65 6347 1929, www.hotel1929.com), and the **Naumi Liora** (55 Keong Saik Rd, +65 6922 9000, www.naumiliora.com) all in the same area, transforming their heritage shophouse units into chic



New Majestic Hotel

boutique properties – note, however, that room sizes can be small.

Shophouse spaces in Little India have also been targeted by the boutique hotel wave. Among these, the **Perak Hotel** (12 Perak Rd, +65 6299 7733, www.peraklodge.com) is ideal for soaking up local colour while offering a respite from the area's hectic vibe. Housed in a restored, Peranakan-style building, it's small but full of character. Then there's the quirkiest hotel in town, **The Wanderlust** (2 Dickson Rd, 6396 3322, www.wanderlusthotel.com), which features some of the wackiest themed rooms on the island, including ones set in a spaceship and a treehouse, making it fun for families as well.

If money is no object, there are plenty of five-star brands dotted around Marina Bay and Orchard Road – but for something with a bit of history, you can't go wrong with **The Fullerton Bay Hotel** (80 Collyer Quay, +65 6333 8388, www.fullertonbayhotel.com),



Matchbox

designed by HK-based interiors wunderkind Andre Fu with a rooftop bar, Lantern, and a flagship restaurant housed in the historic Clifford Pier. A short walk away from Orchard's hustle and bustle is **Hotel Fort Canning** (11 Canning Walk, +65 6559 6770, www.hfcsingapore.com), housed in the stately Colonial-era British Army headquarters set in the centre of the quiet park.

Outside of the city centre, Sentosa also offers a number of luxury accommodations, including **Capella** (1 The Knolls, Sentosa, +65 6377 8888, capellahotels.com/singapore), which boasts seascape vistas, beach access, spa and world-class luxury service. Most Sentosa properties also feature family-friendly amenities, such as the **Festive Hotel** (39 Artillery Ave, +65 6577 8899, www.rwsentosa.com), which offers a Deluxe Family suite with bunk beds for the kids and a doubled-bedded sofa housed in a separate sleeping chamber to keep the entire family happy.

Essential info

All the stuff you need to know (before you get lost)...



Attitude & etiquette

In general, Singaporeans are friendly and helpful. However, race and religion are usually not topics of debate.

Currency

The currency used in Singapore is the Singapore dollar (\$). SGD\$1 is roughly equivalent to AU\$0.80.

Customs

To buy duty-free goods when entering Singapore, you have to have been away for at least two nights. You can't bring cigarettes into Singapore, but you can buy them on the way out. There are no duty-free concessions on cigarettes or other tobacco items. You are not allowed to bring in chewing gum, firecrackers or pirated DVDs and CDs. (www.customs.gov.sg).

Getting around

Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system is a foolproof and efficient way to get around the island. Besides being one of the cleanest transport systems in the world, the MRT provides scenic views of Singapore's heartland and some city areas, though you may want to avoid peak rush hours for a less crowded ride. See map, p51, or download your own from www.yoursingapore.com/getlost (under Plan your trip) to uncover the hidden gems behind the stops.

Buses are also inexpensive, but require a bit of navigation. There are routes all around Singapore, including less accessible areas and a handy late night bus service called the Nite Owl, which operates on Fridays, Saturdays and the eve of Public Holidays. Fares are distance-based and typically costs

under \$2. Most buses are equipped with air-conditioning.

If you're planning on using the trains and buses a lot during your visit, the Singapore Tourist Pass (www.singaporetouristpass.com.sg) offers unlimited rides for \$10/day. Otherwise, pick up an **EZ-Link card** (a stored-value card), which can be used on both trains and buses. Just tap the card on the reader as you board and remember to tap out at your stop. EZ-Link cards can be purchased or topped up at MRT stations island-wide.

You can also hail a **taxi** along most roads, but note that vehicles are not allowed to stop on roads with painted double yellow jagged lines, so it's best to get a cab from one of the numerous taxi stands in Singapore – hotels and shopping centre taxi stands are a sure bet. The flag-down fare starts at \$3.40-\$3.80, but be prepared for additional surcharges depending on the time and place of pickup (tipping is not required).

The city's major cab companies are: **Comfort CityCab** (+65) 6552 1111 **Premier Taxis** (+65) 6476 8880 **SMRT Taxis** (+65) 6555 8888

Taxis are abundant at the airport and a trip to the city costs around \$20-\$25, plus surcharges. Several companies provide the airport transfer services, which you can book even before you travel to Singapore, a half or full day in advance. Among them are Limo Taxi (www.limomaxi.com) and Limousine Cab (www.limousinecab.com), best booked for groups of four and above.

Language

Singapore has four official languages (English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil), but pretty much everyone speaks English (or perhaps more accurately, the local dialect Singlish – see p7).

Useful phone numbers

Singapore's international dialing code is +65. While in Singapore and if you have international roaming service on your mobile, you don't have to press +65.

Emergency

Police 999
Ambulance/Fire 995

General info

Tourist information
1800 736 2000
Changi Airport flight
information 1800 542 4422

Embassies

Australia 25 Napier Rd
+65 6836 4100
New Zealand 391a Orchard Rd
+65 6235 9966

Medical services

Raffles Hospital
585 North Bridge Rd,
+65 6311 1111
Singapore General Hospital
Outram Rd,
+65 6222 3322, 1800 321 3591
Gleneagles Hospital
6A Napier Rd, +65 6473 7222

Credit cards

MasterCard 800 110 0113
American Express 1800 396 6000
Visa 800 448 1250

Useful websites

YourSingapore.com
TimeOutSingapore.com



Signs at MRT stations

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on public transport, in museums, libraries, lifts, cinemas, supermarkets, department stores, hair salons, air-conditioned restaurants and government offices. Alfresco cafes have designated smoking areas. Smoking is permitted in specified rooms within some air-conditioned pubs and nightspots, but not in eating places. Only light up where it's allowed, or risk receiving a sizeable fine.

Tax refunds

A 7 per cent Goods & Services Tax (GST) is charged on most items. Foreign visitors can claim back the GST when leaving from Changi Airport. You must spend a minimum amount of \$100 (including GST) on purchases from the same retailer in the same day to qualify for a refund. You may accumulate up to a maximum of three same-day receipts or invoices from the same retailer to meet this minimum purchase amount.

Tipping

Singaporeans don't generally tip, as hotels and restaurants levy a 10 per cent service charge on bills plus 7 per

cent Goods & Services Tax, denoted by ++ on menus and bills.

Visas

Nationals of most Western countries do not require a visa to visit, and if visiting as a tourist, will be given 'social visit' passes valid for up to 30 days upon arrival. Please refer to the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority's website (www.ica.gov.sg) for the most up-to-date information.

Weather

Singapore's weather is hot and humid with little variation throughout the year. The average daytime temperature is 31°C dropping to around 24°C at night, so if you want to weather the weather, dress accordingly.

Passes & tours

See Singapore Attractions Pass

Powered by iVenture, this credit card-style pass includes entries to over 15 of Singapore's favourite attractions (seesingaporepass.iventurecard.com).

Singapore Sightseeing Pass (SSP)

This full day touring pass provides unlimited hop-on-hop-off rides on land and on water (ducktours.com.sg).

The Original Singapore Walks

These walks work on a simple principle: to bring people into places most other tours don't (journeys.com.sg).

The Real Singapore Tours

Activity-based tours covering Singaporean culture, heritage, food, and much more (betelboxtours.com).



Dempsey
Hill

Singapore Little Black Book

So you think you know Singapore?
Think again. Time Out's Little Black Book
is your guide to this vibrant destination.
Discover everything this strangely
wonderful city-state has to offer.



TimeOut