

# NEIGHBOURHOODS

## top picks

- Singapore Zoological Gardens (p87)
- GX5 swing/G-max Bungy (p156)
- Buddha Tooth Relic Temple (p61)
- Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple (p78-9)
- Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (p91)

# NEIGHBOURHOODS

An ancient parable, so old its origins are lost in the mists of time, tells of a group of blind men who, after touching different parts of an elephant, offer completely different opinions about what an elephant really is. One touches the leg and pronounces the elephant 'like a pillar'. Another touches the tail, and says the animal is 'like a rope'. Another the tusk, another the ear, and so forth.

Modern Singapore is to travellers much as the proverbial elephant was to the blind men: it leaves vastly different images depending on which part one chooses to touch.

Business visitors passing through for a three-day conference will probably spend their time in the central business district (CBD), perhaps carving out a few hours of after-work R&R on the riverfront. 'A modern metropolis of gleaming steel and glass skyscrapers, with just enough surviving colonial splendour to give it a historical feel. Really quite Western!' this visitor may pronounce upon returning home, most likely adding that old chestnut often used to describe the Lion City '...and it's so clean and orderly'.

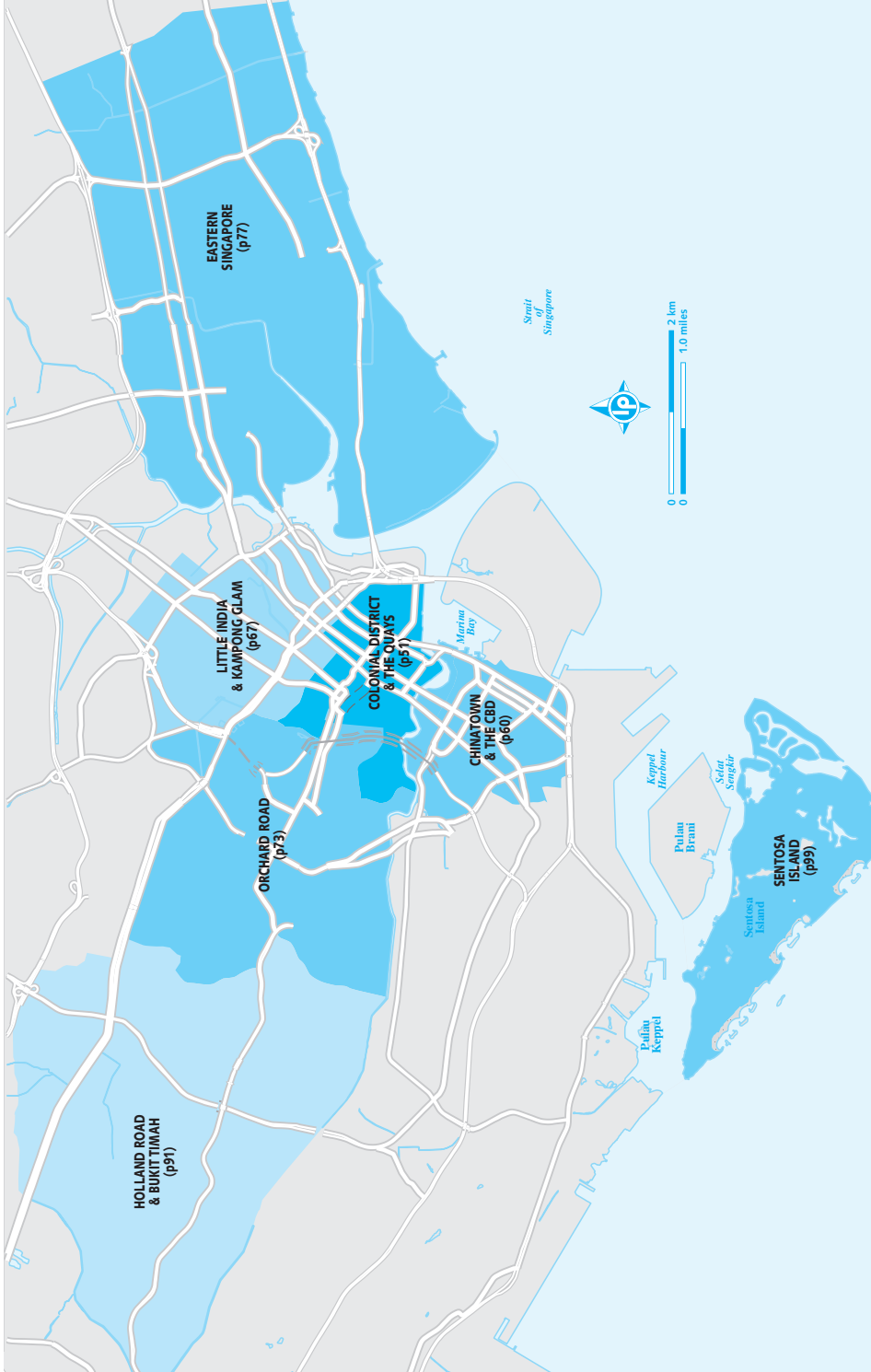
Other travellers, after choosing to spend time around Orchard Rd, might describe the city as 'A wall-to-wall fashion-junkie's paradise, and an expensive one at that, steeped in a peculiar West-meets-East culture, similar to some of the more fashionable neighbourhoods of Hong Kong, only cleaner and less chaotic'.

Backpackers (doing the obligatory two-day stopover on their way through Southeast Asia, most likely) may find themselves prowling the budget-friendly climes of Little India and Kampong Glam. They'll come away with tales of a cacophonous, curry-and-cumin-scented city of colourful, low-slung buildings and sari-clad women – and sari-clad men if they stray down certain alleys. Other backpackers will head to Geylang, where on some streets they may encounter a row of Buddhist shrines and temples, and on other streets a row of semilegal brothels and a veritable army of sex workers. (Whichever street they choose, their description of it afterwards promises to be colourful!)

And so it goes, from the sterility of Singapore's seemingly endless housing blocks (even these neighbourhoods aren't without surprises for those who take the time to explore) to the tropical lushness of farms, parks and patches of jungle found on the city's outskirts, and in places like the forest island of Pulau Ubin.

So which of these impressions best encompass the true essence of Singapore? Returning to the parable of the elephant, all of the blind men are equally correct and incorrect: the elephant is more than just what they're able to glean through a single experience. So it is with Singapore. Take the time to explore each neighbourhood individually, and you'll agree that the Lion City is far more than just the sum of its parts.

'The Lion City is far more than just the sum of its parts'



**EASTERN SINGAPORE**  
(p77)

**LITTLE INDIA  
& KAMPONG GLAM**  
(p67)

**COLONIAL DISTRICT  
& THE QUAYS**  
(p51)

**CHINATOWN  
& THE CBD**  
(p60)

**ORCHARD ROAD**  
(p73)

**HOLLAND ROAD  
& BUKIT TIMAH**  
(p91)

**SENTOSA ISLAND**  
(p99)

Strait of Singapore



0 2 km  
0 1.0 miles

Marina Bay

Keppel Harbour

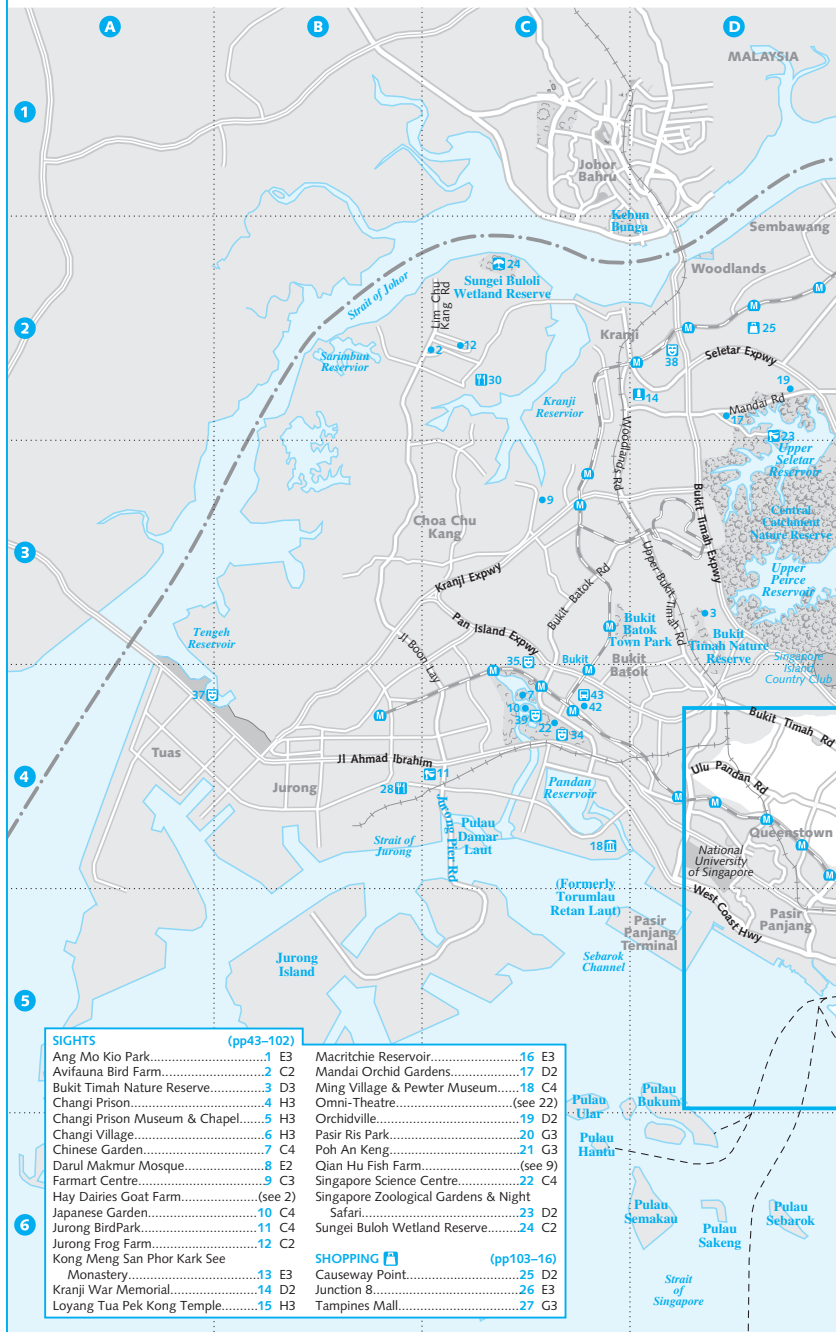
Pulau Brani

Pulau Ubin

Sentosa Island

Straits Settlements

# SINGAPORE ISLAND

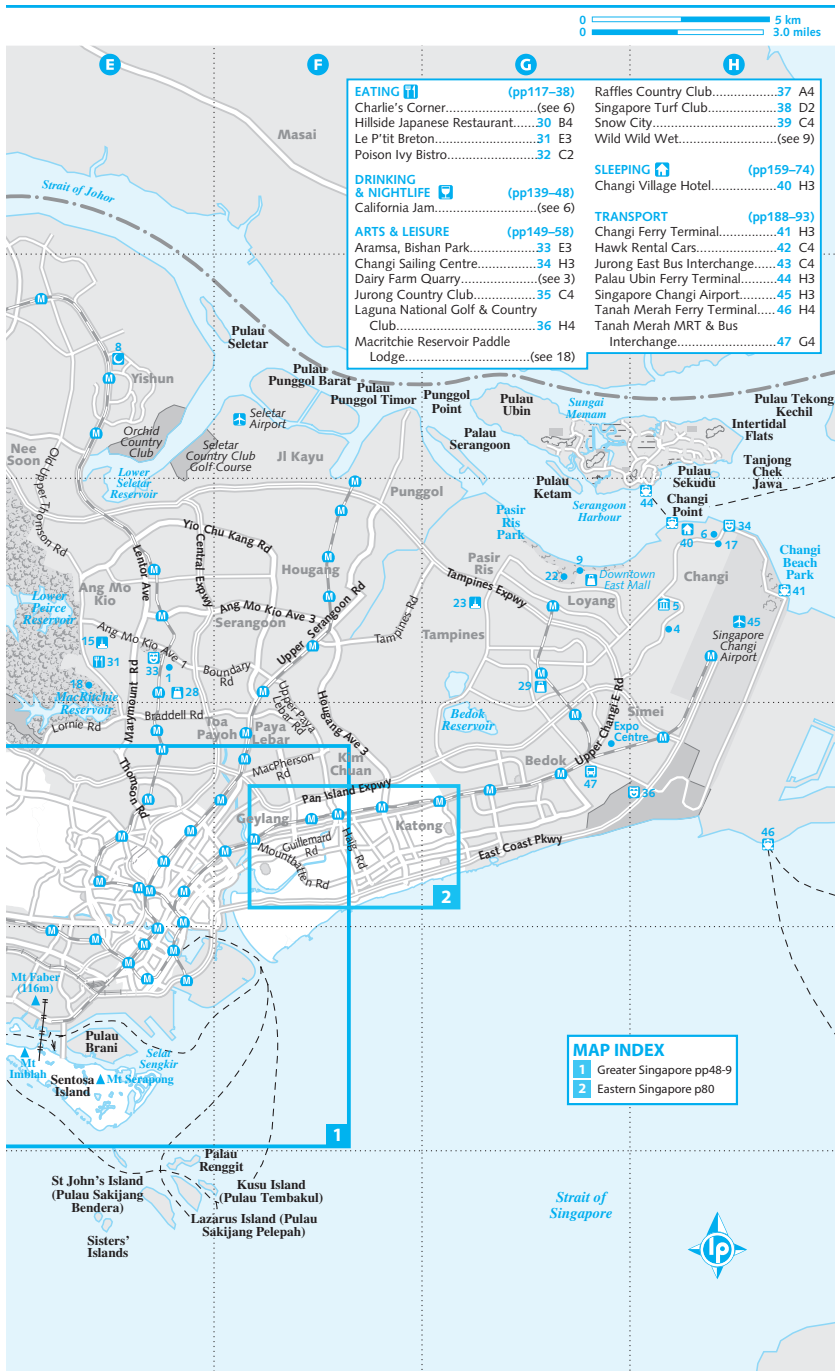


**SIGHTS** (pp43-102)

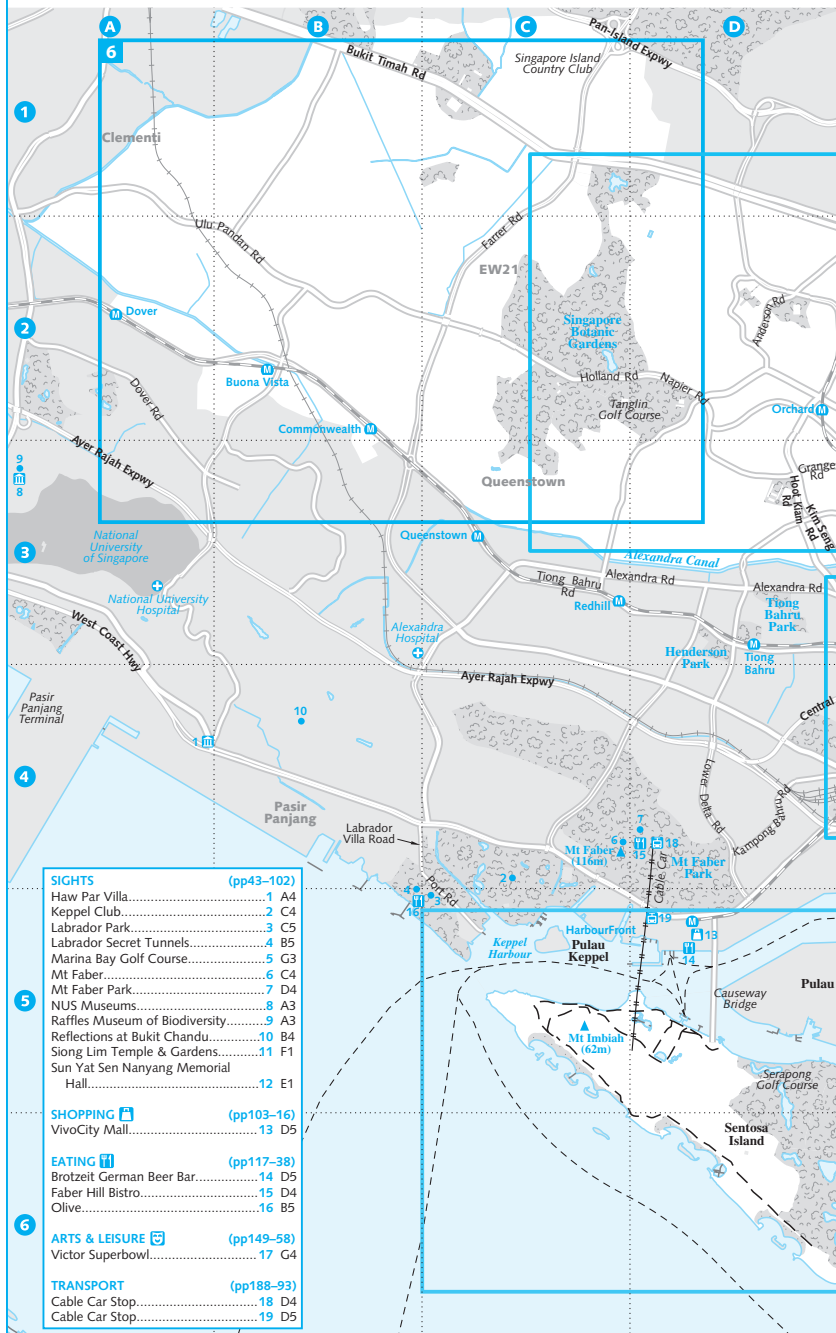
Ang Mo Kio Park.....	1	E3	Macritchie Reservoir.....	16	E3
Avifauna Bird Farm.....	2	C2	Mandai Orchard Gardens.....	17	D2
Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.....	3	D3	Ming Village & Pewter Museum.....	18	C4
Changi Prison.....	4	H3	Orni-Theatre.....	(see 22)	
Changi Prison Museum & Chapel.....	5	H3	Orchidville.....	19	D2
Changi Village.....	6	H3	Pasir Ris Park.....	20	G3
Chinese Garden.....	7	C4	Poh An Keng.....	21	G3
Darul Makmur Mosque.....	8	E2	Qian Hu Fish Farm.....	(see 9)	
Farmart Centre.....	9	C3	Singapore Science Centre.....	22	C4
Hay Dairies Goat Farm.....	(see 2)		Singapore Zoological Gardens & Night Safari.....	23	D2
Japanese Garden.....	10	C4	Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.....	24	C2
Jurong BirdPark.....	11	C4			
Jurong Frog Farm.....	12	C2			
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.....	13	E3			
Kranji War Memorial.....	14	D2			
Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple.....	15	H3			

**SHOPPING** (pp103-16)

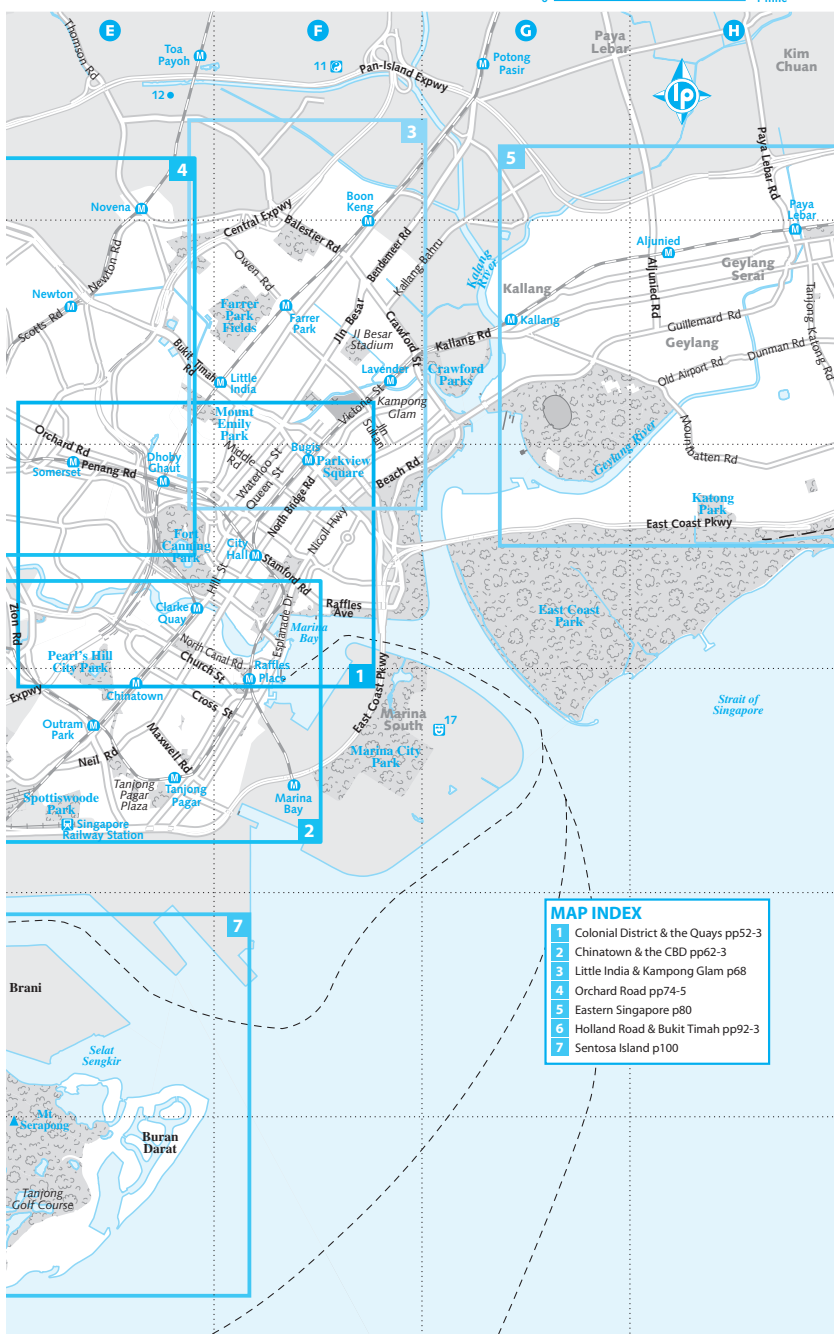
Causeway Point.....	25	D2
Junction 8.....	26	E3
Tampines Mall.....	27	G3



# GREATER SINGAPORE



<b>SIGHTS</b>	(pp43–102)
Haw Par Villa.....	1 A4
Keppel Club.....	2 C4
Labrador Park.....	3 C5
Labrador Secret Tunnels.....	4 B5
Marina Bay Golf Course.....	5 G3
Mt Faber.....	6 C4
Mt Faber Park.....	7 D4
NUS Museums.....	8 A3
Raffles Museum of Biodiversity.....	9 A3
Reflections at Bukit Chandu.....	10 B4
Siong Lim Temple & Gardens.....	11 F1
Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall.....	12 E1
<b>SHOPPING</b>	(pp103–16)
VivoCity Mall.....	13 D5
<b>EATING</b>	(pp117–38)
Brozeit German Beer Bar.....	14 D5
Faber Hill Bistro.....	15 D4
Olive.....	16 B5
<b>ARTS &amp; LEISURE</b>	(pp149–58)
Victor Superbowl.....	17 G4
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	(pp188–93)
Cable Car Stop.....	18 D4
Cable Car Stop.....	19 D5



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1	Colonial District & the Quays pp52-3
2	Chinatown & the CBD pp62-3
3	Little India & Kampong Glam p68
4	Orchard Road pp74-5
5	Eastern Singapore p80
6	Holland Road & Bukit Timah pp92-3
7	Sentosa Island p100

# ITINERARY BUILDER

Singapore's an especially easy city to get around in, so you'll be able to take in plenty of indoor culture during the heat of the day, enjoy the city-state's spectacular outdoor offerings when the weather's a bit cooler, and still have some energy left for fantastic nightlife in the evening.

For the purpose of our Itinerary Builder, southern & western Singapore include Sentosa Island and Jurong & western Singapore neighbourhoods.

AREA	ACTIVITIES	Sights	Eating	Drinking & Nightlife
NEIGHBOURHOODS ITINERARY BUILDER	<b>Colonial District &amp; the Quays</b>	Peranakan Museum (p56) Singapore Art Museum (p56) Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (opposite)	Chef Chan's Restaurant (p123) Hai Tien Lo (p124) Garibaldi (p124)	Brewerkz (p141) Butter Factory (p142) Crazy Elephant (p142)
	<b>Chinatown &amp; the CBD</b>	Buddha Tooth Relic Temple (p61) Sri Mariamman Temple (p61) Chinese Heritage Centre & Pagoda St (p60) Sultan Mosque (p70)	Lau Pa Sat (p128) Saint Pierre (p126) Annalakshmi (p128)	Penny Black (p143) Play (p144) Tantric Bar (p144)
	<b>Little India &amp; Kampong Glam</b>	Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple (p70) Haji Lane (p67)	Gayatri (p129) French Stall (p129) Tekka Centre (p130)	Night & Day (p145) Cafe Domus (p145) Blujaz Café (p144)
	<b>Orchard Rd, Holland Road &amp; Bukit Timah</b>	Istana (p73) Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (p91) Singapore Botanic Gardens (p91)	Wasabi Tei (p132) Din Tai Fung (p131) Newton Circus Hawker Centre (p132)	Alley Bar (p145) Downunder Bar (p145) Wine Network (p147)
	<b>Eastern Singapore</b>	Small temples & lorongs of Geylang (p77) Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple (p78-9) Joo Chiat walking tour (p83)	Old Airport Road Food Centre (p125) Guan Hoe Soon (p133) 328 Katong Laksa (p134)	Artoholic (p147) California Jam (p147) Sunset Bay Garden Beach Bar (p148)
	<b>Northern &amp; central Singapore</b>	Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (p86) Singapore Zoological Gardens & Night Safari (p87) Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (p88)	Au Jardin (p134) PS Café (p135) L'Estaminet (p136)	2am: Desert Bar (p147) Dempsey's Hut (p146) Wala Wala Cafe Bar (p147)
	<b>Southern &amp; western Singapore</b>	Haw Par Villa (p96) Singapore Science Centre (p98) Reflections at Bukit Chandu (p95)	The Cliff (p137) Il Lido (p137) Hilltop Japanese Restaurant (p136)	St James Power Station (p147) KM8 (p148) Sunset Bay (p148)



## COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS

Drinking & Nightlife p140; Eating p123; Shopping p106; Sleeping p161

An urban treasure-trove of pristine colonial buildings, galleries, museums, massive shopping centres, parks and three riverside entertainment strips, this is the heart of Singapore. Nowhere else do you get as vivid a picture of Singapore as an organic city, where old courthouses and churches now welcome boozers and gluttons, men on trishaws offer you rides outside glassy megamalls and everywhere you look there is the loud echo of British rule.

The mark of Sir Stamford Raffles remains indelibly stamped on this district. His statue watches over the Singapore River and his house is still perched on a hill in the lush green oasis of Fort Canning Park. The edifices of colonialism still surround the Padang, where British high society once converged to play cricket and exchange gossip. It's here you'll find the famous Raffles Hotel, a string of old churches, the old and new parliament houses, the art and history museums and, dragging the area into the present, the dazzlingly contemporary 'durians', otherwise known as Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

### ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

Map pp52–3

☎ 6332 7798; 1 Empress Pl; adult/child \$5/2.50;

🕒 1-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sun, to 9pm Fri;

📍 Raffles Place

Offering a plethora of exhibits on the civilisations and cultures of Asia, this museum is definitely the jewel in the crown of the National Heritage Board's bevy of museums. You enter through a series of images projected onto walls, floors and finally a slatted curtain, which you walk through to enter the galleries. The Hindu-Buddhist gallery is perhaps the highlight, with beautifully lit displays including a stunning 18th-century Burmese Buddha head and a large bronze drum. Elsewhere you'll find exquisite examples of porcelain, textiles, lacquerware, costumes and huge traditional procession statues. There are also regular touring and programmed exhibitions. Tours in English run at 11am and 2pm most days.

### CIVIL DEFENCE HERITAGE GALLERY

Map pp52–3

☎ 6332 2995; 62 Hill St; admission free;

🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 City Hall

The Civil Defence Heritage Gallery, which is devoted to fire fighting and civil defence in Singapore, will be of interest to few. This gallery is based in the handsome red-brick and white-plaster Central Fire Station, built in 1908, which is still in use today.

## top picks

- Walking along the river (p58)
- Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (below)
- Fort Canning Park (p55)
- Peranakan Museum (p56)
- Singapore Art Museum (p56)

### ESPLANADE – THEATRES ON THE BAY

Map pp52–3

☎ 6828 8222; www.esplanade.com;

1 Esplanade Dr; 📍 City Hall

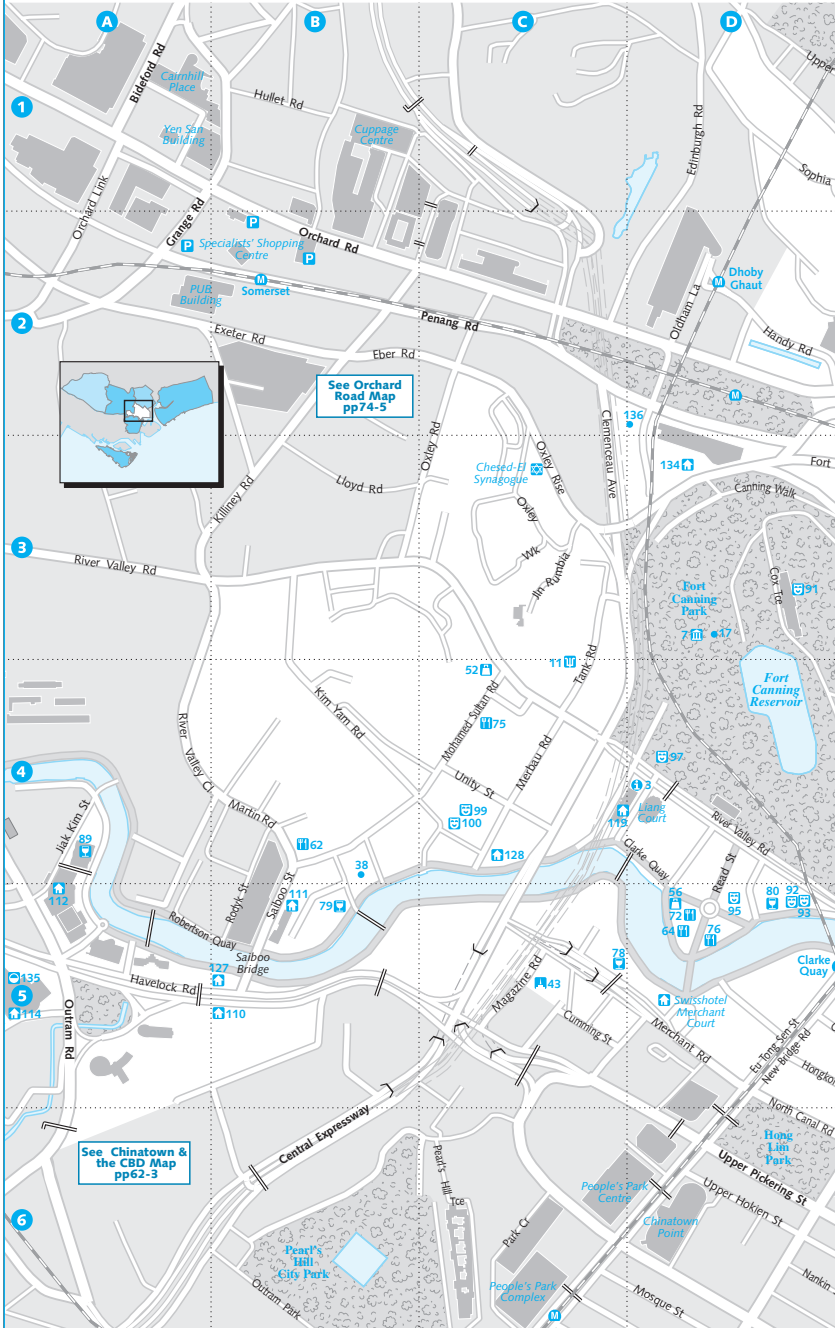
Nicknamed, quite aptly, 'the durians' (after the pungent, spiky fruit), the twin silver hedgehog domes of this \$600-million arts complex couldn't be more of a contrast to the colonial ensemble of the Padang. Love it or hate it, the Esplanade complex has become the poster child of contemporary Singapore, a shining example of the arty, creative side of the island state.

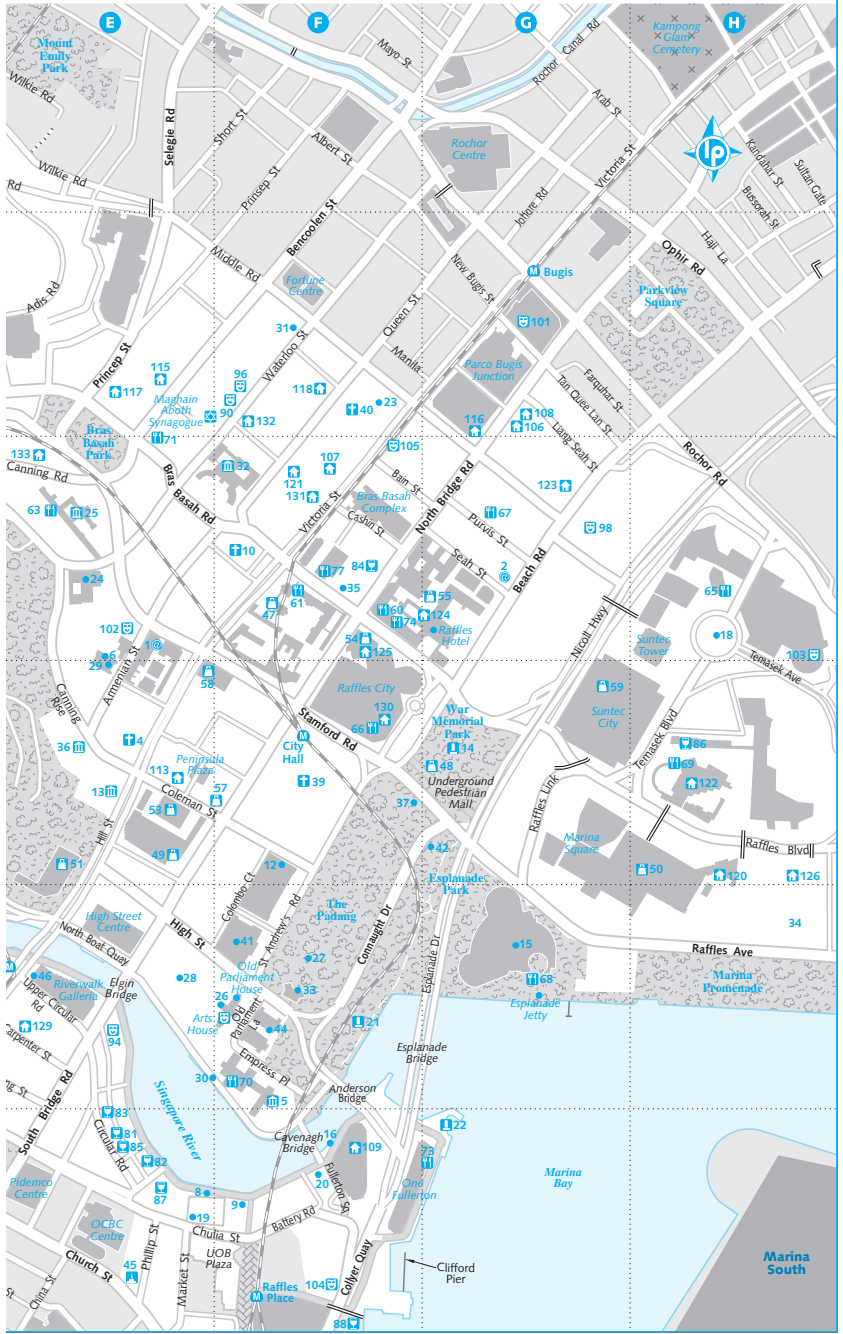
As well as twin auditoriums that are both visually and acoustically spectacular (they both rest on rubber pads to soak up external noise and vibrations), there are several decent eating options here. Also worth looking out for are the regular free performances outside, which are advertised either on the theatre's website or in the monthly what's-on guide. The Esplanade has a branch of the National Library where you can read or watch movies in a spectacular setting.

The building itself was the product of Singapore's recognition that it needed iconic buildings to keep pace with the competitive international tourist industry – a kind of Asian Sydney Opera House.

Despite their fruity nickname, the theatre complex's twin glass domes, covered in spiky metal sunshades, do not take their

# COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS





NEIGHBOURHOODS COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS

## COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS

### INFORMATION

Chills Cafe.....1 E3  
 Cyberstar Centrecore.....2 G3  
 Liang Court Tourist Service  
 Centre.....3 D4  
 Suntec City Visitors Centre.....(see 59)

### SIGHTS (pp51-9)

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 Asian Civilisations Museum.....5 F5  
 Asian Civilisations Museum.....6 E3  
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 Bird Sculpture.....8 E6  
 Boat Quay.....9 F6  
 Caldwell House.....(see 47)  
 Cathedral of the Good  
 Shepherd.....10 F3  
 Chettiar Hindu Temple.....11 C4  
 City Hall.....12 F4  
 Civil Defence Heritage Gallery.....13 E4  
 Civilian War Memorial.....14 G4  
 Esplanade à Theatres on the  
 Bay.....15 G5  
 First Generation Sculpture.....16 F6  
 Fort Canning Park.....17 D3  
 Fountain of Wealth.....18 H3  
 Homage to Newton Sculpture.....19 E6  
 Kucinta Sculpture.....20 F6  
 Lim Bo Seng Memorial.....21 F5  
 Merlion Sculpture.....22 G6  
 Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.23 F2  
 National Library.....24 E3  
 National Museum of Singapore.25 E3  
 Old Parliament House.....26 F5  
 Padang.....27 F5  
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 Peranakan Museum.....29 E4  
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 Singapore Cricket Club.....33 F5  
 Singapore Flyer.....34 H5  
 Singapore Management  
 University.....35 F3  
 Singapore Philatelic Museum.....36 E4  
 Singapore Recreation Club.....37 F4  
 Singapore Tyler Print Institute.....38 B4  
 St Andrew's Cathedral.....39 F4  
 St Joseph's Catholic Church.....40 F2  
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 Tan Kim Seng Fountain.....42 G4  
 Tan Si Chong Su Temple.....43 C5  
 Victoria Theatre &  
 Concert Hall.....44 F5  
 Wak Hai Cheng Beo Temple.....45 E6  
 Yee Swoe Huat.....46 E5

### SHOPPING (pp103-16)

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 Funan - The IT Mall.....49 E4

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 Raffles Hotel Arcade.....55 G3  
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 Soobin Art Gallery.....(see 51)  
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 Bobby's Taproom & Grill.....61 F3  
 Book Café.....62 B4  
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 Crystal Jade Kitchen.....65 H3  
 Doc Cheng's.....(see 55)  
 Equinox.....66 F4  
 Garibaldi.....67 G3  
 Gluttons Bay.....68 G5  
 Hai Tien Lo.....69 H4  
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 Peony Jade.....72 D5  
 Pierside Kitchen & Bar.....73 G6  
 Royal China.....74 F3  
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 Tapas Tree.....76 D5  
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 Wah Lok.....77 F3

### DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE (pp139-48)

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 Eski.....81 E6  
 Harry's.....82 E6  
 Hideout.....83 E6  
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 Loof.....84 F3  
 Molly Malone's.....85 E6  
 Paulaner Brauhaus.....86 H4  
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### ARTS & LEISURE (pp149-58)

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 Amrita Spa.....(see 125)  
 Art-2 Gallery.....(see 51)

Black Box.....(see 91)  
 CalendarOne TicketCharge.....(see 102)  
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 G-Max Reverse Bungy.....92 D5  
 Gajah Gallery.....(see 51)  
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 SISTIC.....101 G2  
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### SLEEPING (pp159-74)

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 Backpacker Cozy Corner  
 Guesthouse.....108 G2  
 Fullerton Hotel.....109 F6  
 Furama Riverfront.....110 B5  
 Gallery Hotel.....111 B5  
 Grand Copthorne Waterfront  
 Hotel.....112 A5  
 Grand Plaza Parkroyal Hotel.....113 E4  
 Holiday Inn Atrium.....114 A5  
 Hotel Bencoolen.....115 E2  
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 Hotel Royal@Queens.....118 F2  
 Novotel Clarke Quay.....119 C4  
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 Pan Pacific Hotel.....122 H4  
 Park View Hotel.....123 G3  
 Raffles Hotel.....124 G3  
 Raffles, The Plaza.....125 F3  
 Ritz-Carlton.....126 H4  
 River View Hotel.....127 B5  
 Robertson Quay Hotel.....128 C4  
 Somerset Bencoolen.....(see 115)  
 Summer Tavern.....129 E5  
 Swissôtel, The Stamford.....130 F4  
 Victoria Hotel.....131 F3  
 Waterloo Hostel.....132 F2  
 YMCA International House.....133 E3  
 YWCA Fort Canning Lodge.....134 D3

### TRANSPORT (pp183-93)

Avis.....135 A5  
 Malaysian Airlines.....136 D2

design reference from tropical fruit, but from the natural geometries of nature and traditional Asian reed weavings. Varying angles and geometrics make the roofline morph and mutate across the building.

The distinctive exterior has a practical aspect as well in that the 7139 variously angled aluminium shades maximise the natural light while shielding the glass roof from the sun.

**FORT CANNING PARK** Map pp52–3**M Dhoby Ghaut**

This park has a shrine to Sultan Iskander Shah, the last ruler of the ancient Majapahit empire, which once ruled Singapore. In those days Fort Canning Park was known as Bukit Larangan (Forbidden Hill). These days the park is much more welcoming; the only natural high spot in the district, the park offers a wonderfully cool retreat from the hot streets below (even after climbing the exhausting steps leading up). Its little pathways and quiet corners mean that at times you'd hardly know you were in a city.

A couple of Gothic gateways lead into the pleasant park, where gravestones from the old Christian cemetery are embedded in the brick walls. There's also a **spice garden** here, on the site of Raffles' original botanical garden, where hollowed-out coconut shells on sticks offer samples of various spices for tasting. These sampling bins are all labelled, as are many of the trees throughout the park. Inside the spice garden is an archaeological dig, where under a wooden roof you can see the Javanese artefacts from the 14th-century Majapahit empire that have been uncovered there.

Also on Fort Canning Hill is the **Battle Box** (☎ 6333 0510; 51 Canning Rise; adult/child \$8/5; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun), Singapore's largest underground military operations complex during WWII. This warren of 26 rooms and tunnels now houses a fascinating hi-tech exhibition on the fall of Singapore in 1942. You can gaze through binocular-like lenses to view holographic figures tapping out Morse-code messages; the Japanese codes are still etched on the walls.

The park hosts several outdoor events each year including Womad and Ballet

under the Stars and the occasional outdoor movie festival.

**PADANG & AROUND** Map pp52–3**M City Hall**

The open field of the Padang is where flannelled fools play cricket in the tropical heat, cheered on by members of the Singapore Cricket Club in the pavilion. At the opposite end of the field is the Singapore Recreation Club. Cricket is still played on the weekends.

This rather prosaic spot has darker historical significance, as it was here that the invading Japanese herded the European community together before marching them off to Changi prison. Apart from the reconstructed monstrosity that is the Singapore Recreation Club (it looks like something made from kids' building blocks), the Padang is flanked by a handsome collection of colonial buildings and assorted monuments, all of which can be taken in on a leisurely stroll (see p58).

At the Padang's southern end, the **Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall** (1862), once the town hall, is now used for cultural events. **Parliament House** (1827) is Singapore's oldest government building. Originally a private mansion, it became a courthouse, then the Assembly House of the colonial government and, finally, the Parliament House for independent Singapore.

Along St Andrew's Rd, the **Supreme Court**, built in 1939, is a relatively new addition and was the last classical building to be erected in Singapore. It replaced the Grand Hotel de L'Europe, which once outshone the Raffles as Singapore's premier hotel. Situated next door, and even newer, is the Foster & Partners–designed **Supreme Court** (p36), which opened in 2005.

**TRANSPORT: COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS**

The grid layout of the district makes it easy to navigate. From City Hall MRT station underneath the towering Raffles City mall-hotel complex, the area to the south has most of the colonial treasures, including the Padang, St Andrew's Cathedral, City Hall, the Old Parliament House and Asian Civilisations Museum (which is actually closer to Raffles Place MRT). From there you can cross the elegant Cavenagh Bridge to Boat Quay and follow the river to Clarke Quay, then along to Robertson Quay or north to climb the steep steps up to Fort Canning Park.

Unless you're lucky enough to be staying in the pricey Colonial District, your point of reference will be City Hall MRT, which is an easy walk from all main attractions. If it's too hot to walk, the following buses can ease the pain. Bus 2 takes you down Victoria St and Hill St. Buses 51, 61, 63 and 80 go along North Bridge Rd. For Beach Rd, hop on bus 100, 107 or 961. Along Bras Basah Rd, get on bus 14, 16, 77 or 111. At night, the best guaranteed taxi spots are the Clarke Quay rank on River Valley Rd and at the Elgin Bridge next to the Jazz@Southbridge pub on South Bridge Rd. Elsewhere, it can be a lottery.

**City Hall**, with its classical facade of Corinthian columns, is located next to the Supreme Court and dates from 1929. It was here that Lord Louis Mountbatten announced Japanese surrender in 1945 and Lee Kwan Yew declared Singapore's independence in 1965. Completing the colonial trio is **St Andrew's Cathedral**.

### PERANAKAN MUSEUM Map pp52–3

☎ 6332 7591; 39 Armenian St; adult/child \$6/3;  
 🕒 1-7pm Mon, 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun, to 9pm Fri;  
 🚶 City Hall

Singapore's newest museum stands as a testament to the Peranakan cultural revival in the Lion City. Opened in 2008, it has 10 galleries featuring over 1200 artefacts and a variety of multimedia exhibits designed to introduce visitors to historical and contemporary Peranakan culture.

In addition to featuring traditionally crafted, beaded Peranakan clothing and exquisitely carved antique furniture, the museum also has a number of interesting and interactive exhibits. Our favourite is the diorama displaying a traditional Peranakan home complete with two video-mounted portraits of elders who argue with each other about whether or not their descendants are leading culturally appropriate lives. This museum is a must-visit for anyone who wants to understand local culture.

### RAFFLES HOTEL Map pp52–3

☎ 6337 1886; [www.raffleshotel.com](http://www.raffleshotel.com);  
 1 Beach Rd; 🚶 City Hall

Viewing the regal edifice that stands today, it's hard to believe that Raffles Hotel started life as a 10-room bungalow. It was opened in December 1887 by the Sarkies brothers, immigrants from Armenia and proprietors of two other grand colonial hotels, the Strand in Yangon (Rangoon) and the Eastern & Oriental in Penang.

The hotel's heyday began in 1899 with the opening of the main building, the same one that guests stay in today. Raffles soon became a byword for oriental luxury ('A legendary symbol for all the fables of the Exotic East', went the publicity blurb) and was featured in novels by Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham. The famous Singapore sling was first concocted in the hotel's Long Bar in 1915.

The hotel lobby is open to the public, and is a popular tourist attraction. Dress standards apply; so no shorts or sandals.

Hidden away on the 3rd floor of the Raffles Hotel Arcade, the **Raffles Hotel Museum** (admission free; 🕒 10am-7pm) is worth hunting out. Here you'll find a fascinating collection of memorabilia including photographs and posters from bygone eras and a fine city map showing how Noel Coward could once sip his gin sling and stare out at the sea from the hotel verandah.

### SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM Map pp52–3

☎ 6332 3222; [www.nhb.gov.sg/sam](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/sam);  
 71 Bras Basah Rd; adult/child \$3/1.50; 🕒 noon-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-9pm Fri; 🚶 City Hall or Dhoby Ghaut

Two blocks west of Raffles Hotel is this fine museum based in the former St Joseph's Institution, a Catholic boys' school that was relocated in 1987.

The reconstruction by local architect Wong Hooe Wai fuses historical charm with a strong contemporary feel. Features include Filipino artist Ramon Orlina's abstract-glass window in the former school chapel and US artist Dale Chihuly's sea anemone-like blown-glass installations, which incidentally can also be seen at the **Chihuly Lounge** (p142) at the Ritz-Carlton Millenia hotel.

The 13 galleries focus on Singaporean and regional artists, with exhibitions ranging from classical Chinese calligraphy to contemporary works examining issues of Asian identity and the modern Singaporean experience, as well as temporary overseas exhibitions. Afterwards, it's worth stopping for coffee in the museum's genteel cafe, **Dôme**. Admission to the museum is free from noon-2pm on weekdays.

### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE

Map pp52–3

☎ 6332 3659; [www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg);  
 93 Stamford Rd; 🚶 Dhoby Ghaut

The grand dame of Singapore's museum scene, NSM is located in the history-drenched neoclassical 19th-century building that once housed the former Raffles Museum and Library. Perhaps the most magnificent feature of the building itself is the recently restored rotunda, which includes 50 carefully crafted pieces of stained glass. At once modern and classical, NSM features a wide variety of multimedia exhibits focused primarily on – naturally – Singapore's history, culture and overall glory.

## QUAYS OF THE CITY

The stretch of riverfront that separates the Colonial District from the CBD is known as the Quays.

### Boat Quay

Closest to the harbour, Boat Quay was once Singapore's centre of commerce, and remained an important economic area into the 1960s. By the mid-1980s, many of the shophouses were in ruins, business having shifted to hi-tech cargo centres elsewhere on the island. Declared a conservation zone by the government, the area has since become a major entertainment district filled with colourful restaurants, bars and shops.

It's on Boat Quay that you'll find riverfront restaurants serving all manner of Singaporean delicacies, though many find the restaurant touts a bit on the aggressive side.

### Clarke Quay

This quay, named after Singapore's second colonial governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, was developed like Boat Quay into a dining and shopping precinct in the early 1990s. Its unique design has cemented its status as one of Singapore's most popular night haunts in the first decade of the 21st century.

How much time you spend in Clarke Quay really depends upon your personal sense of aesthetics, for it's on this stretch of riverfront that Singapore's most whimsical designers have been given carte blanche to bring their dreams to life. Among the high (or low) lights: gumdrop railings done out in kids' paintbox colours, lilypad umbrellas straight out of a Dr Seuss colouring book, and many once-dignified shophouses now painted in shades that might be a tad too bright for some eyes. A hip hangout for some, Jellybean Town for others.

### Robertson Quay

At the furthest reach of the river, Robertson Quay was once used for the storage of goods. Now some of the old *godown* (warehouses) have been tarted up into flash party places and bars, though it's quieter and more low-key than its counterparts downriver. You'll also find several good hotels and restaurants clustered around here.

## SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM

Map pp52-3

☎ 6337 3888; [www.spm.org.sg](http://www.spm.org.sg); 23B Coleman St; adult/child \$5/4; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun, 1-7pm Mon; 🚶 City Hall

Housed in the attractive former Methodist Book Room Building dating from around 1895, this museum holds a well-presented collection of rare and not-so-rare stamps from Singapore and around the world. While some of the artwork and design is impressive, the museum is a must-visit for stamp collectors only.

## CHETTIAR HINDU TEMPLE

Map pp52-3

☎ 6737 9393; 15 Tank Rd; ☎ 8am-noon &

5.30-8.30pm; 🚶 Clarke Quay or Dhoby Ghaut

Completed in 1984 and replacing a much earlier temple built by Indian *chettiers* (moneylenders), this Shaivite temple is dedicated to the six-headed Lord Subramaniam. If you can, come during the festival of **Thaipusam** (p16), whose procession ends here.

## TAN SI CHONG SU TEMPLE

Map pp52-3

15 Magazine Rd; 🚶 Clarke Quay

With its decorative roof, guardian dragons and lions, and painted wooden doors, this

is a particularly fine example of temple design. Built in 1876, much of the material used to make this temple arrived in Singapore as shipping ballast.

## SINGAPORE TYLER PRINT INSTITUTE

Map pp52-3

☎ 6336 3663; [www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg); 41 Robertson Quay; admission free; ☎ 1-5pm Sun & Mon, 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 54 from 🚶 Clarke Quay

Established by the American printmaker Kenneth E Tyler, the institute features a gallery holding exhibitions on various aspects of printmaking, as well as a paper mill and an educational facility.

## YEO SWEE HUAT

Map pp52-3

☎ 6533 4288; 15 Upper Circular Rd;

☎ 8.30am-5.30pm, closed Sun; 🚶 Clarke Quay

Superstitious locals may give this shop a wide berth, but travellers with an interest in Eastern religious rites will be fascinated by this family-owned workshop which, for three generations, has handcrafted paper effigies and accessories for Buddhist and Taoist funerals. The Yeo family also creates all manner of auspicious paper items, which make excellent gifts.

## RIVERSIDE HERITAGE TOUR

### Walking Tour

**1 Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** Our tour begins here at **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (p51), the world's largest and most expensive sculptural homage to the durian, king of all fruits. Climb up to the roof for some excellent shots of the surrounding area, and to get your last dose of air conditioning for a while.

**2 War Memorial Park** Crossing Esplanade Dr takes you into War Memorial Park, in which you'll find the Cenotaph, Singapore's best-known war memorial. Initially built to commemorate soldiers of WWI, a second dedication was added to commemorate Singaporeans who made the ultimate sacrifice during WWII. The foundation stone for this monument was laid by former colonial governor Sir Lawrence Nunn Guillemard. In and around the area of this park are a number of other notable sculptures, including the **Lim Bo Seng Memorial**, built in honour of a WWII hero, the **Indian National Army Monument** and the Victorian-style **Tan Kim Seng Fountain**. Across Stamford

Rd is the **Civilian War Memorial**, locally known as 'the chopsticks' – it's not difficult to see why.

**3 St Andrew's Rd** Heading through the park and across Connaught Dr takes you past the **Singapore Recreation Club** and **Singapore Cricket Club**; across St Andrew's Rd is where you'll find the magnificent **St Andrew's Cathedral**. Hanging a left on St Andrew's Rd takes you past **City Hall** and the **old Supreme Court**. Located right next to the old court is the brand new Foster & Partners-designed **Supreme Court**, with its unmistakable spaceship design. You can go all the way to the top, but you can't snap any photos (all cameras are checked at the door).

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

**End** Merlion Park

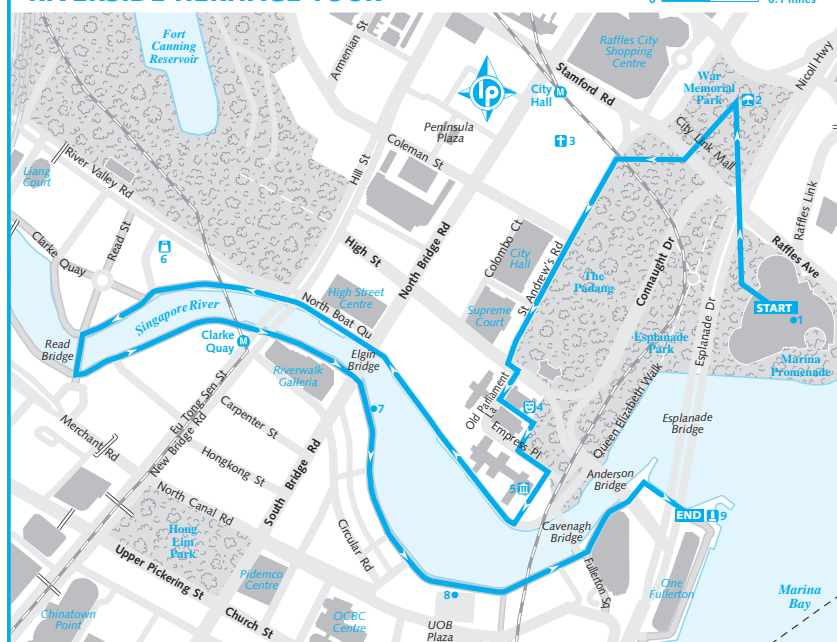
**Distance** 3km

**Time** Two hours

**Exertion** Easy

**Fuel stop** Boat Quay

### RIVERSIDE HERITAGE TOUR





**4 Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall** Below where St Andrew's Rd curves to the left you'll find a group of colonial-era buildings including the Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall, in front of which you'll see the original Raffles statue, which once stood at the Padang.

**5 Asian Civilisations Museum** If you have time, explore the extremely impressive [Asian Civilisations Museum \(p51\)](#), which sits on the North bank of the river on Empress Pl. If you don't have time (or are short on funds), at least take the time to visit the free Singapore River Gallery on the 1st floor.

**6 Clarke Quay** The walk along the northern bank of the Singapore River is a pretty one, offering some of the best opportunities for photographs of downtown Singapore. The rather picturesque building with the multi-coloured window frames, on the corner of Hill St overlooking the river, is the [old Hill Street police station](#), which currently houses the Ministry of Communication and the Arts (MICA). Past this, still on the north side of the river, is [Clarke Quay \(p57\)](#), where you'll find the G-max reverse bungee (which some find exciting and others find nauseating) and Clarke Quay Pavilion (which provokes similarly varied reactions).

**7 Boat Quay** From Clarke Quay, head across the river over [Read Bridge](#). Built in 1881, the pedestrian and bicycle bridge links Clarke Quay to the [Swissotel Merchant Court](#). Hang a left

at the hotel and walk along the southern side of the river. This stretch is mostly filled with bars and restaurants more modern and a good deal less gaudy than those over on Clarke Quay. Past Coleman Bridge on the riverbank is where many of the river's sculptures begin, starting with the bronze statues of river-swimming children caught mid-jump.

**8 Sculpture Walk** On the south side of the river past [Boat Quay \(p57\)](#) is where you'll find some of Singapore's finest outdoor sculpture. Some, like Fernando Botero's [Bird](#) (a gigantic pudgy bird squatting on a marble podium) are whimsical. Others tell clear stories, like Aw Tee Hong's [The River Merchants](#), which displays three bronze merchants (one Chinese, one Malay, and one Caucasian) engaged in negotiation. Salvador Dali's [Homage to Newton](#) is more difficult to describe. There are several others spread around the riverbank for those who care to look.

**9 Merlion** Having had your fill of culture and sculpture, end your tour with a leisurely stroll along the river, stopping at whichever pub or restaurant strikes your fancy. Libations consumed, you'll be ready to complete the circuit by following the river further east to the point where it reaches Marina Bay. It's here where you'll find stairs leading into the bay, on top of which, staring out into the sea, you'll come face to face with the famous [Merlion \(p101\)](#) statue, Singapore's most famous icon.

# CHINATOWN & THE CBD

Drinking & Nightlife [p143](#); Eating [p126](#); Shopping [p108](#); Sleeping [p165](#)

That a primarily Chinese city like Singapore has a neighbourhood designated as 'Chinatown' might seem a bit odd to some, so let's clarify the distinction. Once upon a time, in a much smaller Lion City, this was the area where the new immigrants – mostly, but not entirely, from China – would sleep and eat, working primarily on the shores of the nearby Singapore River where most commerce occurred. Hence, to the mostly-Anglo captains of industry (who lived in fancier neighbourhoods), the area came to be known as 'Chinatown', and now, generations later, the name has stuck.

Nowadays, Chinatown is mostly known as a tourist destination for those looking to take in Singapore on the quick, and as such much of the neighbourhood has taken on a distinctly Disneyland vibe. In between the temples, parks and other culturally edifying spots are plenty of restaurants, shops and endless street-stalls selling the same trinkets you'll find in Chinatowns throughout the world.

Between Chinatown and the Singapore River is the central business district (CBD), the financial pulse of the city. Once the city's vibrant heart, Raffles Place is now a rare patch of grass above the MRT station, surrounded by the gleaming towers of commerce. The CBD is a short walk across the Cavenagh Bridge from the Colonial District. There are some interesting sculptures here and along the nearby Singapore River (see [p32](#)), including the latest incarnation of the island's much-hyped Merlion, which is in Merlion Park.

Chinatown is roughly bounded by the Singapore River to the north, New Bridge Rd to the west, Maxwell and Kreta Ayer Rds to the south and Cecil St to the east. The principal centres of visitor attention and activity are clustered between New Bridge Rd and South Bridge Rd, where you'll find the Chinatown Complex, the Pagoda and Trengganu St pedestrian strips (or tourist traps) and the temples, while the Club St bar area lies just to the east of South Bridge Rd.

## CHINATOWN HERITAGE CENTRE

Map [pp62–3](#)

☎ 6325 2878; [www.chinatownheritage.com.sg](http://www.chinatownheritage.com.sg);  
48 Pagoda St; adult/child \$9.80/6.30; 🕒 9am–8pm;  
📍 Chinatown

A reflection of the oft-frenetic atmosphere of Chinatown itself, this museum is crammed to the rafters with imaginative, interactive displays on the area's history. Three restored shophouses have been combined to make the three-storey centre, part of which recreates very evocatively and accurately the cramped and miserable living quarters that many Chinese immigrants once endured.

The fascinating oral and video histories of local people describe what life was like in the days when Singapore was less than immaculate, from the old woman who survived through unspeakable suffering to the stories of the Triad-style secret societies that patrolled and terrorised the neighbourhoods.

## top picks

- Buddha Tooth Relic Temple (opposite)
- Nei Xue Tang (opposite)
- People's Park (p109)
- Chinatown Heritage Centre (left)
- Sri Mariamman Temple (opposite)

Andrew Yip, owner of the nearby [Service World Backpackers Hostel \(p166\)](#) sells and displays the works of his late father, famed Singaporean photographer Yip Cheong-Fun, in front of the centre.

## EU YAN SANG MEDICAL HALL

Map [pp62–3](#)

☎ 6223 6333; 269A South Bridge Rd;  
🕒 8.30am–6pm Mon–Sat; 📍 Chinatown

First opened in the early 20th century and now very tastefully refurbished, this is Singapore's most famous Chinese medicine centre and has spawned branches across the country.

A nearby spot of a similar medical vein worth checking out is the [People's Park Complex \(p109\)](#), where you'll find endless stalls offering all manner of Asian health gadgets and treatments, from herbal tinctures and arthritis-curing marble hand-balls to massage and footbaths with tiny fish that suck the dead skin off your feet.

## BUDDHA TOOTH RELIC TEMPLE

Map pp62–3

☎ 6220 0220; [www.btrts.org.sg](http://www.btrts.org.sg); 288 South Bridge Rd; 🕒 4.30am–9pm; 📍 Chinatown

Opened with much fanfare in 2008, this magnificent five-storey southern Chinese-style Buddhist temple is quickly altering Chinatown's gravity by becoming the number-one attraction for both tourists and local worshippers alike. The temple, as you may have guessed from the name, houses what is believed to be the sacred tooth of the Buddha. The magnificent relic stupa is composed of 420kg of gold donated by worshippers. This is also the only temple that – to our knowledge – has its own underground parking garage.

## NEI XUE TANG

Map pp62–3

☎ 6220 0220; 235 Cantonment Rd; adult/child \$5/3; 🕒 10am–5pm; 📍 Outram Park

This museum offers the largest collection of Buddhist artefacts in the city, including relics from China, Tibet, India, Japan, Burma and beyond. Pieces range from statues and jewellery to assorted esoteric devotional items.

## SENG WONG BEO TEMPLE

Map pp62–3

113 Peck Seah St; 📍 Tanjong Pagar

Tucked behind red gates next to the Tanjong Pagar MRT station, this temple, seldom visited by tourists, is dedicated to the Chinese City God, who is not only responsible for the well-being of the city but also for guiding the souls of the dead to the underworld. It's also notable as the only temple in Singapore that still performs ghost marriages.

## SRI MARIAMMAN TEMPLE

Map pp62–3

☎ 6223 4064; 244 South Bridge Rd; 🕒 7.30–11.30am & 5.30–8.30pm; 📍 Chinatown

This South Indian Dravidian-style temple is Singapore's oldest Hindu temple, built originally built in 1827 by Nariana Pillay, who arrived in Singapore on the same ship as Sir Stamford Raffles. Its present form dates back to 1843; the distinctive, colourful *gopuram* (tower), crowded with deities, soldiers and floral decoration over the entrance gate, dominates the street.

## TRANSPORT: CHINATOWN & THE CBD

The centre of any trip to Chinatown will be Chinatown MRT station. Exit A from the station lands you right on Pagoda St. Coming from the Colonial District, hop on bus 61, 145 or 166, which takes you from North Bridge Rd to South Bridge Rd. From Hill St, buses 2, 12 and 147 run you down New Bridge Rd. It's possible to walk from the CBD to Chinatown, but from Raffles Quay, bus 608 goes to South Bridge Rd, or take bus C2 from Clifford Pier.

Inside are a series of shrines. The main one, straight ahead after you walk through the gate, belongs to the healing goddess Mariamman. Another shrine is devoted to Periyachi Amman, who is supposed to protect children.

In late October/early November each year, the temple is the scene for the Thimithi festival, during which devotees walk barefoot over burning coals – supposedly feeling no pain, although spectators report that quite a few hot-foot it for the final few steps!

## THIAN HOCK KENG TEMPLE

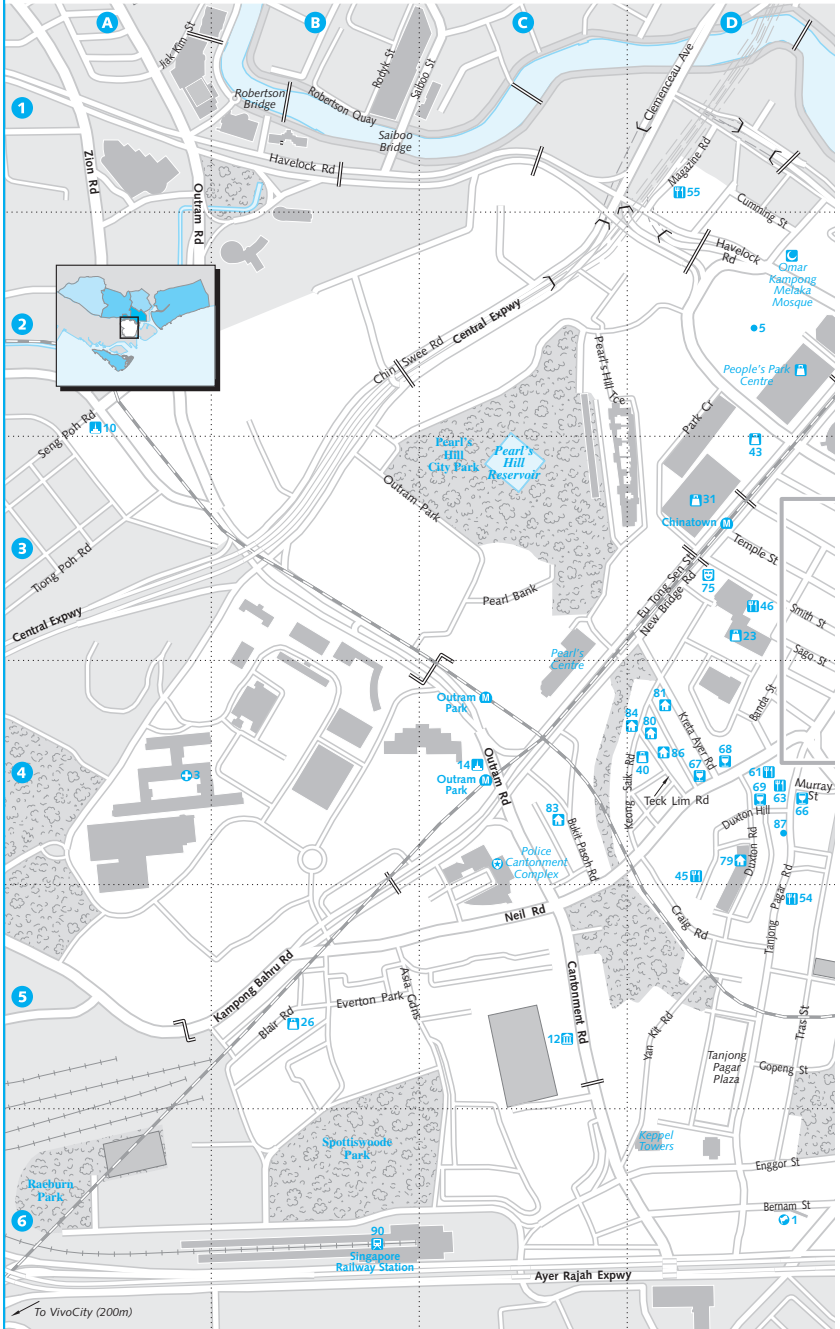
Map pp62–3

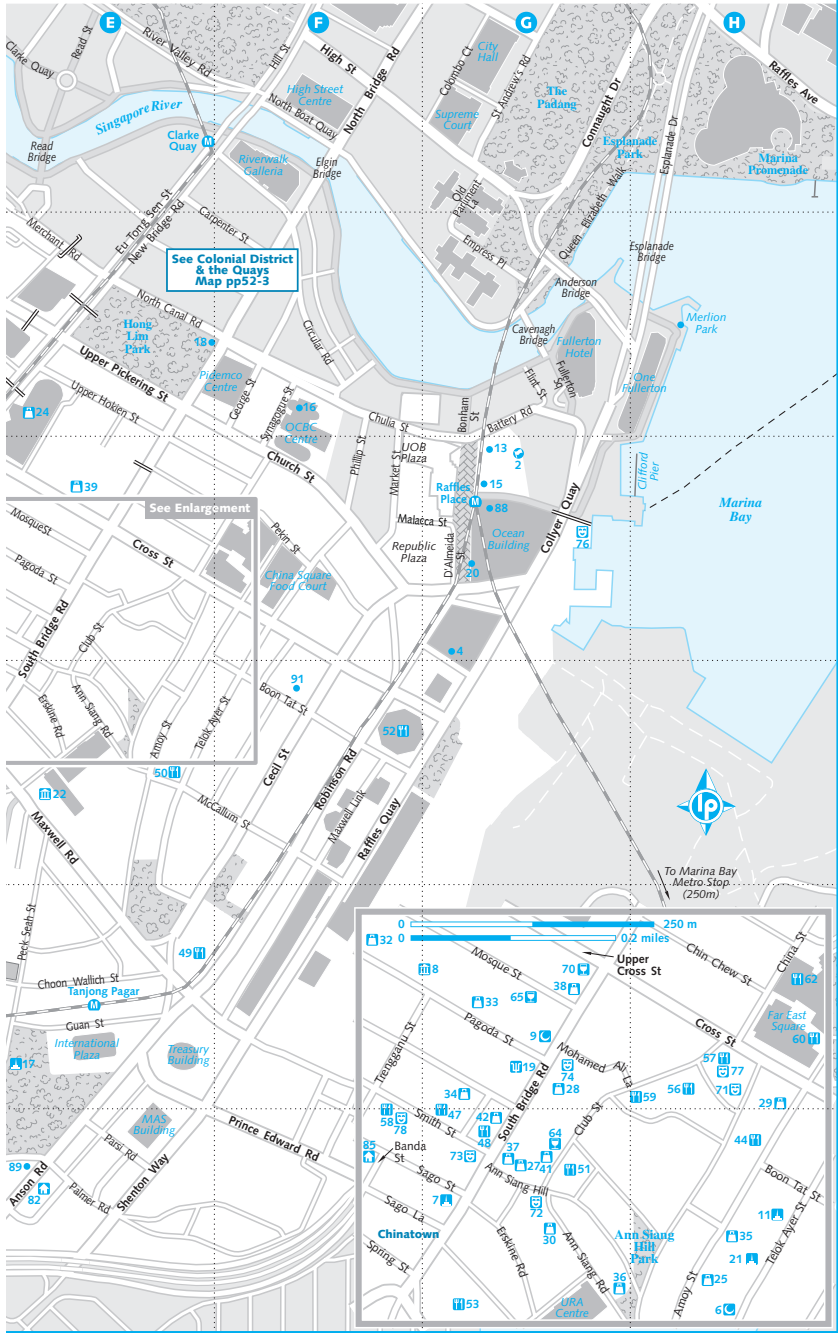
☎ 6423 4626; 158 Telok Ayer St; 📍 Raffles Place or Chinatown

Its name translates as Temple of Heavenly Bliss, which is entirely apt given the gorgeous decoration of this, the oldest and most important Hokkien temple in Singapore. It was built between 1839 and 1842 on the site of the shrine to the goddess of the sea, Ma-Chu-Po, which was once the favourite landing point of Chinese sailors, back when Telok Ayer St ran along the shoreline. All the materials came from China except, interestingly, the gates (which came all the way from Scotland) and the tiles (from Holland). The temple was magnificently restored in 2000.

As you wander through the courtyards of the temple, look for the rooftop dragons, the intricately decorated beams, the gold-leaf panels and, best of all, the beautifully painted doors. During the restoration, a calligraphic panel from 1907 and from the emperor of China, Guang Xu of the Qing dynasty, was discovered above the central altar.

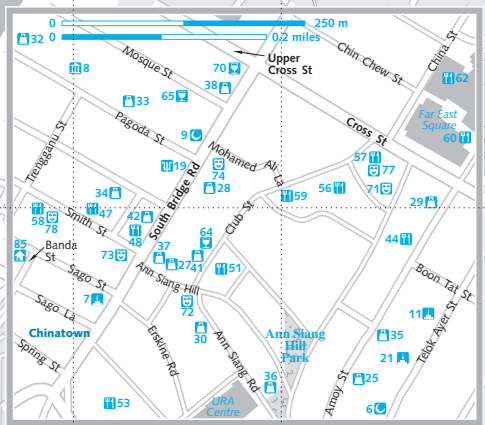
# CHINATOWN & THE CBD





See Colonial District & the Quays Map pp52-3

See Enlargement



## CHINATOWN & THE CBD

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German Embassy.....	2	G3
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Small Claims Tribunal.....	5	D2

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Eu Yan Sang Medical Hall.....	(see 27)	
Jamae Mosque.....	9	G5
Monkey God Temple.....	10	A2
Nagore Durgah Shrine.....	11	H6
Nei Xue Tang.....	12	C5
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Qi Tian Gong.....	14	C4
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em Gallery.....	26	B5
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Senso.....	56	H5
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M Hotel.....	82	E6
New Majestic Hotel.....	83	C4
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Service World Backpackers Hostel.....	85	D3
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KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines.....	89	E6
Singapore Railway Station.....	90	B6
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## URA GALLERY Map pp62-3

☎ 6321 8321; [www.ura.gov.sg](http://www.ura.gov.sg); 45 Maxwell Rd; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Tanjong Pagar

To understand how Singapore's urban environment has changed over recent decades and how it will change further in the future (especially with regards to the amazing development happening around Marina Bay), pop into the URA Gallery. This showcase of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) includes video shows, interactive exhibits and a huge scale-model of the island state with its own six-minute sound-and-light show.

## WAK HAI CHENG BIO TEMPLE

Map pp62-3

cnr Phillip & Church Sts; 📍 Raffles Place

On the CBD edge of Chinatown, this Taoist temple is also known as the Yueh Hai Ching Temple, which translates as Calm Sea Temple. Dating from 1826, it's an atmospheric place, with giant incense coils smok-

ing over its empty courtyard, and a whole village of tiny plaster figures populating its roof.

## CHINATOWN WALK

### Walking Tour

**1 Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple** Take a moment as you emerge at Raffles Pl to consider how much the surrounding CBD has changed over the last century. A graceful note amid the gleaming towers are the Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) entrances, scaled-down copies of the facade of the long-gone John Little department store that once stood here. Head west along Chulia St and turn south down Phillip St to the **Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple** (left).

**2 Fuk Tak Ch'i Museum** Cross over Church St to Telok Ayer St – the name means 'bay water', for this street once ran alongside the bay. On your right, practically swallowed up into the Far East Sq dining precinct, is the small Fuk Tak Ch'i Museum. Further along is

**Ying Fo Fui Kun**, a two-storey building established in 1822 for the Ying Fo Clan Association, which services Hakka Chinese.

**3 Nagore Durgha Shrine** At the junction with Boon Tat St is the Nagore Durgha Shrine, a mosque built between 1828 and 1830 by Chulia Muslims from South India's Coromandel Coast. A little further down is the beautifully restored **Thian Hock Keng Temple (p61)**, Singapore's most impressive Chinese temple. If you continue along Telok Ayer St, you'll encounter the **Al-Abrar Mosque**, which was built between 1850 and 1855.

**4 Siang Cho Keong Temple** By the Amoy St hawker centre, turn right into Amoy St, where at No 66 you'll see the Siang Cho Keong Temple, built between 1867 and 1869. Left of the entrance is a small 'dragon well' into which you can drop a coin and make a wish.

**5 Anglo-Chinese School** At the junction of Amoy and McCallum Sts you'll see a small brown archway next to the temple marked Ann Siang Hill Park. Go through here, then follow the walkways and wooden steps upwards to what is Chinatown's highest point.

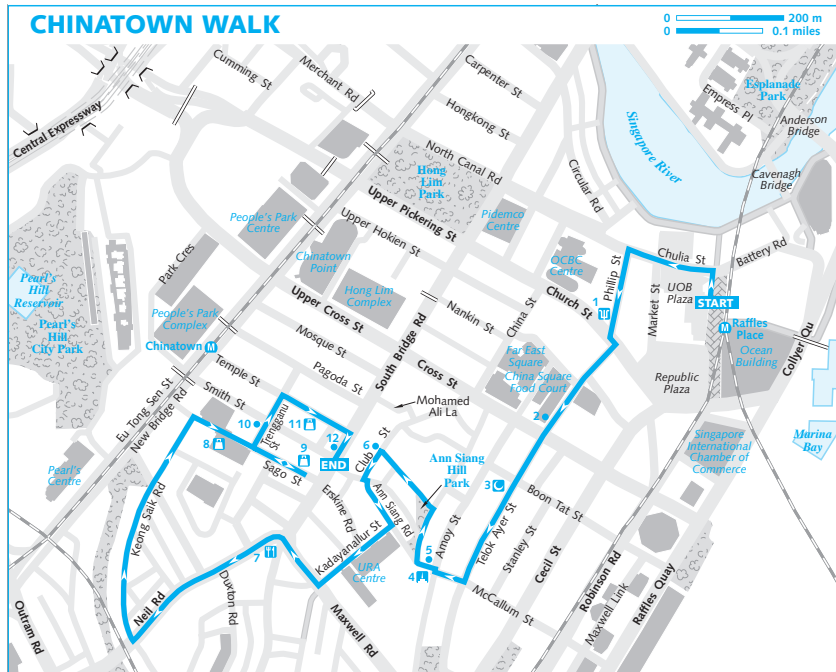
Climbing up past the historical site of the old Anglo-Chinese School, and up a wrought-iron spiral staircase, follow the charming back street downhill, emerging on Club St.

**6 Club St** After a rest, head up Club St. The highly decorated terraces here once housed Chinese guilds and clubs, but now it's almost all trendy bars and restaurants. You'll want to return for libations after dark, and you'll want to look your best. Why not head over to Mohamed Ali Lane, where you can get a haircut in an antique barber chair for \$6.

**7 Jinriksha Station** On the corner of Neil and Tanjong Pagar Rds is the triangular Jinriksha station, once the depot for hand-pulled rickshaws, but now a restaurant. Take a quick

## WALK FACTS

- Start** Raffles Place MRT station
- End** South Bridge Rd
- Distance** 2km
- Time** 2½ hours
- Ease** Moderate
- Fuel stops** Smith St hawker stalls



## COMING SOON IN SINGAPORE: MORE!

'... Seriously folks, I love Singapore. I can't wait to see what it looks like when they finish building it.'

With that line, Singapore-based comedian Jonathan Atherton describes succinctly the endless drive for expansion that in Singapore borders on mania. The area just southwest of the CBD, known as Marina Bay, once a mere gleam in the eyes of city planners, now sits as a shining example of land reclamation, boasting wide, palm-lined boulevards ringed with high-class condominiums, bars and restaurants. In autumn of 2008, Singapore's first Formula One Grand Prix tore through a street circuit in Marina Bay in what could become a yearly event. So what's next?

For a glance at the future, hop on bus 30 (a double-decker that offers lovely views) for a trip along the East Coast Parkway as it runs south of the CBD. Just a few years back, the view southward would have been sea and cargo ships. At the time this book was being researched, water and freight had been replaced by reclaimed land covered by a forest of building cranes. If all goes according to plan, by the time you read this the vast construction site will be transformed into what the Singapore government euphemistically refers to as the 'Integrated Resort', one of two proposed casinos to be built in Singapore (the second is slated to be built on Sentosa Island) before 2012.

walk southwest along Neil Rd to Keong Saik Rd, a curving street of old terraces with coffee shops, clan houses, clubs and small hotels. At the junction with Kreta Ayer Rd is the small Indian Layan Sithi Vinyagar Temple.

**8 Chinatown Complex** Heading into the heart of Chinatown along Keong Siak Rd, you'll hit the back of the [Chinatown Complex](#) (p110). If you're hungry, stop for a cheap bite; there's a fascinating wet market and a bustling food centre. Outside, facing the corner of Sago and Trengganu Sts, is a square that's a popular meeting place for the old folks in the evening.

**9 Fong Moon Kee** At the back of [Fong Moon Kee](#) (16 Sago St), an elderly gentleman still makes and mends traditional rattan matting using an antique sewing machine. The mats, once widely used for sleeping on, are durable and absorbent.

**10 Lai Chun Yuen** The next three streets – Smith, Temple and Pagoda – all run off Treng-

ganu St and are the heart of tourist Chinatown. Consequently they are packed with shops, restaurants and outdoor stalls. On the corner of Smith and Trengganu Sts is a former Cantonese opera house, Lai Chun Yuen, designed by the same architect responsible for Raffles Hotel and the Victoria Theatre.

**11 Temple St** In days gone by, Temple St used to have tinsmiths down one side and ceramics shops on the other. Today the tradition lingers in places such as [Bao Yuan Trading](#) at No 15 and [Sia Huat](#) (p109) from No 9 to 11.

**12 South Bridge Rd** Along nearby South Bridge Rd there are also the traditional Chinese medicine shops. Also worth stopping by on South Bridge Rd are the [Sri Mariamman Temple](#) (p61), Singapore's oldest Hindu temple, and the nearby [Jamae Mosque](#) (also known as Chulia), built by Indian Muslims from the Coromandel Coast of Tamil Nadu between 1830 and 1855.



# LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM

Drinking & Nightlife [p144](#); Eating [p128](#); Shopping [p110](#); Sleeping [p166](#)

Abandon all thoughts of sterile Singapore; this colourful enclave of the Indian community is anything but organised and clean. Fruit and vegetable shops crowd the grubby five-foot ways with their boxes of eggplants, okra and tomatoes, jostling for space with the goldsmiths and raucous stores selling electronics and cheap CDs from India. And everywhere is the smell of incense and spices, wafting from the merchants' shops and countless eateries offering amazing Indian cuisine.

It's a fascinating area to wander around, shopping, browsing, eating and, in traditional Indian style, being stared at by groups of men (if you're female). For shopping there probably isn't anywhere in Singapore to match the 24-hour Mustafa Centre for sheer chaotic variety.

A 15-minute walk southeast brings you to Kampong Glam, (called by tourists, but not locals, 'the Arab quarter'). By day the area is a great place for visiting mosques and shops selling clothing, raw cloth and other dry goods. At night it becomes a focal point for a strange social mix of the Middle Eastern community and the city's trendy, alternative youth, who come here to smoke sheesha. Behind Arab St, the narrow back street of Haji Lane has developed a scene of its own, with alternative record shops, offbeat boutiques and some more Middle Eastern cafes.

## ARAB STREET [Map p68](#)

### Bugis


This is the traditional textile district, where you'll find several caneware shops near the junction with Baghdad St. Stop here for a well-deserved rest and some bread, dips and grilled lamb at the area's best Muslim restaurant, [Café Le Caire](#) ([p130](#)), also known as Al Majlis.

## HAJI LANE [Map p68](#)

### Bugis

A picturesque, narrow lane (the narrowest in Singapore, some say) running parallel to Arab St with fascinating shops, including three places selling non-mainstream CDs, books and DVDs. There are also several shops selling sheesha pipes. [Kazura](#) ([☎ 6293 1757](#); 51 Haji Lane; [🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat](#)) is a traditional perfume business with rows of decanters containing perfumes, such as Ramadan, for the faithful. For more on shopping in Haji Lane, see [p112](#).

## HAJJAH FATIMAH MOSQUE [Map p68](#)

[☎ 6297 2774](#); 4001 Beach Rd;  Lavender or Bugis Constructed in 1846, the mosque is named after a Malakan-born Malay woman, Hajjah Fatimah; the site was once her home. It has

## top picks

- [Haji Lane](#) (left)
- [Arab Street](#) (left)
- [Sultan Mosque](#) (p70)
- [Museum of Shanghai Toys](#) (p70)
- [Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple](#) (p70)

two unusual features. First is its architecture, which is British influenced, rather than traditional Middle Eastern. The second is its leaning minaret, which leans about six degrees off-centre.

## MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE [Map p68](#)

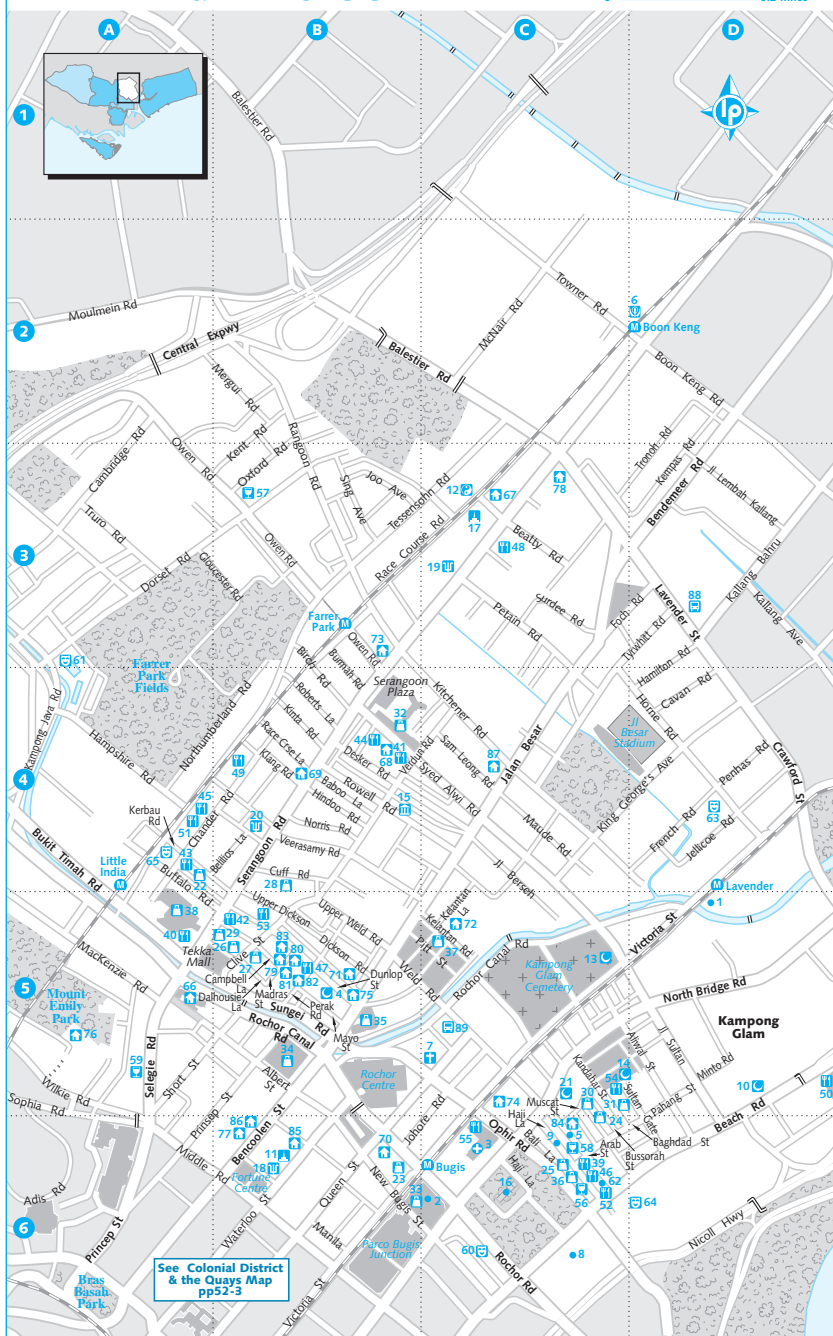
[☎ 6391 0450](#); [www.malayheritage.org.sg](#); 85 Sultan Gate; adult/child \$3/2; [🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, 1-6pm Mon](#)

The Kampong Glam area is the historic seat of the Malay royalty, resident here before the arrival of Raffles, and the *istana* (palace) on the site was the built for the last sultan of Singapore, Ali Iskander Shah, between 1836 and 1843. An agreement allowed the palace to belong to the sultan's family as long as they continued to live there. Even though this was repealed in 1897, the family stayed on for over a century and the palace gradually slid into ruin.

In 1999 the family moved out and a long period of renovation ended in 2004 with the opening of the Malay Heritage Centre. The building and grounds are a delight and the museum itself is a sparse but interesting account of Singapore's Malay people, featuring an reconstructed Kampong house upstairs.

# LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM

0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles



See Colonial District & the Quays Map pp52-3

## LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM

### INFORMATION

Immigration Department.....	1	D5
International Enterprise Singapore.....	2	C6
Raffles Hospital.....(see 3)		
Raffles Surgi Centre.....	3	C6
Singapore Visitors Centre @ Little India.....(see 80)		

### SIGHTS

(pp67–72)

Abdul Gaffoor Mosque.....	4	B5
Arab St.....	5	C6
Central Sikh Temple.....	6	D2
Church of Our Lady of Lourdes..	7	C5
Gateway.....	8	C6
Haji Lane.....	9	C6
Hajjah Fatimah Mosque.....	10	D5
Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple.....	11	B6
Leong San See Temple.....	12	C3
Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath Mosque.....	13	C5
Malay Heritage Centre.....	14	C5
Museum of Shanghai Toys.....	15	B4
Parkview Square.....	16	C6
Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple.....	17	C3
Sri Krishnan Temple.....	18	B6
Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple.....	19	C3
Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple..	20	B4
Sultan Mosque.....	21	C5

### SHOPPING

(pp103–16)

Ansa Store.....	22	A4
Bugis St Market.....	23	B6
Edge.....(see 33)		
Golden Mile Complex.....(see 50)		
Grandfather's Collections.....	24	C6
House of Japan.....	25	C6
Indian Classical Music Centre.....	26	B5

Indian Handicraft Centre.....	27	B5
Khan Mohamed Bhooy & Sons.....	28	B4
Little India Arcade.....	29	B5
Little Shophouse.....	30	C5
Melor's Curios.....	31	C5
Mustafa Centre.....	32	B4
Parco Bugis Junction.....	33	B6
Sim Lim Square.....	34	B5
Sim Lim Tower.....	35	B5
Straits Records.....	36	C6
Sungei Road Thieves Market....	37	C5
Tekka Centre.....	38	A5

### EATING

(pp117–38)

Al-Tazzag.....	39	C6
Ananda Bhavan.....	40	A5
Ananda Bhavan.....	41	B4
Ananda Bhavan.....	42	B5
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Anjappar.....	44	B4
Banana Leaf Apolo.....	45	A4
Café Le Caire (Al Majlis).....	46	C6
Countryside Café.....	47	B5
French Stall.....	48	C3
Gayatri.....	49	B4
Golden Mile Complex.....	50	D5
Kashmir.....	51	A4
Korean Hot Stone BBQ.....	52	C6
Madras New Woodlands.....	53	B5
Tekka Centre.....(see 38)		
Tepak Sireh.....	54	C5
Ya Kun Kaya Toast.....	55	C6

### DRINKING

#### & NIGHTLIFE

(pp139–48)

Blujaz Café.....	56	C6
Café Domus.....	57	B3
Glassy Junction English Pub....	58	C6
Night and Day.....	59	A5
Prince of Wales.....(see 83)		

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Farrer Park Swimming Pool.....	61	A3
Sanctum.....	62	C6
Scuba Corner.....	63	D4
Shaw Bugis Complex Cinema....	(see 2)	
St Gregory Javana Spa.....	64	D6
Wild Rice.....	65	A4

### SLEEPING

(pp159–74)

Albert Court Hotel.....	66	A5
Asphodel Inn.....	67	C3
Aspinals Hotel.....	68	B4
Broadway Hotel.....	69	B4
Bugis Backpackers.....	70	B6
Dickson Court Hotel.....	71	B5
Dragon Inn Hostel.....	72	C5
Fortuna Hotel.....	73	B3
Golden Landmark Hotel.....	74	C5
Haising Hotel.....	75	B5
Hangout@Mt.Emily.....	76	A5
Hawaii Hostel.....	77	B6
Hive.....	78	C3
InnCrowd.....	79	B5
InnCrowd.....	80	B5
Madras Hotel.....	81	B5
Perak Hotel.....	82	B5
Prince of Wales Backpacker Hostel.....	83	B5
Sleepy Sam's.....	84	C6
South-East Asia Hotel.....	85	B6
Summer View Hotel.....	86	B6
Treehouse Backpacker's Hostel.....	87	C4

### TRANSPORT

(pp188–93)

Lavender Street Bus Terminal....	88	D3
Queen Street Bus Terminal.....	89	C5

## KUAN IM THONG HOOD CHO TEMPLE

Map p68

178 Waterloo St; **M** Bugis

Dedicated to Kuan Yin (Guan Yin; goddess of mercy), one of the most popular deities, this temple attracts a daily crowd of devotees seeking divine intervention. Flower sellers can always be found outside the temple, which is particularly busy on the eve of Chinese New Year, when it stays open right through the night. Just up from the temple, near the South-East Asia Hotel, is a large money god, with a polished belly where the faithful rub their hands for good luck.

Next door is the recently renovated and even more polychromatic **Sri Krishnan Temple**, which also attracts worshippers from the Kuan Yin temple, who show a great deal of religious pragmatism by also burning joss sticks and offering prayers at this Hindu temple.

## LEONG SAN SEE TEMPLE Map p68

☎ 6298 9371; 371 Race Course Rd; ☎ 6am–6pm;

**M** Farrer Park

Across the road from the **Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** (p70) is this less gaudy Taoist place of worship (dating from 1917 and dedicated to Kuan Yin). The name translates as Dragon Mountain Temple and it's beautifully decorated with timber beams carved with chimera, dragons, flowers and human figures.

## MALABAR MUSLIM JAMA-ATH MOSQUE Map p68

☎ 6294 3862; 471 Victoria St; **M** Lavender

The blue-tiled Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath Mosque, the only one on the island dedicated to Malabar Muslims from the South Indian state of Kerala, is one of the most distinctive in Singapore, but it didn't always look this way. Work on the building started in 1956, but it wasn't officially opened until 1963 due to cash-flow problems.

## TRANSPORT: LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM

Little India MRT station is the starting point for most visits, and lands you at the end of the bustling Buffalo Rd food market. Bus 65 runs from Orchard Rd to Serangoon Rd (the spine of Little India, off which many narrow streets branch, offering myriad interesting exploration opportunities). From the Colonial District, catch bus 131 or 147 on Stamford Rd to Serangoon Rd. Little India's borders are roughly marked by Lavender St to the north, Bukit Timah and Sungei Rds to the south, Race Course Rd to the west and Jalan Besar to the east. Following Serangoon Rd south, you will eventually hit the eastern end of Orchard Rd.

For Kampong Glam, get off at Bugis MRT station – it's a 10-minute walk to Arab and Bussorah Sts. If the walk from Little India is too much, there are no direct bus services, but a cab will cost about \$4. From Orchard Rd, catch bus 7 to Victoria St and get off at the Stamford School, just past Arab St. From the Colonial District, buses 130, 133, 145 and 197 head up Victoria St and buses 100 and 107 run along Beach Rd from the Raffles Hotel to the end of Bussorah St.

The magnificent tiling on the mosque was only finished in 1995!

### MUSEUM OF SHANGHAI TOYS

Map p68

☎ 6294 7742; [www.most.com.sg](http://www.most.com.sg); 83 Rowell Rd;  
🕒 10am-8pm; 📍 Little India

Who knew that toys played such an integral role in 20th-century Chinese history? Marvin Chan, founder and curator of the Museum of Shanghai Toys, certainly did, and his expertise shows in the impressive assortment of antique toys in this renovated three-storey shophouse in Little India. You can shop for contemporary toys on the 1st floor after visiting the collection on the second. Don't forget to chat with Marvin, who'll be able to explain the cultural and historical importance of various items.

### SAKAYA MUNI BUDDHA GAYA TEMPLE

Map p68

Temple of 1000 Lights; ☎ 6294 0714; 366 Race Course Rd; 🕒 8am-4.45pm; 📍 Farrer Park

In 1927 a Thai monk founded this Buddhist temple, popularly known as the Temple of 1000 Lights. It's dominated by a brightly painted 15m-high, 300-tonne Buddha that sits alongside an eclectic range of deities, including Kuan Yin, the Chinese goddess of mercy, as well as Brahma and Ganesh (both Hindu deities).

Flanking the entrance to the temple are yellow tigers, symbolising protection and vitality. On your left as you enter the temple is a huge mother-of-pearl footprint, complete with the 108 auspicious marks that distinguish a Buddha foot from any other 2m-long foot. It's said to be a replica of the footprint on top of Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka.

### SRI SRINIVASA PERUMAL TEMPLE

Map p68

☎ 6298 5771; 397 Serangoon Rd; 🕒 6.30am-noon & 6-9pm; 📍 Farrer Park

This large complex, dedicated to Vishnu, dates from 1855 but the 20m-tall *gopuram* is a relatively recent addition, built in 1966 for \$300,000. Inside the temple you will find a statue of Perumal, or Vishnu, his consorts Lakshmi and Andal, and his bird-mount, Garuda. This temple is the starting point for devotees who make the walk to the Chettiar Hindu Temple during the Thaipusam festival.

### SRI VEERAMAKALIAMMAN TEMPLE

Map p68

☎ 6293 4634; 141 Serangoon Rd; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 4-8.30pm; 📍 Little India

This Shaivite temple, dedicated to Kali, is one of the most colourful and bustling in Little India. Kali, bloodthirsty consort of Shiva, has always been popular in Bengal, the birthplace of the labourers who built this temple in 1881. Images of Kali within the temple show her wearing a garland of skulls and ripping out the insides of her victims, and sharing more peaceful family moments with her sons Ganesh and Murugan.

### SULTAN MOSQUE Map p68

☎ 6293 4405; 3 Muscat St; 🕒 5am-8.30pm; 📍 Bugis

Singapore's biggest mosque is the golden-domed focal point of Kampong Glam. It was originally built in 1825 with the aid of a grant from Raffles and the East India Company, as a result of Raffles' treaty with the Sultan of Singapore that allowed him to retain sovereignty over the area. A hundred years later in 1928, the original mosque was replaced by the present magnificent building, which, interestingly, was designed by an architect who was from Ireland and

worked for the same company that designed the Raffles Hotel.

The building follows classic Turkish, Persian and Moorish style. Inside the huge prayer hall, which can accommodate around 5000 people, the mosaic-tiled walls bear inscriptions from the Koran calling the faithful to prayer. The luscious rug on the floor was donated to the mosque by a Saudi Prince, whose emblem is woven into it. You might also notice a number of incongruous-looking digital clocks, which were installed so that prayer times could be accurately observed.

Bear in mind that this is a functioning mosque and only go inside if there isn't a prayer session going on. Non-Muslims are asked to refrain from entering the prayer hall at any time, and all visitors are expected to be dressed appropriately. Pointing cameras at people during prayer time is never appropriate.

## LITTLE INDIA WALK

### Walking Tour

**1 Tekka Centre** Beginning at the Little India MRT station, walk to the corner of Serangoon and Buffalo Rd; the famous **Tekka Centre** (p111 and p130) is currently under renovation, but many of the stalls have moved to a temporary location one block north on Race Course Rd. Buffalo Rd is a fun street to explore, as is Kerbau Rd (*kerbau* means 'buffalo' in Malay) one block east.

**2 Tan House** Note the fine two-storey Tan House, a Peranakan-style building constructed in 1905. Head southeast along Kerbau Rd (a pedestrian strip designated an 'arts village'), which is given over to shops and galleries specialising in Indian clothes, artwork and beauty treatments, including henna designs for the hands and feet – and a beer garden. Turn left at Serangoon Rd, which has numerous gold shops with glittering window displays.

**3 Khan Mohamed Bhoj & Sons** Walk 50m, then turn right down Cuff Rd, where you can get a glimpse of Singapore's past at one of the island's last spice-grinding shops, **Khan Mohamed Bhoj & Sons** (p111).

**4 Kampong Kapor Methodist Church** At the end of Cuff Rd, turn left along Kampong Kapor Rd and pass the Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, built in 1929. Hang a left

up Veerasamy Rd, bringing you back up to Serangoon Rd and the bustling, polychromatic **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (opposite).

**5 Mustafa Centre** Around 500m further along Serangoon Rd is the thoroughly Indian shopping complex the **Mustafa Centre** (p111) – a great place for well-priced electrical goods, luggage and all manner of household items. It's open 24 hours a day and always seems to be seething with bargain-hungry shoppers. In this area, in the alleyways off Desker Rd, the brothels are successors to the long-demolished ones in old Bugis St.

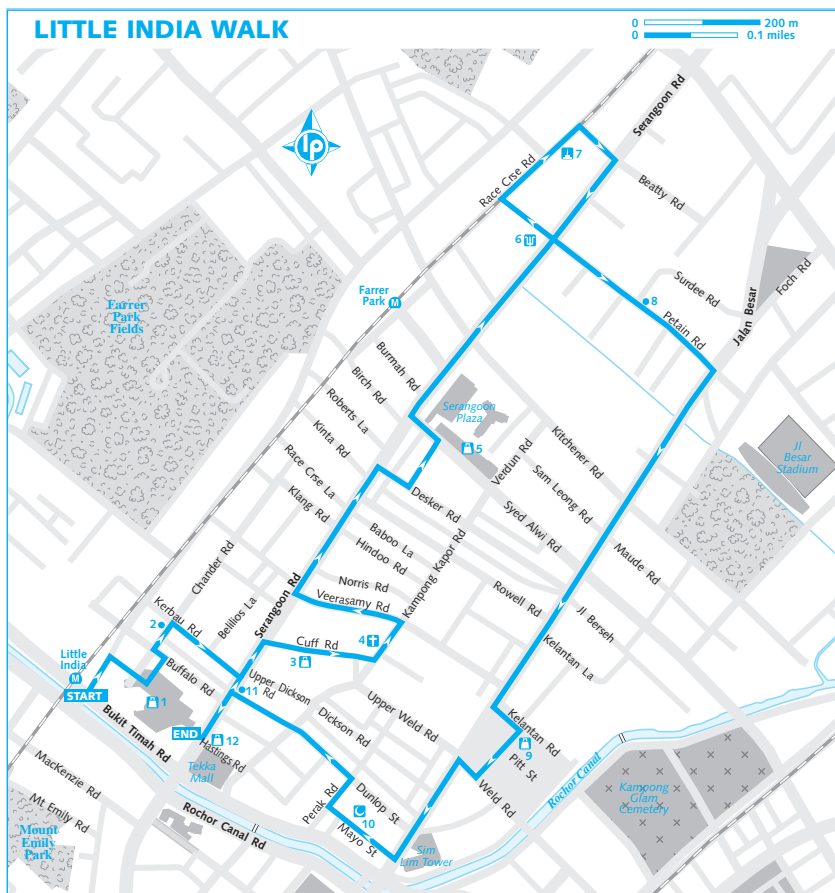
**6 Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** A block north of the Mustafa Centre along Serangoon Rd, the **Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** (opposite) is a large, ornately decorated complex dedicated to Vishnu.

**7 Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** Cut through the pedestrian alley, next to the temple, to Race Course Rd, where you'll find the glitzy, Thai-influenced **Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** (opposite), better known as the Temple of 1000 Lights. Head across the road to the **Leong San See Temple** (p69) considered by some to be even more beautiful than its striking neighbour.

**8 Shophouses** Head back to Serangoon Rd and walk southwest, turning left onto Petain Rd, noting the beautifully restored block of shophouses on the corner of Surdee Rd. When you reach Jalan Besar turn right and head south along this grimy, busy main road lined with hardware and lighting shops. The Indian influence wanes here, but there are still some fine old pastel-coloured terraces with intricate stucco and tiles. If you're feeling a bit worn out, turn left at the end of Petain Rd, cross over Jalan Besar to the bus stop, hop on a bus (64, 65, 130, 139 or 147) and get off at the third stop, before Sim Lim Tower.

**9 Sungei Rd Thieves Market** Near the end of Jalan Besar duck into the **Sungei Rd Thieves Market** (p112) next to Sim Lim Tower, an arresting jumble of wares sold by anybody from fashionable students, gnarled old Hokkien 'uncles' and some of Singapore's homeless.

**10 Abdul Gaffoor Mosque** Back on Jalan Besar, turn right on to Mayo St to view the Abdul Gaffoor Mosque. An intriguing blend of Arab and Victorian architecture, it was declared a national monument in 1979.



**11 Fortune-tellers** From here, spend some time exploring the atmospheric back streets, which bear the names of imperial India, such as Clive, Hastings and Campbell. This is the beating heart of Little India, with all manner of colourful shops and street life. At the Serangoon Rd end of Dunlop St you'll find fortune-tellers, who use birds to pick your fortune (though bear in mind that some people say these birds are not treated well). Campbell St is something of a tourist strip, lined with shops selling souvenirs, crafts and 'antiques'. You will also find a few garland-makers scenting the air with their jasmine flowers.

### WALK FACTS

- Start** Little India MRT station
- End** Little India MRT station
- Distance** 2.5km
- Time** Two hours
- Ease** Moderate
- Fuel stops** Tekka Centre or Dunlop St

**12 Little India Arcade** Finish up at the Little India Arcade, a block of renovated shophouses containing various shops selling spices, Ayurvedic remedies, textiles, tapes, brassware, homeware and souvenirs.

## ORCHARD ROAD

Drinking & Nightlife [p145](#); Eating [p130](#); Shopping [p112](#); Sleeping [p169](#)

Singapore's wall-to-wall consumerist nirvana is an assault on your senses – and your wallet. Faced with this immense stretch of towering malls, some will scream with delight, others will run screaming. From quirky, rundown Lucky Plaza to the imposing chocolate-coloured marble edifice of Ngee Ann City and the chic, exclusive grey of Paragon, it's possible to spend days here and never visit the same mall twice. Trees that shade the ever-present crowds are almost the only reminder that this area was, in the 19th century, an orchard lined with nutmeg and pepper plantations. However, between the five-star hotels and hulking shrines to materialism, a few architectural relics from this time remain.

When you've had your fill of the shops and chilly air-conditioning, escape is close to hand with the serene Singapore Botanic Gardens a short bus ride from the west end of the road.

### CUPPAGE TERRACE & EMERALD HILL [Map pp74–5](#)

Cuppage Rd;  Somerset

Named after William Cuppage, who was the 19th-century owner of the nutmeg estate here, Cuppage Tce, a renovated terrace of Peranakan-style shophouses dating from the 1920s, is overwhelmed by the surrounding shopping malls and hotels. Most of the terrace is given over to bars and restaurants, as is the Orchard Rd end of Emerald Hill.

Take some time out, though, to wander up from pedestrianised Peranakan PI to Emerald Hill Rd, where some fine terrace houses remain; the quiet atmosphere feels a million miles from bustling Orchard Rd. Check out Nos 39 to 45, built in 1903 with an unusually wide frontage and a grand Chinese-style entrance gate, and the art deco-style houses Nos 121 to 129, dating from 1925.

### ISTANA [Map pp74–5](#)

 6737 5522; [www.istana.gov.sg](http://www.istana.gov.sg);

 Dhoby Ghaut

Home of Singapore's president, the Istana was built between 1867 and 1869 as Government House, a neoclassical monument to British rule. Public works were never a high priority in laissez-faire colonial Singapore, but the need to impress the visiting Duke of Edinburgh convinced the island's Legislative Council to approve the building's huge budget. The actual construction – stonemasonry, plumbing, carpentry, painting and stone-cutting – was done by Indian convicts transported from Bencoolen on Sumatra.

The Istana is situated approximately 750m back from the road in beautifully maintained grounds including a nine-hole golf course and terraced garden. Most of the time the closest you are likely to get to it are the well-guarded gates on Orchard Rd, it's open to the public on selected public holidays – call or check the website for details. If you are lucky enough to be in Singapore on one of these occasions,

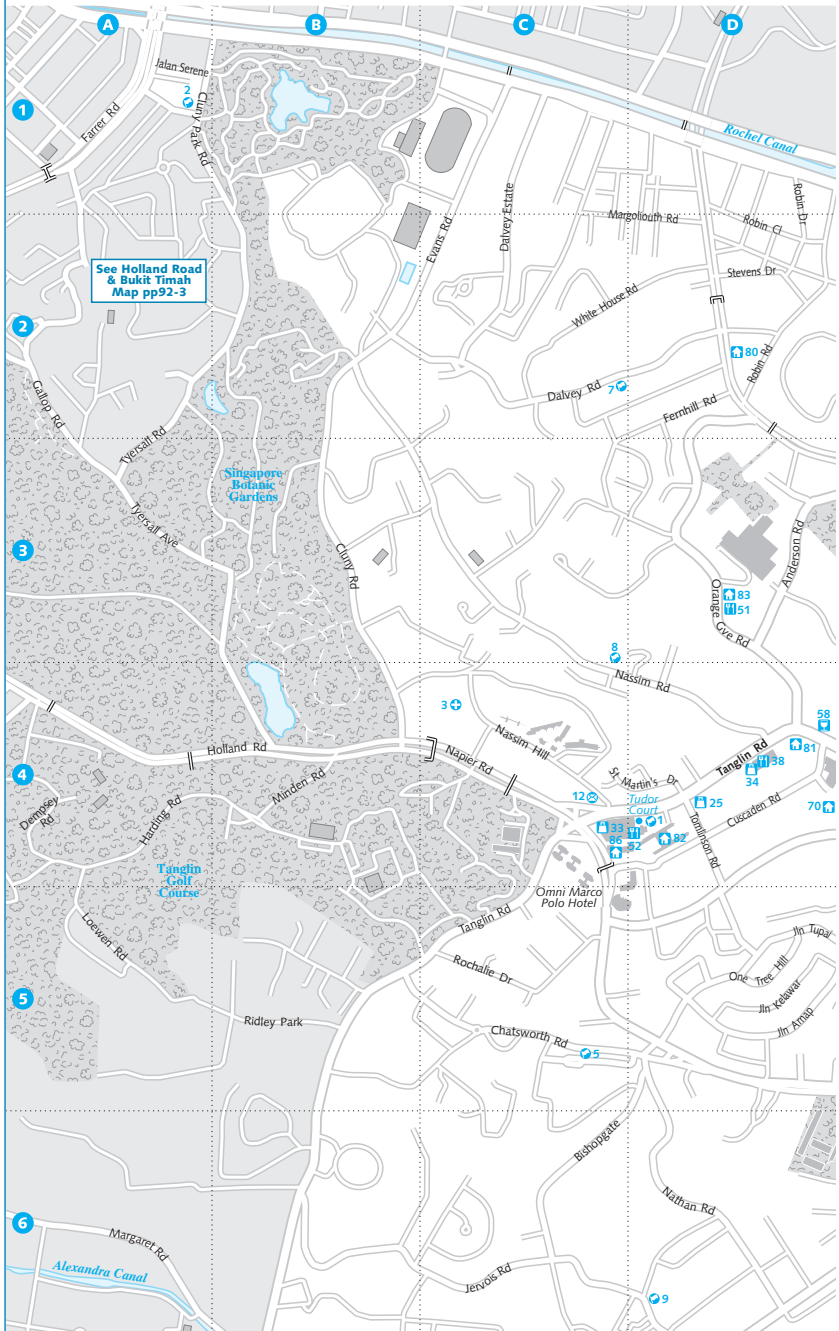
### THE KING & 'EYESORE'

It's a question many visitors to the blissfully quiet and efficient Royal Thai Embassy on Orchard Rd quietly ask themselves. What on earth is it doing here? An ageing house that some consider an eyesore (we love it), surrounded by a lush compound on a prime spot on one of the most expensive real estate strips in Singapore? And why hasn't the Thai government sold the plot for the fortune it's undoubtedly worth?

The answer lies in history. The plot was bought for Thailand in 1893 for \$9000 by the revered King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V), whose picture, as most visitors to Thailand will know, is hung in virtually every house and building in the country.

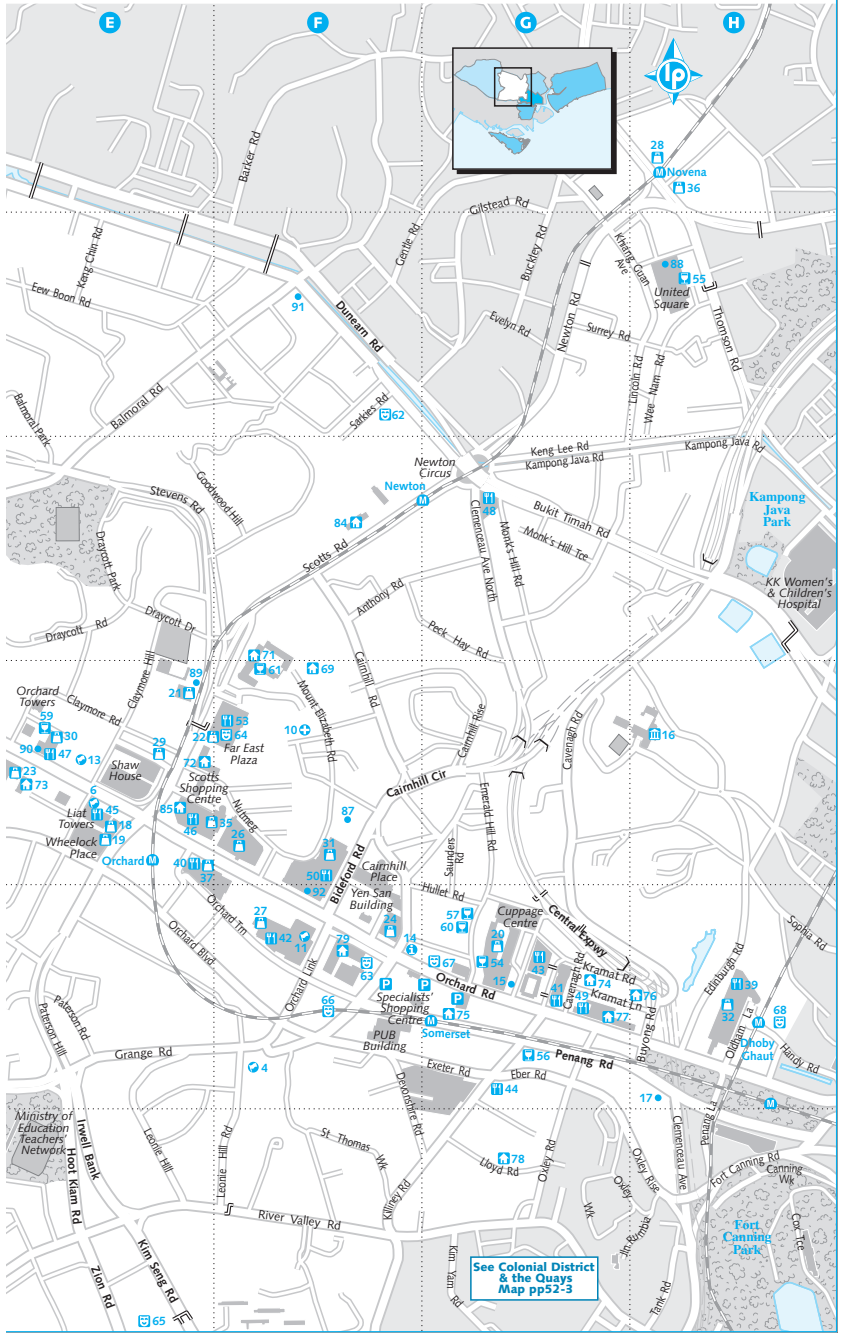
There has been talk of developing the embassy site for decades. The Thai government was reportedly offered \$139 million for the plot in the late '90s, but turned the offer down. Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra revived the idea of developing the site in 2003, but nothing has happened as yet, and since selling the plot would be seen as an affront to the great monarch's memory, it's likely to remain a delightful peculiarity for some time to come.

# ORCHARD ROAD





0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles



See Colonial District & the Quays Map pp52-3

NEIGHBOURHOODS ORCHARD ROAD

## ORCHARD ROAD

### INFORMATION

Chinese Embassy.....	1 D4
French Embassy.....	2 A1
Gleneagles Hospital.....	3 C4
Indian High Commission.....	4 F5
Indonesian Embassy.....	5 C5
Irish Embassy.....	6 E4
Israel Embassy.....	7 C2
Japanese Embassy.....	8 C3
Malaysian High Commission.....	9 D6
Mt Elizabeth Hospital.....	10 F4
New Zealand Embassy.....	11 F5
Post Office.....	12 C4
Royal Thai Embassy.....	13 E4
Singapore Visitors @ Orchard.....	14 F5

### SIGHTS

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Cuppage Terrace.....	15 G5
Istana.....	16 H4
Tan Yeok Nee House.....	17 H5

### SHOPPING

(pp103-16)

Apple Centre.....	18 E4
Borders.....	19 E4
Centrepoint.....	20 G5
DFS Galleria.....	21 E4
Far East Plaza.....	22 E4
Forum - The Shopping Mall.....	23 E4
HMV.....	(see 24)
Heeren.....	24 F5
Isetan.....	(see 37)
Jazmin Asian Arts.....	25 D4
Kinokuniya.....	(see 27)
Loft.....	(see 20)
Lucky Plaza.....	26 F4
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Novena Square.....	28 H1
Opera Gallery.....	(see 27)
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Palais Renaissance.....	30 E4
Paragon.....	31 F4
Plaza Singapura.....	32 H5
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### EATING

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Din Tai Fung.....	(see 50)
Food Republic.....	40 E4
Gordon Grill.....	(see 71)
Hachi.....	41 G5
Imperial Treasure Nan Bei Kitchen.....	42 F5
Izakaya Nijumaru.....	43 G5
Killiney Kopitiam.....	44 G5
Lingzhi Vegetarian.....	45 E4
Lingzhi Vegetarian.....	(see 28)
Lucky Prata.....	46 E4
Marmalade Pantry.....	47 E4
Newton Circus Hawker Centre.....	48 G3
Nogawa.....	49 G5
Projectshop Café.....	50 F4
Shang Palace.....	51 D3
Tanglin Mall Food Junction.....	52 D4
Top of the M.....	(see 79)
Wasabi Tei.....	53 F4

### DRINKING

#### & NIGHTLIFE

(pp139-48)

3-Monkeys.....	(see 59)
Alley Bar.....	54 G5
Brauhaus Restaurant & Pub.....	55 H2
Downunder Bar.....	(see 59)
Dubliners.....	56 G5
Ice Cold Beer.....	57 G5
Muddy Murphy's.....	58 D4
Orchard Towers.....	59 E4
Que Pasa.....	60 G5
Thumper Bar.....	61 F4

### ARTS & LEISURE

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Alliance Française.....	62 F2
CalendarOne TicketCharge.....	(see 23)
Cathay Cineleisure Orchard.....	63 F5
Exotic Tattoo.....	64 F4
Golden Village Cinemas.....	65 E6
Kenko.....	(see 33)
Lido Cinema.....	(see 24)
National Youth Centre Skate Park.....	66 F5
Ngee Ann Foot Reflexology.....	67 G5
Picture House Movie Theatre.....	68 H5
Plaza Singapura Cinema.....	(see 32)

### SLEEPING

(pp159-74)

Elizabeth.....	69 F4
Four Seasons Hotel.....	70 D4
Goodwood Park Hotel.....	71 F3
Grand Hyatt Singapore.....	72 E4
Hilton International.....	73 E4
Hotel Grand Central.....	74 G5
Hotel Phoenix.....	75 G5
Hotel Supreme.....	76 H5
Le Meridien Singapore.....	77 G5
Lloyd's Inn.....	78 G6
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take your passport and join the queues to get in.

If you happen to be in the area on the first Sunday of any given month, the

Changing of the Guard parade happens in the evening on this day.

## TRANSPORT: ORCHARD ROAD

Orchard Rd is important enough to have three MRT stations: Orchard MRT at the western end, Somerset in the centre and Dhoby Ghaut at the eastern end. (Believe it or not, some Singaporeans do take the train between them rather than walk.) Dhoby Ghaut is an important MRT junction, from which trains fan off to City Hall and Raffles Pl (Colonial District), Little India, Clarke Quay and Chinatown. Buses from Orchard Rd and Scotts Rd also fan out across the island.

## TAN YEOK NEE HOUSE

Map pp74-5

207 Clemenceau Ave;  
Dhoby Ghaut

Near Orchard Rd, on the corner of Penang Rd, Tan Yeok Nee House was built in 1885 as the townhouse of a prosperous merchant, and is the sole surviving example in Singapore of a traditional Chinese mansion. Today it's part of the Asian campus of the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, but you can still admire its fine roof decoration from outside.

## EASTERN SINGAPORE

Drinking & Nightlife [p147](#); Eating [p132](#); Shopping [p115](#); Sleeping [p171](#)

Though comprising a fair swath of the island, the neighbourhoods of the east receive far less attention from tourists than do those of the city centre. It's a shame, really, because whereas Chinatown is becoming a Disney-esque parody – existing mostly as a museum piece for tourists – the neighbourhoods of the east are vibrant, alive and, on the whole, more reflective of Singapore culture, both today and of days past.

Eastern Singapore is where you'll find the Geylang district (at once notorious and spiritual); Katong (also known as Joo Chiat), a picturesque neighbourhood of multicoloured shophouses that, in recent years, has come into its own as the spiritual heartland of Singapore's Peranakan people; and Changi, the city's easternmost region.

Stretching for several kilometres along the seafloor, from the city right up to Tanah Merah, is East Coast Park, whose well-paved waterfront paths offer many kilometres of skating and bicycling, as well as numerous spots for eating and drinking.

### GEYLANG

Though the very name Geylang is synonymous in Singapore with the flesh trade, there's more to this neighbourhood than meets the eye. Yes, what you may have heard about this district being an open-air meat market filled with a Dante-esque assortment of brothels, girlie bars, cheap hotels and alley after alley lined with prostitutes from all over Southeast Asia is all true. Yet strange as it may seem, the area is also one of the Lion City's spiritual hubs, with huge temples and mosques, and picturesque alleys dotted with religious schools, shrines and temples.

Geylang borders the Katong/Joo Chiat district, with Paya Leber Rd being the marker.

#### AMITABHA BUDDHIST CENTRE

Map [p80](#)

☎ 6745 8547; [www.fpmtabc.org](http://www.fpmtabc.org); 44 Lorong 25A; ☎ 10am-9pm; 📍 Aljunied

This seven-storey Tibetan Buddhist centre holds classes on dharma and meditation (check its website for the schedule), as well as events during religious festivals. The upstairs meditation hall, swathed in red-and-

gold cloth, is open to the public and filled with beautiful statues and other objects of devotion. In addition to being involved with community outreach, the centre also operates a store selling religious and spiritual items such as prayer flags, spinning wheels, and other items associated with Tibetan Buddhism.

Around the corner from Amitaba over a large fruit-stand selling durians is the **Sakyamuni Dharma Centre** (☎ 6745 5900; Level 3, 270-B Sims Ave; ☎ 10am-9pm). Much smaller than Amitaba, this centre has a meditation hall, and welcomes people wishing to learn about Tibetan Buddhism.

#### PU JI SI BUDDHIST RESEARCH CENTRE

Map [p80](#)

☎ 6746 6211; [www.pujisi.org.sg](http://www.pujisi.org.sg); 39 Lorong 12; 📍 Aljunied

Inside this fantastic four-storey building, which is part educational facility, part house of worship, visitors will find meditation halls, Buddhist libraries filled with books and scripture, and a seeming endless well of serenity. Take the elevator up for a sit by the fountain in the rooftop statue

### THE LURE & LORE OF GEYLANG'S LORONGS

True enough, Geylang is known as a red-light district; still, the vast majority of Geylang's unsavoury trade takes place west of Aljunied Rd. A daytime stroll through the *lorongs* (alleys) that run north to south between Sims Ave and Geylang road offers surprising charm for those who take the time to look.

Several pretty side-streets well worth checking out include tree-lined Lorong 27, a small street chock-a-block with colourful shrines and temples. Picturesque Lorong 24A is lined with renovated shophouses, from which the sounds of chanting often emerge; this is because many of these houses have actually been taken over by numerous smaller Buddhist associations in the area. Gorgeous Lorong 34 boasts both restored and unrestored shophouses painted in varying hues, as well as a number of colourful shrines and braziers for burning incense. One house on the street even boasts a street-side bamboo garden.

## TRANSPORT: EASTERN SINGAPORE

Compared to the city centre, eastern Singapore isn't particularly well served by the MRT network; Aljunied is the closest MRT station to Geylang, and Paya Lebar takes you into the northern end of Joo Chiat. For this reason, buses can be a better bet.

Buses 33 and 16 run into the centre of Joo Chiat after passing through Geylang, while 14 goes from Orchard Rd to East Coast Rd. To and from the Colonial District, buses 12 and 32 head into the city along North Bridge Rd.

To get to East Coast Park, you can get bus 401 from Bedok MRT station, but only on weekends. At other times, you'll be forced to take a taxi (an increasingly expensive proposition, especially at night), or walk from East Coast Rd.

garden. Breathe in the air of serenity while pondering the eternal. Across the street from the centre sits a nameless jungle park for postmeditation contemplation.

## KATONG/JOO CHIAT

The heart of Singapore's re-emerging Peranakan culture, the Joo Chiat area runs roughly southeast from the Paya Lebar MRT station over to Still Rd in the west and East Coast Park to the south. The heart of the neighbourhood is Joo Chiat Rd, which has a host of restaurants, daytime businesses, clubs and bars. What makes the neighbourhood truly worth exploring are the myriad renovated Peranakan-style terrace shophouses, which exist on both Joo Chiat Rd and on side-streets throughout the neighbourhood, as well as a number of temples (Chinese and Indian), mosques, and other landmarks that will give visitors a taste of old Singapore. Joo Chiat is also home to the Geylang Serai wet market.

Joo Chiat Rd runs into East Coast Rd, also noted for its Peranakan influence, mostly because of the opportunity to sample Peranakan food (also known as Nonya cuisine). The alleyways to the west of Joo Chiat along East Coast Rd are particularly good for exploration. Joo Chiat Rd itself has something of a red-light reputation, but this is felt primarily only at night, and only on the stretch containing bars between Koon Seng Rd and Joo Chiat Pl.

## GEYLANG SERAI WET MARKET

Map p80

Geylang Serai;  Paya Lebar

Hidden behind some older-style housing blocks on Geylang Rd, this is a bustling and traditional Southeast Asian market, crammed with stalls selling food, fabrics and other wares. Some say that its continued existence defies the odds: as

real-estate prices in the area skyrocket the trend seems to lean towards tearing down older shopping areas and replacing them with more 'Disney-esque' areas such as the nearby (and thoroughly avoidable) Malay Cultural Village. The market reaches its peak of activity during Ramadan, when the whole area is alive with evening market stalls. Just north of the market is a strip of park (next to the elevated MRT) where you can eat your durian in peace.

## CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Map p80

6 Chapel Rd;  Eunos

With its gracefully curving roof, stained glass and gleaming white edifice, this Catholic church displays an interesting mixture of Western and Asian architecture. Though not the original building (the original chapel on this spot was built in 1923, though the origins of the congregation go back further), the edifice is worth a look. Keep an eye out for the unusual stained-glass window featuring the image of a 16-pointed star over the altar.

## KATONG ANTIQUE HOUSE

Map p80

 6345 8544; 208 East Coast Rd;  Eunos

Part shop, part museum, the Katong Antique House is a labour of love for Peter Wee. A lifelong resident of the area, Peter displays (and occasionally sells) Peranakan antiques, artefacts, and other *objects d'art*. A noted repository of Peranakan history and culture, Peter will happily regale you with tales as you browse.

## SRI SENPAGA VINAYAGAR TEMPLE

Map p80

19 Ceylon Rd;  Paya Lebar

Easily among the most beautiful Hindu temples in Singapore, Sri Senpaga

Vinayagar is also probably the most visitor-friendly as well, thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers who've made sure that all of the temple's devotional art is labelled in a number of languages. The temple has a number of unique features that make it well worth a visit even if you weren't in the neighbourhood already, especially the *kamalapaatham*, a specially sculptured granite foot-stone found in certain ancient Hindu temples. The roof of the inner sanctum sanctorum is covered in gold.

### KUAN IM TING TEMPLE Map p80

**cnr Tembeling Rd & Joo Chiat Lane; M Paya Lebar**  
A beautiful temple dedicated to Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy, this Buddhist temple is home to many festivals throughout the year. Of particular interest to temple-lovers is the ornate roof ridges, adorned with dancing dragons and other symbols important to worshippers of the goddess.

### PERANAKAN TERRACE HOUSES

Map p80

**Koon Seng Rd; M Paya Lebar**  
Just off Joo Chiat Rd you'll find some of the finest Peranakan terrace houses in Singapore. Exhibiting the typical Peranakan love of ornate design, they are decorated with stucco dragons, birds, crabs and brilliantly glazed tiles. *Pintu pagar* (swinging doors) at the front of the houses are another typical feature, allowing in breezes while retaining privacy. (For background information on the Peranakan people, see p29.)

## EAST COAST PARK

This 11km stretch of seafront park is where Singaporeans come to swim, windsurf, kayak, picnic, bicycle, rollerblade and, of course, eat. The whole park has been superbly designed so that the many leisure facilities don't crowd the green space. In this single, narrow strip, there are several bird sanctuaries, patches of unmanaged bushland, golf driving ranges, tennis courts, a resort, Playground@Big Splash (not a water park, but a family-themed playground), several ponds and a lagoon, sea sports clubs, hawk centres, and some excellent bars and restaurants.

Renting a bicycle or rollerblades and gently pedalling from one end to the other, enjoying the sea breezes, watching the veritable city of container ships out in the strait and capping it off with a meal and a few beachfront beers is one of the most pleasant ways to spend a Singapore afternoon.

The East Coast Park starts at the end of Tanjong Katong Rd in Katong and ends at the National Sailing Centre in Bedok, which is actually near the Tanah Merah MRT station. At the western end of the park, the bicycle track continues right through to Geylang, ending at the Kalang River.

### MARINE COVE RECREATION CENTRE

Map p80

**East Coast Park Service Rd; 401 from M Bedok (weekends only), taxi from M Bedok (\$4-5) or the city (\$8) on weekdays**

Midway along the park, near the end of Still Rd South, this outdoor leisure complex has tenpin bowling, squash, crazy golf and a large selection of restaurants, food stalls and bars, plus a McDonald's (Singapore's only one with a skate-through window). On the beach side of the complex there are a couple of bicycle and rollerblade rental stations and a kayak and sailboat rental place on the beach itself.

## CHANGI & PASIR RIS

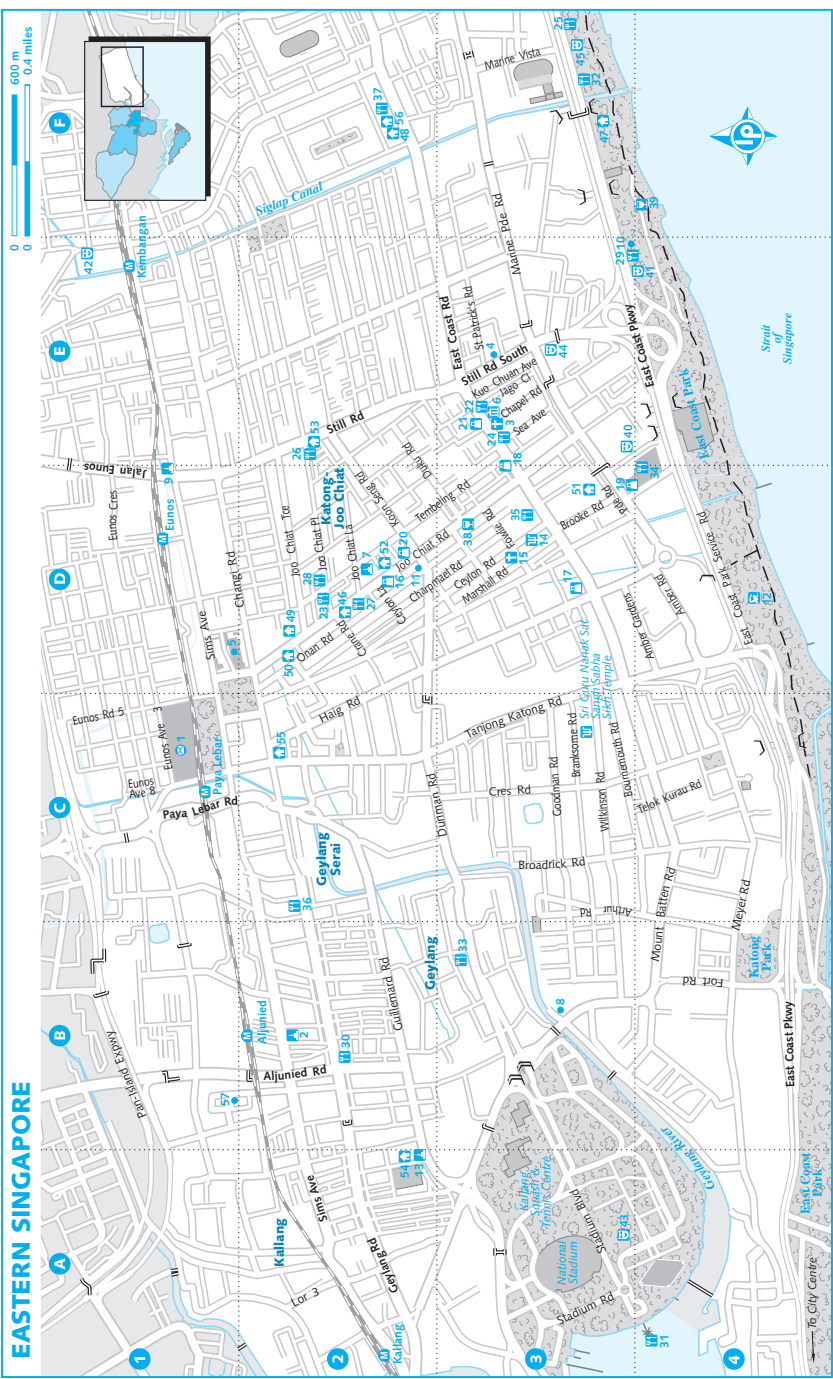
These 'remote' neighbourhoods at the extreme east of the island were once dominated by Malay kampong (villages). While the stilted houses are long gone, replaced by modern housing estates and reclamation projects, the area, particularly Pasir Ris, still has a pleasant atmosphere, with manicured lawns, Ma-and-Pa stores and attractive seafront parks. Here's where you'll find the moving Changi Prison Museum & Chapel site, a

### TRANSPORT: CHANGI & PASIR RIS

Pasir Ris is easily reachable by MRT – it's at the end of the East West Line. From the station, all the attractions are within easy walking distance. To get to Changi, get off the train at Tanah Merah MRT station and hop on bus 2, which will take you to both the Changi Chapel and Changi Village, which is the end of the line.

A taxi from the city to either area costs approximately \$15.

# EASTERN SINGAPORE



## EASTERN SINGAPORE

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few resorts and theme parks for the kids, a sprinkling of malls and the giant space-age Expo centre.

At Changi Village you'll also find the ferry terminal for bumboats to Pulau Ubin (p176) and Johor in Malaysia.

## CHANGI PRISON MUSEUM & CHAPEL

Map pp46–7

☎ 6214 2451; www.changimuseum.com;  
 1000 Upper Changi Rd North; admission free;  
 🕒 9.30am–5pm; 🚗 2

A steady stream of visitors makes its way to this quiet, moving museum commemorating the Allied POWs who were captured and imprisoned and suffered horrific treatment at the hands of the invading Japanese forces during WWII. It was shifted from the original Changi prison site in 2001 when Singapore Prisons reclaimed the land to expand its operations.

Former POWs, veterans and historians will feel the loss of the actual site most keenly, but to the architects' credit the understated design of the new building is well suited to its dual role as a shrine and history museum. The square white facade is reminiscent of a concrete bunker, yet the greenery hints at healing and renewal. The gaping entrance and open plan suggest accessibility. The museum's centrepiece is a replica of the original Changi Chapel built by inmates as a focus

for worship and presumably as a sign of solidarity. Tucked into the walls beside the altar, with its cross made of ammunition casings, are little mementos left by visitors – white crosses, red poppies, fresh flowers and handwritten notes. Services are held on Sundays (at 9.30am and 5.30pm), but the shadeless courtyard heats up like an oven.

Bus 2 from Victoria St or Tanah Merah MRT station will take you past the entrance. Get off at bus stop B09, just after the Changi Heights condominium. The bus terminates at Changi Village.

## LOYANG TUA PEK KONG TEMPLE

Map pp46–7

20 Loyang Way; admission free;  
 🚗 9 from 🏠 Bedok

The embodiment of the Singaporean approach to spirituality, this temple hosts three religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, under one vast roof. There's even a shrine devoted to Datuk Kung, a saint of Malay mysticism and Chinese Taoist practices. This temple is new and grand with large handcrafted wooden carvings, swirling dragons on large granite pillars and hundreds of colourful effigies of deities, gods and saints. It's a bit off the beaten path, but worth the trip. Get off bus 9 at the Loyang Valley condominium.

**CHANGI VILLAGE** Map pp46–7

On the far northeast coast of Singapore, Changi Village is an escape from the hub-bub of central Singapore. The buildings are modern (although there are some interesting old 'black-and-white' bungalows along Loyang Ave), but there's still a village atmosphere, with the lively and quite renowned hawkers centre next to the bus terminus being a focal point. There's a small, attractive beachfront camp site across the Changi Creek from the bus terminal, where you can watch the planes gliding into Changi airport while relax-

ing on the imported sand. It's popular on weekends but almost deserted during the week. You might want to avoid swimming here, though. Changi's beach is where thousands of Singaporean civilians were executed by the Japanese during WWII. A memorial marks the site.

Next to the bus terminal is the Changi Point Ferry Terminal, where you can catch bumboats to [Pulau Ubin \(p176\)](#) or [Johor \(p180\)](#).

**PASIR RIS PARK** Map pp46–7

Pasir Ris Dr 3; Pasir Ris

Stretching along a couple of kilometres of the northeast coast, a short walk from

**TO BE PERANAKAN MEANS TO BE ACCEPTED AS A LOCAL** *Peter Wee*

The word Peranakan originated during British colonial times, around 1825, when settlement began in Malacca, Penang and Singapore. To understand what the term Peranakan means, you need to start with the Straits Chinese. Peranakan culture is really the interfusion between local people and Chinese traders. When the traders of China first came to Malacca in 1500, they came down to trade and intermingled with local inhabitants, forming communities of sorts. It was these Chinese traders, through intermingling with the local inhabitants, that gave birth to a new culture, the Peranakan.

Peranakan culture isn't found only in Singapore. Throughout coastal Indonesia and Malaysia you'll find other pockets of Peranakan culture. To some, Peranakan culture may seem very similar to traditional Chinese culture, which makes sense, as our culture is about 80% derived from Chinese culture. However, there are subtle differences, certainly in our traditions, the way we speak and, of course, in our culinary traditions. Many of these differences come from a combination of time and the other cultures that make up the Peranakan, both local Straits inhabitants and colonial – especially British – influence.

Increasingly, there seems to be an awakening cultural awareness among members of the younger generation in Singapore. One recent event sticks out. A young couple came to my shop while planning their wedding. The bride-to-be was shopping for a *kebaya*, a beautiful hand-embroidered outfit traditionally worn by Peranakan women. This struck me as odd, and I assumed that the choice of dress had been made by the parents. So I was surprised to learn that, in fact, the parents objected. They wanted to have a more modern wedding. But it was the young people themselves that chose to get married wearing the clothing of their past.

Most Peranakan tend to be Christian because of the influence of early missionaries – French, Dutch, Portuguese, and finally English – in the area. But Peranakan culture crosses religious boundaries. In 2008, there are Peranakans who are Muslims, others who maintain Buddhist traditions. The way we speak is itself unique, not quite a language in and of itself, but more like a *patois*, a mixture of Hokkien, Malay, English, with a tinge of Dutch, and even Portuguese. It's very unique to Malacca, Penang and Singapore, only found around here.

The Joo Chiat district derives its name from a famous Peranakan family. The main street is named after Chew Joo Chiat, who was a philanthropist in the late 19th century. Many of the original families have left, for various reasons, but some are returning. There is a lot of nostalgia for the area. We are trying to put it back together again, so that Joo Chiat can become what it once was.

Visitors to Singapore should take the time to visit the area to see the truly unique architecture that exists, especially the art deco shophouses of Koon Seng and Tembeling Rd. And of course, Joo Chiat is the place in Singapore to sample Peranakan cuisine. I always take friends out to try our *mee siam* (white thin noodles in a sourish and sweet gravy made with tamarind), laksa, and our traditional Peranakan dumplings. One Peranakan specialty is the *buah keluak*, a creamy, almost cacao like nut found in Indonesia.

There are Peranakan Indian, Peranakan Chinese, Peranakan Hokkien. Even Peranakan Eurasians. My great-great grandfather came from Malacca, but he traced his ancestry back to Xiamen (in China), and I am a Singaporean-born Peranakan. To be Peranakan means to be accepted as a local.

*Peter Wee, 62, is the owner and curator of the Katong Antique House in Joo Chiat, the heart of Singapore's Peranakan cultural renaissance. His shop, which is open only by invitation, offers a unique collection of textiles, porcelain, Peranakan furniture and spices. The shop also doubles as a kind of 'living museum' of local culture. Under the gaze of the portraits of four generations of Straits Peranakan, Peter spoke about Joo Chiat's renaissance, and Peranakan culture and identity.*



Pasir Ris MRT station, this peaceful place is the third-largest park in Singapore and certainly among the best. There's a surprising variety of attractions here, including a maze garden, adventure playground and sea fishing for kids; fish ponds; bicycle, rollerblade and kayak rentals; and a pristine 5-hectare mangrove swamp, complete with boardwalks and signboards describing the ecology of the area, and a large observation tower for bird-watchers.

## JOO CHIAT WALK

### Walking Tour

**1 Geylang Serai** From Paya Lebar MRT, head south by southwest to and through the bustling **Geylang Serai Wet Market** (p78), an excellent hawker centre and wet market with an accent on Malay food. Towards the back are a number of stalls selling clothing and surprising objets d'art. From the market, head down Joo Chiat Rd; if you aren't already full, sample snacks at any one of the many small restaurants that line the road.

**2 Kuan Im Ting Temple** Hang a left at Joo Chiat Lane and walk to the corner of

Tembeling Rd, where you'll find the beautiful **Kuan Im Ting Temple** (p79). The heart of Joo Chiat's Buddhist community, the temple features an ornate facade, including traditional circular windows surrounded by the symbols of the eight immortals. Check out the central prayer hall, dedicated to Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy.

**3 Koon Seng Road Shophouses** Walk south a block to Koon Seng Rd; while the whole street is filled with beautiful examples of Peranakan-style shophouses (p79), you'll find the most ornate of these on the strip between Tembeling and Joo Chiat Rd. You may notice a subtle difference in style between houses on either side of the street, with one side affecting a slightly more art deco facade; according to

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Paya Lebar MRT station

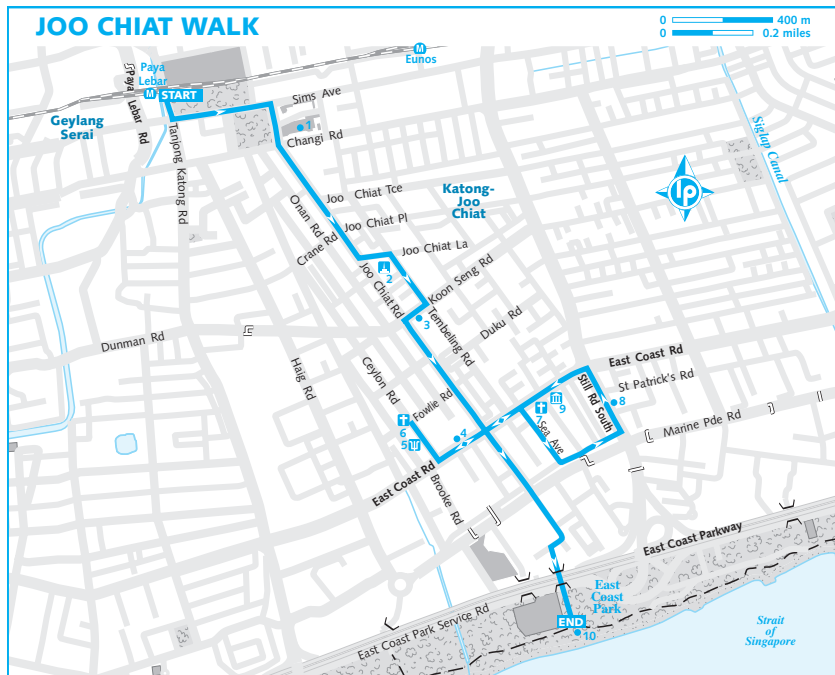
**End** East Coast Park

**Distance** 4km

**Time** Three hours

**Ease** Moderate

**Fuel stops** Nonya laksa stalls



# top picks

## MUST-TRY TOURS

- When it comes to selecting a guide to show you the sights and sounds of the Lion City, you won't find anyone more idiosyncratic than **Jeffery Tan** (☎ 9784 6848; <http://jefflimo.tripod.com/jefflimo.htm>). Known as 'Singapore's Singing Cabbie', Tan can croon in nine languages, and will happily serenade you in the language of your choice while showing you the city's attractions. A native Singaporean, Tan's tours include any sights that you'd like; he also does a food tour, ensuring that all your senses are stimulated. If you feel like singing along, Jeff can accommodate you: the limo is equipped with the latest in video karaoke systems.
- Operated by the amazing Tony Tan, owner of the Betel Box Hostel and expert on all things Singapore, a **Real Singapore Tour** (☎ 6247 7340; [www.betelbox.com](http://www.betelbox.com)) is one you won't soon forget. His food tours, a Singapore must-experience, generally start each Friday evening around six. Tony takes his charges on a veritable gastronomic odyssey through the historical Joo Chiat neighbourhood, where they sample over 20 authentic dishes from all over Southeast Asia. Other tours include walking or cycling trips focusing on history, nature and culture. Tony also leads an amazing pub crawl. Prices start at \$50 including food, equipment and the services of one of the most knowledgeable tour guides in Singapore.
- **Geraldene Lowe-Ahmad** (☎ 6737 5250; [geraldenestours@hotmail.com](mailto:geraldenestours@hotmail.com)) and **Diane Chua** (☎ 9489 1999; [dianachua1999@yahoo.com.sg](mailto:dianachua1999@yahoo.com.sg)) are the venerable dynamic duo of the Singapore guide scene, offering a wide variety of tours to suit all interests. Geraldene's knowledge of Singapore's history, cuisine, architecture, botany, ethnic diversity, religions and festivals is second to none. She also does amazing WWII tours, popular among veterans. Diane, in addition to cultural and historical tours, also specialises in more esoteric areas, such as excursions examining Singaporean feng shui, cemeteries and other less-examined facets of the Lion City. Both offer time-specific tours, taking advantage of various religious and cultural festivities. Tours can be conducted in English, Malay, Chinese, Italian or French.

locals, this reflects the style that happened to be in vogue during restoration.

**4 East Coast Road** Head south down Joo Chiat Rd and hang a right at East Coast Rd; this stretch is known for its great restaurants, particularly the Nonya laksa stalls on the corner of East Coast and Ceylon Rds. There are also some more fine shophouses along this stretch.

**5 Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple** Hang a left on Ceylon Rd. See that fantastically ornate Hindu Temple on the corner? That's the **Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple** (p78-9), and with multi-coloured scenes of Hindu myth and legend carved into the ceilings, it's even more beautiful on the inside. The temple is also a hub of activity, especially on weekdays. Volunteers will be glad to walk you through and explain the meaning behind the temple's overwhelming devotional art.

**6 St Hilda's Anglican Church** Right across Fowlie Rd from the temple sits St Hilda's Anglican Church; with its sloped, red-tiled roof and white walls, the church is as quaint as any you might find in the British Isles. The serene garden is a particularly nice spot to catch your breath.

**7 Church of the Holy Family** Head back south to East Coast Rd and turn left, crossing Joo Chiat Rd once more. Take a right at the next alley takes you down a pleasant cul-de-sac with a number of traditional terrace houses in various states of restoration. One block past this, in between Sea Ave and Chapel Rd, is the **Church of the Holy Family** (p78). A unique mixture of East and West, the Catholic church boasts a gracefully curving roof and an edifice so white it almost hurts the eyes. Of particular note is the stained-glass window featuring the image of a 16-pointed star over the altar.

**8 Former Grand Hotel** From the Church of the Holy Family, heading directly south will take you into a small park filled with trees, kids and folks walking their dogs. On the north end of the park you'll see a few bungalows, which, once upon a time, all had sea views (prior to the land reclamation that pushed the ocean south nearly half a mile). Hanging a left through the park will

take you to both wings of the Former Grand Hotel, built in 1917 and split in two with the creation of Still Rd. Though there are plans to renovate at least one wing of this Singaporean Grand Dame, currently both are vacant.

**9 Katong Antique House** Continue north on Still Rd and hang a left on East Coast Rd. On the south side of the street you'll find the [Katong Antique House \(p78\)](#), whose owner, Peter Wee, welcomes visitors who are interested

in local culture. See the interview with Peter on [p82](#).

**10 East Coast Park** From Peter's shop, you can head north on Joo Chiat Rd for some more wandering through Joo Chiat before heading back to the MRT at either Paya Leber or Eunos (both east of Geylang Serai). Heading south on Joo Chiat Rd takes you past Marine Parade Rd, south of which you'll find the lovely [East Coast Park \(p80\)](#), an excellent spot from which to watch the sun go down.

# NORTHERN & CENTRAL SINGAPORE

A short drive through the central and northern areas of the island is enough to dispel any notion of Singapore as a purely urban city. Yes, there is never-ending construction and land reclamation, but Singapore also has an astonishing variety of green spaces, from the many delightful city parks to large nature reserves and forests. Apart from Rio de Janeiro, it is the only city in the world that retains an area of primary rainforest, in the form of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Just 15 minutes from Orchard Rd, you could be standing next to a centuries-old tree surrounded by macaque monkeys and monitor lizards, with not a mall or high-rise apartment building in sight.

## CENTRAL CATCHMENT NATURE RESERVE Map pp46–7

🚌 162

Encompassing the MacRitchie and Lower and Upper Peirce Reservoir parks, this 2000-hectare area is Singapore's largest nature reserve. The area is criss-crossed by a series of trails, ranging from short boardwalks around the reservoirs to long treks through the forest. The most popular entry point to this precious wilderness is the MacRitchie Reservoir, a delightful, partly manicured park wrapped around the water's edge, where you can rent a kayak (see p157), and get a bite to eat at the small hilltop food centre overlooking the water and a bizarre zigzagging pontoon bridge. It's also the starting point for some fairly arduous forest walks (see p88). To get here, take bus 162 from Orchard Blvd or Scotts Rd, and or bus 157 from Toa Payoh MRT station, and get off at the reservoir entrance at the top of Thomson Rd.

## KONG MENG SAN PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY Map pp46–7

☎ 6453 4046; <http://kmspsks.org>; 88 Bright Hill Dr; 🕒 7am–6pm; 🚌 410

A fascinating couple of hours can be had exploring this monastery and temple complex, Singapore's largest. Founded in 1921, the monastery's main function is as a

crematorium, which is huge. There are also several monumental halls housing various guises of the Buddha. A highlight is the Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas, with its golden cone-shaped stupa lined on the inside with 9999 Buddha images – the 10,000th Buddha is the giant one inside the pagoda.

For a few weeks every year during April's **Qing Ming festival** (p17), the monastery swarms with Chinese families paying respect to their ancestors and cleaning their tombs.

Call in advance if you want to arrange a guided tour of the complex.

Free vegetarian meals are served in the refectory, but they are supposed to be for the needy, not tourists. On the 27th of each month an informal flea market is held in the monastery's grounds.

Opposite the monastery is Singapore's largest park, **Bishan Park**, the northern section of which is a beautiful, quiet spot with a series of linked ponds spanned by small wooden Japanese-style bridges, immaculately kept gardens and a delightful ornamental lily pond. An outdoor cafe called **Explorer Zone** is next to the park entrance north of the temple and is a perfect spot for a pond-side lunch or dinner.

Bus 410 runs here from behind the Junction 8 shopping centre above Bishan MRT station.

## KRANJI WAR MEMORIAL Map pp46–7

☎ 6269 6158; 9 Woodlands Rd; admission free; 🕒 24hr; 📍 Kranji or 🚌 170

Near the Causeway off Woodlands Rd, the Kranji War Memorial includes the graves of thousands of Allied troops who died in the region during WWII. The walls are inscribed with the names of 24,346 men and women, and registers, stored inside unlocked, weatherproof stands, are available for inspection. The memorial can be reached by bus 170 from Rochor Rd, or it's about 10 minutes' walk from Kranji MRT station.

## TRANSPORT: NORTHERN & CENTRAL SINGAPORE

Central Singapore is encircled by the North South Line of the MRT network and while none of the stops are particularly close to any of the nature reserves, they'll get you close enough to limit your taxi costs. The area is also threaded with expressways, which means getting there by taxi from the city is only a matter of minutes.

**MANDAI ORCHID GARDENS** Map pp46–7

☎ 6269 1036; [www.mandai.com.sg](http://www.mandai.com.sg); 200 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child \$2/0.50; 🕒 8.30am–5.30pm; 🚗 138 from **M** Ang Mo Kio

Singapore has a major business in cultivating orchids, and with four solid hectares of orchids, the Mandai Orchid Gardens, a short walk from the zoo (or one stop on bus 138), is one of the best places to see them, though nonenthusiasts might find there's little to hold their attention. You can arrange to have a gift box of fresh orchids flown to just about anywhere in the world. It's next to the [Singapore Zoo](#) (below).

**SINGAPORE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS & NIGHT SAFARI** Map pp46–7

☎ 6269 3411; [www.zoo.com.sg](http://www.zoo.com.sg); 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child \$16.50/8.50; 🕒 8.30am–6pm; 🚗 138 from **M** Ang Mo Kio

In the far north of the island, Singapore's world-class zoo has 3600 animals, representing 410 species including endangered white rhino, Bengal white tigers and even polar bears. Wherever possible, moats replace bars, and the zoo is beautifully spread out over 28 hectares of lush greenery beside the Upper Seletar Reservoir. As far as zoos go, this is one of the best. Some of the animal shows might be a little circuslike, such as the elephant rides and the sea lion performance, but most are magnificent – particularly the white tiger, elephant, crocodile and, best of all, baboon enclosures. Feeding times are well staggered to allow you to catch most of them as you walk around. There are trams (adult/child \$5/3) that can shuttle you around if it's too hot, or you're too lazy.

Next door, but completely separate from the zoo, is the acclaimed [Night Safari](#) (☎ 7269 3412; [www.nightsafari.com.sg](http://www.nightsafari.com.sg); adult/child \$22/11; 🕒 7.30pm–midnight), which many people count as the highlight of their trip to Singapore. This 40-hectare forested park allows you to view 120 different species of animals, including tigers, lions and leopards. In the darkness the moats and other barriers seem to melt away and it actually looks like these creatures could walk over and take a bite out of you. The atmosphere is heightened even further by the herds of strolling antelope, which often pass within inches of the electric trams that are available to take you around. For an even creepier experience, walk through the enclosed Mangrove

Walk, where bats flap around your head and dangle from trees a few feet above your head.

You are asked not to use a flash on your camera since it disturbs the animals and annoys fellow visitors.

# top picks

## FOR KIDS

Few Asian metropolises are as kid-friendly. There's so much for kids to do in Singapore that at the end of your trip you may have to drag the little ones screaming to the airport – unless, that is, it's the kids who are dragging you from Orchard Rd. The city packs in a huge number of family-friendly activities, with enough variety to please children of every temperament, as long as they can cope with the heat.

- [Singapore Zoological Gardens & Night Safari](#) (left) Hands-down the best zoo in Asia. Have breakfast with an orang-utan at the zoo, or combine a zoo visit and night safari trip.
- [Haw Par Villa](#) (p96) Though the graphic depictions of Buddhist hell might scare the little ones, this colourful and wonderfully weird theme park of Chinese culture scores high on both the educational and gross-out scale.
- [Singapore Science Centre](#) (p98) An amazing hands-on science museum; watch hydrogen balloons being blown up by lightning generated from a Tesla coil.
- [Singapore Flyer](#) (p156) Come on, how could the world's largest Ferris wheel fail to excite young and old alike?
- [East Coast Park](#) (p80) Rollerblade or bicycle along the lovely stretch of coastline that wraps around the island's southeast flank, stopping for sustenance with an ocean view in one of the park's restaurants, bars or food stalls.
- [Orchard Road malls](#) (p112) Check out the fabulous Christmas light displays from November to the end of December.
- [Singapore DUCK TOUR](#) (p198) Board the amphibious craft that tours the city streets before plunging into the harbour. Go on, you know you want to.
- [Bukit Timah](#) (p91), [MacRitchie Reservoir](#) (p88) or [Sungei Buloh](#) (p88) Introduce the kids to a bit of tropical nature at one of Singapore's reserves, where they can see cavorting monkeys and, if you're lucky, huge monitor lizards that'll scare them witless.
- [Dolphin Lagoon](#) (p102) Get up close to the impossibly cute pink dolphins.

As well as exploring the park on foot, it is worth taking the night-safari tram tour (adult/child \$6/3), which lasts about 45 minutes and also has a live commentary. Expect queues; it's very popular.

You can save a bit of money with a combined zoo and night safari ticket (adult/child \$30/15), but specify when you buy this whether you want to view both parks on the same day or different days. Both parks have plenty of decent food outlets (plus the usual junk) and the zoo boasts award-winning, clean and creatively designed 'outdoor' toilets!

When returning from the night safari you should catch a bus at around 10.45pm to ensure you make the last train leaving Ang Mo Kio at 11.28pm. A taxi to or from the city centre costs around \$15; there is a taxi stand at the zoo entrance, though queues are often long and taxis can be maddeningly infrequent.

## SIONG LIM TEMPLE & GARDENS

Map pp48–9

☎ 6259 6924; 184E Jalan Toa Payoh; 🕒 7am–5pm; 📍 Toa Payoh or 🚏 238

Nestled in a corner of the Toa Payoh HDB estate is Siong Lim Temple, also known as Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery (Twin Groves of the Lotus Mountain). The original buildings date from 1912 and the main hall is wonderfully atmospheric – a towering space stained by decades of incense smoke and perpetually buzzing with visitors. The adjoining complex of newer temples is also beautifully decorated and surrounded by neatly clipped bonsai. Sadly the ambience is disrupted by traffic thundering by on the expressway.

You can walk to the temple – it's about 1km east of Toa Payoh MRT station – or take one of several buses for three stops from Toa Payoh bus interchange.

## SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

Map pp48–9

☎ 6256 7377; www.wanqingyuan.com.sg/english; 12 Tai Gin Rd; admission \$3; 🕒 9am–5pm Tue–Sun, to 6pm Sat; 📍 Toa Payoh or 🚏 145

This national monument, built in the 1880s, was the headquarters of Dr Sun Yat Sen's Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in Southeast Asia, which led to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the creation of the first Chinese republic. Dr Sun Yat Sen briefly stayed in the house, which was donated to the Alliance by a wealthy Chinese businessman, while tour-

ing Asia to whip up support for the cause. It's a fine example of a colonial Victorian villa and houses a museum with items pertaining to Dr Sun's life and work. A magnificent 60m-long bronze relief depicting the defining moments in Singapore's history runs the length of one wall in the garden.

Next door is the **Sasanaramsi Burmese Buddhist Temple** (14 Tai Gin Rd; 🕒 6.30am–9pm), a towering building guarded by two *chinthas* (lionlike figures).

Bus 145 from the Toa Payoh bus interchange stops on Balestier Rd near the villa and temple.

## SUNGEI BULOH WETLAND RESERVE

Map pp46–7

☎ 6794 1401; www.sbw.org.sg; 301 Neo Tiew Cres; adult/child \$1/0.50; 🕒 7.30am–7pm Mon–Fri, 7am–7pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 925 TIBS from 📍 Kranji

This 87-hectare wetland nature reserve, situated in the far northwest of the island overlooking the Strait of Johor, is home to 140 species of birds, most of which are migratory. It has been formally declared a nature reserve by the government and recognised as a migratory bird sanctuary of international importance. From the visitor centre, with its well-presented displays, trails lead around ponds and mangrove swamps to small hides, where you can observe the birds and, sometimes, massive monitor lizards. The birdlife, rather than the walks, is the main reason to visit (the best time for viewing them is before 10am).

Free guided tours begin at 9am, 10am, 3pm and 4pm on Saturday. On other days, tours have to be pre-booked and cost \$50 per group, though it's claimed you need to book a month in advance. Audiovisual shows on the park's flora and fauna are held at 9am, 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm (hourly between 9am and 5pm on Sunday). Allow yourself three hours to do the park justice.

On weekdays, the bus stops at the carpark a 15-minute walk from the park. On weekends, the bus goes right to the park entrance.

## MACRITCHIE RESERVOIR NATURE WALK

### Walking Tour

**1 Lornie Rd bus stop** Take bus 157 from Toa Payoh MRT station, or bus 162 from Scotts Rd. Start at the bus stop on Lornie Rd and walk

up to the edge of the reservoir. Head right (anticlockwise) around the reservoir, past the kayak rental station until you reach a boardwalk going off to your left and a track going straight ahead. Take the track, which leads you on to the MacRitchie Nature Trail, or follow the boardwalk along the water's edge – looking out for terrapins or, if you're very lucky, a massive monitor lizard zipping through the water at remarkable speed. At various points along the boardwalk, you'll come across signs pointing you towards the nature trail; take one of these. If you haven't encountered them already, you'll see plenty of long-tailed macaques as you follow the 3km-long stretch along the northeast side of the reservoir. (Watch out: if you have food they can sometimes be aggressive, but generally they just ignore you. Don't look them in the eye!)

**2 Singapore Island Country Club** After about 3km of uninterrupted jungle, you'll emerge at the Singapore Island Country Club. Turn left and follow the signs to the Treetop Walk, which takes you alongside the huge, heavily protected tanks of the Kallang Service Reservoir.

**3 Ranger Station** After some twists and turns you'll eventually come to the Ranger Station and interpretation centre.

**4 Treetop Walk** From here it's a short walk to the wooden steps leading down to the Treetop Walk, a narrow 250m suspension bridge through the upper levels of the jungle canopy, affording excellent views (and apparently the odd snake encounter). Closed on Monday.

**5 Petaling Trail** On the other side, a boardwalk and a long series of steps up and down through some dense forest – known as the Petaling Trail – brings you out to a rest hut. (To shorten your walk to about 7km, turning left

## WALK FACTS

**Start** MacRitchie Reservoir Park

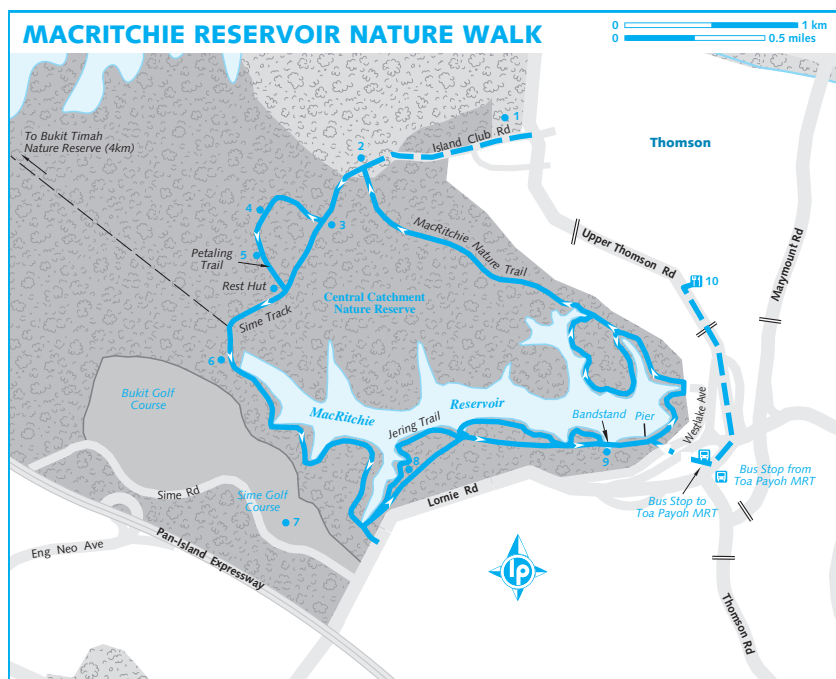
**End** MacRitchie Reservoir Park

**Distance** 12km

**Time** Four hours

**Ease** Difficult

**Fuel stop** Le P'tit Breton



from here will take you back to the Country Club, from where it's a 25-minute walk along Island Club Rd to Upper Thompson Rd.)

**6 Jelutong Tower** Turn right and follow the Sime Track, then Golf Link to the Jelutong Tower, an observation deck providing a good view over the trees to the reservoir.

**7 Sime Golf Course** After this you hit another boardwalk running downhill through jungle and alongside the Sime Golf Course, coming to a slightly unnerving and surreal sign describing the differences between crocodiles and monitor lizards. (In the event of a crocodile confrontation, we don't think there would be much doubt, but in any case be wary of any swishing in the water just beneath the boards!)

**8 Tombstone** After diverting away from the golf course and hugging the edge of the reservoir for about 1km, you'll hit the fairways

again for another 1km before reaching a junction. Follow the Jering Trail boardwalk left along the water's edge, looking out for a lone Chinese tombstone near the water's edge. It dates from 1876, but apparently no record exists of who is buried there. Not surprisingly, there are rumours of a 'water ghost' that haunts this area, dragging unsuspecting walkers to their doom.

**9 Zigzag bridge** Winding along the boardwalk, you'll emerge, finally, back into civilisation. Cross the bizarre zigzag bridge that adjoins the bandstand, where concerts are sometimes held at the weekend, and reward yourself with a drink and something to eat at the hilltop food centre.

**10 Le P'tit Breton** Or, if you still have energy, catch bus 162 one stop to Upper Thompson Rd and head to Le P'tit Breton for a French crêpe feast.



# HOLLAND ROAD & BUKIT TIMAH

Drinking & Nightlife (p146); Eating (p134); Shopping (p116)

Primarily residential, and overwhelmingly affluent, these two areas to the immediate west of the city centre are book-ended by two of Singapore's best-loved green spaces: the astoundingly beautiful Singapore Botanic Gardens and the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. The latter is a tiny patch of jungle offering a chance to see tropical birds, monkeys and other exotic wildlife (look, but don't touch, and for their sake and that of your bank account, don't feed the monkeys – fines for feeding them approaches the yearly GNPs of some emerging nations). Both of these places are absolute must-sees. After spending an afternoon strolling through manicured gardens or primary rainforest, take some time to visit some of the area's upscale restaurant strips like Holland Village, Greenwood Ave and Dempsey Rd, which, also known as Tanglin Village, offers great shopping, eating and drinking opportunities, and is pretty swank considering the site is a converted former army barracks. Holland Village has long been a favourite nightspot for Singapore's expatriate community, offering a number of excellent restaurants, bars and clubs. An evening out in any of these eating areas, not often visited by casual tourists, is a good way to get a real taste of Singapore.

## SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

Map pp92–3

☎ 6471 7361; [www.sbg.org.sg](http://www.sbg.org.sg); 1 Cluny Park Rd; admission free; ☎ 5am-midnight; M Orchard, then ☎ 7, 77, 123 or 174 from Orchard Blvd

You can't beat the botanic gardens as a spot to recover from your jet lag, have a picnic or just lie around forgetting you're in a large metropolis. Established around 1860 and covering 52 hectares, the gardens originally acted as a test ground for botanical research and potential cash crops, such as rubber. Today they still host a herbarium housing more than 600,000 botanical specimens and a library with archival materials dating back to the 16th century.

Visitors can enjoy manicured garden beds or explore a 4-hectare patch of 'original Singaporean jungle', a sample of the kind of forest that once covered the entire island – though [Bukit Timah Nature Reserve](#) (right) and [MacRitchie Reservoir](#) (p88) give a more accurate picture of that. Still, it's worth taking one of the rainforest tours. They usually cost \$15 for a group of up to 15 people, but call ahead because there are free tours at certain times.

Also don't miss the extraordinary [National Orchid Garden](#) (adult/child \$5/free; ☎ 8.30am–7pm), one of the world's largest orchid displays featuring over 60,000 of these delicate-looking but incredibly hardy plants, including the Vanda Miss Joaquim. This hybrid orchid, Singapore's national flower, was discovered in 1893 by Agnes Joaquim in her garden.

## BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE

Map pp46–7

☎ 1800 468 5736; [www.nparks.gov.sg](http://www.nparks.gov.sg); ☎ 8.30am–6pm; ☎ 65, 75, 170 or 171

The only area of primary forest remaining in Singapore, this 164-hectare nature reserve offers a range of nature walks, testing jungle treks and even mountain-bike trails. It's a haven for plants (one naturalist estimated there are more species here than in the whole of North America) and 160 species of animals. It also boasts the highest point on the island, Bukit Timah (163m), though the dense foliage doesn't afford much of a view.

The most popular and easiest walk in the park is along a paved road to the top of Bukit Timah. Even during the week it attracts a number of walkers, but few venture off the pavement to explore the side trails, which are more interesting. For a distinctly out-of-Singapore experience, try the North View, South View or Fern Valley paths.

## TRANSPORT: HOLLAND ROAD & BUKIT TIMAH

The area is poorly serviced by the MRT, the closest station to Holland Village being Buona Vista. Bus 174 runs from Eu Tong Sen St in Chinatown, along Orchard Rd and past the Botanic Gardens and Dempsey Rd, then turns off Holland Rd and runs the length of Bukit Timah Rd. Bus 170 runs from Little India all the way to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.

For Holland Rd, catch bus 7 from behind the Orchard MRT.

# HOLLAND ROAD & BUKIT TIMAH

## INFORMATION

- Australian High Commission.....1 H5
- British High Commission.....2 H5
- US Embassy.....3 H5

## SIGHTS

- Catholic Church of the Blessed Sacrament.....4 D6
- Holland Village.....(see 11)
- National Orchid Garden.....5 G4
- Singapore Botanic Gardens.....6 G5
- Sri Muneeswaran Hindu Temple.....7 D6

## SHOPPING

- Asiatique.....8 F5
- Eastern Discoveries.....9 F5
- Gastronomia.....10 D4
- Holland Road Shopping Centre.....11 D4
- Jones the Grocer.....12 F5

- Lim's.....(see 11)
- Pantry Magic.....13 D4
- Pasardina Fine Living.....(see 9)
- Shang Antiques.....(see 9)

## EATING

- Au Jardin.....14 G4
- CA\* California.....15 F5
- Cold Storage.....(see 11)
- Greenwood Fish Market & Bistro.....16 F1
- Halia.....17 G4
- Holland Village Market & Food Centre.....18 D4
- Island Creamery.....19 G2
- L'Estaminet.....20 F1
- Michelangelo's.....21 D4
- Monster Mash.....22 C4
- North Border Bar & Grill.....23 C5
- Original Sin.....24 D4

- PS Café.....25 F5
- Samy's Curry Restaurant.....26 G5
- Sebastien's Bistrot.....27 F1
- Shermay's Cooking School.....28 D4

## DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

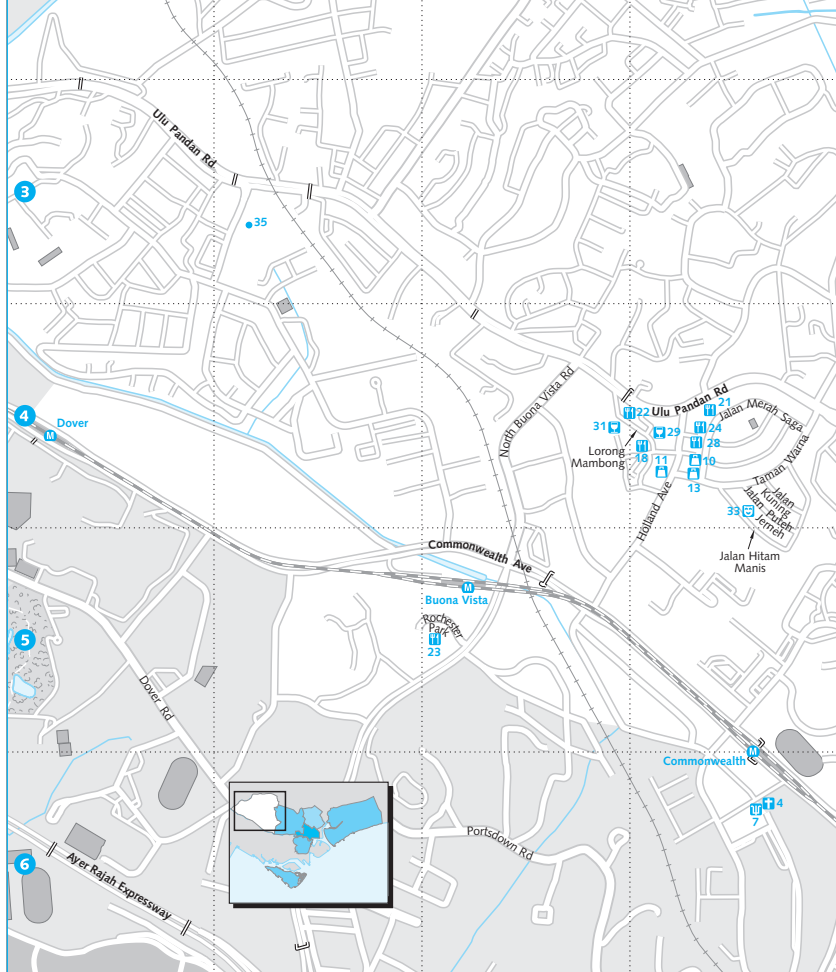
- 2am: Desert Bar.....29 D4
- Dempsey's Hut.....30 G5
- Wala Wala Cafe Bar.....31 C4
- Wine Network.....(see 30)

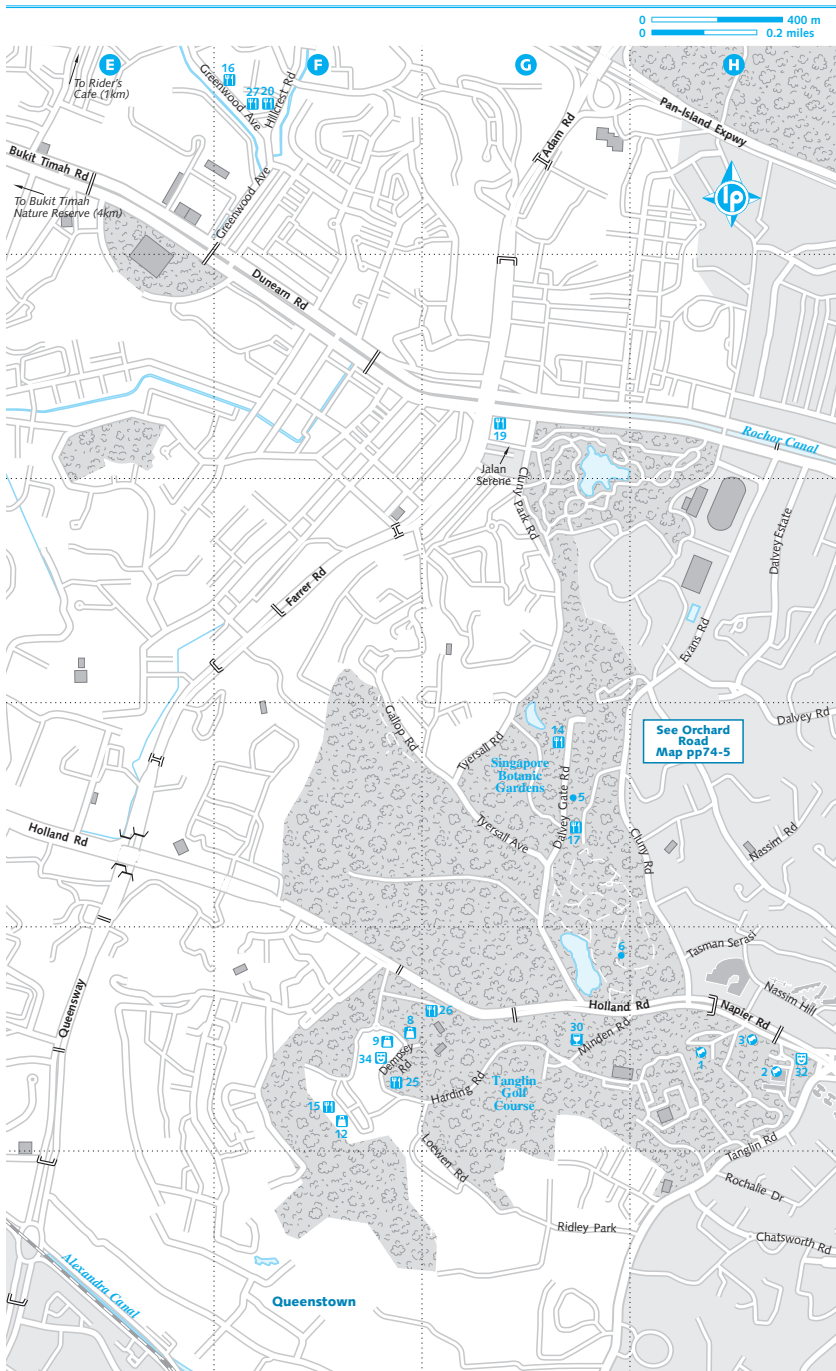
## ARTS & LEISURE

- British Council.....32 H5
- Keatna Patel Studio Gallery.....33 D4
- Red Sea Gallery.....34 F5

## TRANSPORT

- Trekology Bikes 3.....35 B3





## CHINESE TEMPLE FESTIVALS OF SINGAPORE

Anyone's trip to Singapore should include a visit to some of the Lion City's vibrant Chinese temples. Should your journey coincide with a temple festival, you'll be in for an amazing display indeed – not to mention the possibility of a free vegetarian meal.

Festivals are based on the Chinese Lunar Calendar, so you'll need to convert the dates into their Western-calendar equivalents using an online Western-to-Chinese date calculator. A good one is available at [www.chinesetools.eu/tools/chinesecalendar](http://www.chinesetools.eu/tools/chinesecalendar).

- Chinese New Year's Eve** Held on the 29th or 30th day of the 12th month, depending on the year. This is perhaps the most important Chinese holiday (think of Christmas in the West). Expect to breathe in temple air filled with incense burned to welcome in the lunar New Year. Some excellent spots to join the revelry include **Thian Hock Keng** (p61) on Telok Ayer St, **Wak Hai Cheng Bio** (p64) on Philip St and the **Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho** (Goddess of Mercy Temple; p69) on Waterloo St.
- Birthday of the Monkey God** Held on the 15th or 16th day of the first month. Beloved by many in Singapore, this religious celebration honours the birthday of T'se Tien Tai Seng Yeh, the Monkey God, who cures the sick and frees the hopeless. During the ceremony, mediums called Tan Kees perform miraculous feats, going into trances, piercing their cheeks and tongues with skewers and writing out charms in their own blood. This festival is celebrated at many temples throughout the city, including **Qi Tian Gong** (Monkey God Temple; Map pp62–3) in Tiong Bahru and **Poh An Keng** (Map pp46–7) on Tampines Rd.
- Birthday of Matsu** Held on the 23rd day of the third month. The birthday of the goddess of the sea, Matsu (sometimes spelled 'Mazu'), is a major cause for celebration for Taoists, especially those who live by the ocean. Expect processions, incense and celebrations galore. **Thian Hock Keng** (p61) on Telok Ayer St and **Wak Hai Cheng Beo** (p64) on Philip St both play host to worshippers on the goddess' birthday.
- Vesak Day** Held on the first full moon of the fourth lunar month. This important holiday celebrates three important events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, his enlightenment, and his attainment of nirvana. The flavour of this holiday will differ depending on which sect is celebrating it. The **Amitabha Buddhist Centre** (p77) in Geylang sponsors a huge tent festival in the park across the street; expect the air to be filled with incense and Tibetan chanting. Free vegetarian meals are also served.
- Hungry Ghost Festival** Held on the seventh lunar month. An important festival that incorporates various prayers and activities all over the island. The Chinese believe that during this month, the gates of hell are opened to free the hungry ghosts who then wander to seek food on Earth. If you're feeling spooked, remember that offering food to the deceased is believed to appease the spirits and ward off bad luck.
- Nine Emperor Gods Festivals** Held from the first to the ninth day of the ninth month. This is celebrated at many of the Taoist temples devoted to the nine Emperor Gods. During this festival, many temples of the nine Emperor Gods will be celebrating by going to the river or sea to welcome the gods on the eve of the first day and at a grand sending off on the night of the ninth day. In between, they do processions visiting fellow temples.

*Special thanks to local author and noted scholar of Chinese culture and religion Victor Yue, who was gracious enough to share his expertise on the Chinese temple festivals of Singapore. Victor recommends Margaret Chan's book Ritual Is Theatre, Theatre Is Ritual to anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of local Chinese popular religion. Victor's blog can be found at <http://chinesetemples.blogspot.com>.*

These involve some scrambling over rocks and tree roots and can be quite testing in parts.

Pick up a map of the park's trails from the visitor centre, where an exhibition details the various flora and fauna that can be found in the reserve. A small shop here sells drinks, snacks, guidebooks and the all-important mosquito repellent.

Bukit Timah has two tough mountain-bike trails, 6km in all, running around the edge of the nature reserve between Chestnut Ave and Rifle Range Rd. The trails cut

through jungle and abandoned quarry sites and are hilly in parts. There's also a bike trail running through the neighbouring Central Catchment Nature Reserve to the MacRitchie Reservoir, 6km east.

Several buses run close to the park, including buses 65 and 170 from Newton MRT, bus 75 from the CBD and Chinatown, and bus 171 from the YMCA on Orchard Rd or from Scotts Rd. Get off at the Bukit Timah Shopping Centre; the entrance to the park is about 1km north along Hind-hede Dr.

# SOUTHWEST SINGAPORE

## Eating (p136)

On the face of it, there's little to draw the visitor to this corner southwest of the city centre, bisected by the roaring Ayer-Rajah Expressway and flanked by Singapore's vast ports. Look a little closer, however, and you'll see several peaceful hilltop parks harbouring areas of historical interest, some unusual museums, the magnificently tasteless Haw Par Villa, plus the city's largest shopping mall VivoCity and newest entertainment centre, Golden Village Cinema.

## MT FABER PARK Map pp48–9

**cable car from**  HarbourFront

Off Kampong Bahru Rd, 116m-high Mt Faber forms the centrepiece of Mt Faber Park, one of the oldest parks in Singapore. The hillside slopes, covered with secondary rainforest, offer some fine views over the harbour and central Singapore, and on the hike up here you'll catch glimpses of colonial-era black-and-white bungalows and the strikingly stripy **Danish Seaman's Mission** built in 1909. It's a steep, sweaty walk to the top, so if this sounds unappealing, the **cable car** (☎ 6270 8855; adult/child \$8.90/3.90; 🕒 8.30am–9pm) might be a better option. It connects the World Trade Centre, next to HarbourFront MRT station, with the summit and Sentosa Island.

At and around the summit are a number of red-brick paths through manicured gardens, pavilions, look-out points and, beside the distinctly tacky souvenir shop, a cafeteria with fantastic views over the Singapore Strait and onward to the Indonesian Riau Islands. The Jewel Box, a glass-fronted dining and entertainment centre boasting a ballroom, look-out points and chairlifts is a particularly classy touch; even the toilets boast harbour views.

## NUS MUSEUMS Map pp48–9

☎ 6874 4616; [www.nus.edu.sg/museum/](http://www.nus.edu.sg/museum/); 50 Kent Ridge Cres; admission free; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Sat; 🚶 95 from  Buona Vista

On the campus of the National University of Singapore (NUS), these three small but exquisite art museums all hold fine collections. On the ground floor is the **Lee Kong Chian Art Museum** with works spanning 7000 years of Chinese culture, from ancient ceramics to modern paintings done in traditional style.

The concourse level houses the **South & Southeast Asian Gallery**, showing a mixture of art from across the region, including textiles and sculptures. On the top level is the **Ng Eng Teng Gallery**, which displays the

## TRANSPORT: SOUTHWEST SINGAPORE

Bus 408 from Harbourfront MRT runs along the main artery through the area.

paintings, drawings and sculptures of Ng Eng Teng (1934–2001), one of Singapore's foremost artists specialising in imaginative, sometimes surreal, depictions of the body.

While you're in the area, make time for the nearby **Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research** (☎ 6516 5082; <http://rmbn.nus.edu.sg>; admission free; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Fri), a small on-campus museum with top-notch exhibits on flora and fauna. There are stuffed and preserved examples of some rare and locally extinct creatures, including a tiger, a leopard, a huge elephant's leg bone, a slightly creepy preserved banded leaf monkey, a huge king cobra that, a few years back, made the mistake of slithering into the Singapore Country Club, a crocodile skull and a massive, frankly terrifying, Japanese spider crab.

## REFLECTIONS AT BUKIT CHANDU

Map pp48–9

☎ 6375 2510; [www.s1942.org.sg](http://www.s1942.org.sg); 31K Pepys Rd; admission \$2; 🕒 9am–5pm Tue–Sun; 🚶 10, 30, 51 or 143

Atop Bukit Chandu (Opium Hill) in Kent Ridge Park, this 'WWII interpretive centre' based in an old renovated villa is a worthwhile and moving memorial. Its focus is the brave sacrifice made by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Malay Regiment defending the hill in the Battle of Pasir Panjang when the Japanese invaded in 1942. The battalion was all but wiped out when, facing 13,000 Japanese soldiers, they decided to make a stand. Hi-tech displays, using films from the period and audio effects to transport you to the scene of the battle, are all quite evocative. It's also possible to hold

the kind of rifles and wear the heavy iron helmets those soldiers wore in the 'Hands-On' room.

The nearest bus stops are on Pasir Panjang Rd, from where it's a steep hike up the hill. A taxi from the nearest MRT station at Queenstown shouldn't cost more than \$6.

## LABRADOR SECRET TUNNELS

Map pp48–9

☎ 6339 6833; Labrador Villa Rd, Labrador Nature Reserve; adult/child \$8/5; 🕒 10am–7pm; 🚇 HarbourFront, then 🚏 408 Sat & Sun, taxi other days

This series of storage and armament bunkers built by the British in the 1880s remained undiscovered for 50 years after WWII, until it was unearthed when work began on turning Labrador Park into a nature reserve. There are small but fascinating displays of artefacts left behind when the British abandoned the tunnels in 1942, as well as the buckled and caved-in walls from a direct hit from a Japanese bomb.

## HAW PAR VILLA

Map pp48–9

☎ 6872 2780; 262 Pasir Panjang Rd; admission free; 🕒 9am–7pm; 🚏 200 from 🚇 Buona Vista, 🚏 10, 30 or 188 from 🚇 HarbourFront

Originally known as the Tiger Balm Gardens, this wonderfully weird (some might call it tacky) theme park was originally built by Aw Boon Par and Aw Boon Haw (the original

creators of the medicinal salve Tiger Balm) as a venue for teaching visitors about Chinese mythology. But how do you cram thousands of years of mythology into a mere theme-park? With statues, over a thousand of 'em, laid out lovingly (though sometimes chaotically) throughout the grounds.

The result is a visual barrage of folklore and fable, with dioramas depicting scenes from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Confucianism, and – everybody's favourite – a walk-through exhibit depicting the myriad gruesome torments that await sinners in the underworld. Called 'The Ten Courts of Hell', this last exhibit goes into great detail, visually cataloguing which afterlife punishments (impaling, freezing, being cast into fiery lakes) fit which crimes. The Ten Courts might scare the little ones; best leave them by the food court with a guardian, or perhaps beneath the watchful gaze of the nearby laughing Buddha.

Located on a hill on the grounds of the park, [Hua Song Museum](#) (☎ 6872 2780; adult/child \$8.50/5.40; 🕒 9am–6pm) offers visitors a glimpse into the lives, enterprises and adventures of Chinese migrants around the world. This indoor museum features beautifully laid out historical and cultural exhibits done in a more studious fashion than those in Haw Par Villa (which may account for its admission fee). Well worth it for those enchanted by Chinese history.

## JURONG & WESTERN SINGAPORE

Western Singapore is a mass of contradictions. It's the engine room of the country's economic success and home to the huge, if slowly declining, manufacturing industry. At the same time, it's also full of greenery. It boasts an entire island devoted to heavy industry, yet another island nearby, Sentosa, is Singapore's centrepiece tourist attraction. And though the area bristles with Housing Board tower blocks and industrial estates, it has the largest number of specialised attractions for kids of any district in Singapore.

Hence, not far from the unnerving spires of the Jurong Island chemical plants and oil refineries, you have the magnificent Jurong BirdPark, Snow City (p155) and Singapore Science Centre.

### CHINESE & JAPANESE GARDENS

Map pp46–7

☎ 6261 3632; 1 Chinese Garden Rd; admission free;  
 🕒 6am–10pm Mon–Fri, 6am–11pm Sat & Sun;  
 🚶 Chinese Garden

These spacious gardens, which occupy 13.5 hectares in the vicinity of Jurong Lake, are a very pleasant place for an afternoon stroll, though by themselves they are not worth the trek from the city.

The Chinese Garden is actually an island containing a number of Chinese-style pavilions and a seven-storey pagoda providing a great view. Apart from the pavilions, there is an extensive and impressive *penjing* (Chinese bonsai) display, as well as some more of those spectacularly clean 'outdoor' public toilets that seem to be catching on all over Singapore.

Inside the large compound near the bonsai display is an unusual **Live Turtle & Tortoise Museum** (adult/child \$5/3; 🕒 10am–7pm), where, among other things, you can see a live two-headed, six-legged turtle – one of the few in the world ever to have survived – and a large pond literally teeming with the little, one-headed fellows.

The gardens are a five-minute walk on a pedestrian path from Chinese Garden MRT station.

### TRANSPORT: JURONG & WESTERN SINGAPORE

Most of the attractions in western Singapore are within easy reach of Jurong East MRT station, which lies near the western end of the East West Line. A cab ride out here from the city will cost around \$12. Alternatively, take bus 502 from Orchard Blvd (behind Orchard MRT). Sentosa is easily reached via the HarbourFront MRT station, from where you can get the Sentosa bus, or the cable car.

### JURONG BIRDPARK Map pp46–7

☎ 6265 0022; www.birdpark.com.sg; 2 Jurong Hill; adult/child \$18/9; 🕒 8am–6pm; 🚶 194 or 251 from 🚶 Boon Lay

Over 8000 birds representing around 600 species can be seen at this beautifully landscaped 20-hectare park. Highlights include the new Birds 'n' Buddies show; a walk-through Waterfall Aviary (with its 30m-high custom-made waterfall, the highest in Southeast Asia); the Penguin Parade, which simulates a slice of Antarctica; a lake with pink flamingos; the fascinating Pelican Cove enclosure featuring some massive specimens; and an underwater viewing gallery where you can watch the birds catch fish. There's also the World of Darkness, in which day and night have been reversed to allow visitors a look at nocturnal birds doing something other than sleeping. A monorail (adult/child \$4/2) will transport you around it all.

As with the zoo (which is run by the same management), there are bird shows at various times during the day, kicking off with the Breakfast with the Birds show (adult/child \$18/12, from 9am to 10.30am) and including the Birds of Prey show, starting at 10am.

If you're planning to visit the Singapore Zoo and Night Safari as well (and you should be), you can buy an all-inclusive ticket that gets you entrance to all three (adult/child \$40/20); you don't need to do all three in one day, however.

### MING VILLAGE & PEWTER MUSEUM

Map pp46–7

☎ 6265 7711; 32 Pandan Rd; admission free;  
 🕒 9am–5.30pm; free shuttle service from  
 🚶 Clementi

Reproduction Ming and Qing dynasty pottery is made in this workshop, where you can watch the craftspeople at work.

## DOWN ON THE FARM

First-time visitors are usually surprised to learn that the tiny island-state, far from being an endless urban canyon, actually contains a fair bit of jungle, parkland, and even farms. These are some of the most interesting:

- **Avifauna Bird Farm** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6793 7461; avifauna@singnet.com.sg; 2 Lim Chu Kang Lane; admission \$3.50; 🕒 10am–4.30pm Sun) One of the largest exotic bird breeding and research farms in Southeast Asia, the farm was recently re-opened after being closed by the bird flu scare. Take bus 175 from Choa Chu Kang MRT.
- **Farmart Centre** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6767 0070; www.farmart.com.sg; 67 Sungei Tengah Rd; 🕒 10am–7pm) Established by Uncle William, ‘the quail man of Lim Chu Kang’, this is a one-stop showcase of small farms, including bees, goats, quails, ornamental fish, herbs and frogs. Take the free shuttle bus from Choa Chu Kang MRT. Various tour packages range from \$5 to \$10.
- **Hay Dairies Goat Farm** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6792 0931; www.haydairies.com.sg; 3 Lim Chu Kang Lane 4; 🕒 9am–4pm) Goats bred for milking. Demonstrations and tours take place in the morning and cost \$3, including a free bottle of goat’s milk. Take bus 175 from Choa Chu Kang MRT and get off at Lim Chu Kang Lane 4. It’s a three-minute walk from there.
- **Jurong Frog Farm** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6791 7229; www.jurongfrogfarm.com.sg; 56 Lim Chu Kang Lane 6; 🕒 7am–6pm) Breeding station for bullfrogs, sold for their meat and medicinal value; more fun than you’d think. A taxi from Choa Chu Kang MRT should cost around \$4.
- **Orchidville** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6552 5246; www.orchidville.com; Lot MD1A Lorong Lada Hitam; 🕒 8am–6pm) Massive orchid farm with more than two million specimens for sale. Education programs also available. Take bus 138 from Ang Mo Kio MRT and get off at Stop B13 on Mandai Rd.
- **Qian Hu Fish Farm** (Map pp46–7; ☎ 6766 7087; 71 Jalan Lekar; admission free; 🕒 9am–6pm Mon–Thu, 9am–7pm Fri–Sun) A very modern farm breeding more than 200 species of exotic ornamental fish for sale, with an attached cafe. Take bus 172 or 175 from Choa Chu Kang and walk from the junction of Old Choa Chu Kang Rd and Jalan Lekar.

The complete production process is done on the premises and guided tours are available.

Ming Village is owned by Royal Selangor Pewter, whose products are sold at Orchard Rd’s Centrepoint and Takashimaya department stores. There’s also a small pewter museum here with some interesting pieces. The pewter is made in Malaysia, but the polishing and hand-beaten designs are demonstrated at the village. The showroom sells an extensive selection of pewter and porcelain.

The company runs a free shuttle service from Orchard, Mandarin, Raffles and Pan Pacific Hotels from 9.20am; enquire with the hotel concierges.

### OMNI-THEATRE Map pp46–7

☎ 6425 2500; adult/child \$10/5; 🎫 **Jurong East**  
An essential part of any trip to the Science Centre, this vast domed cinema is an unforgettable experience, showing short 15- to 20-minute movies on anything from African wildlife to space exploration and simulated thrill rides, on a huge screen that envelopes you on your reclining seat. The sound quality is magnificent. It’s also worth taking a moment to examine the bizarrely complex

Sputnik-like device that projects the images onto the screen.

### SINGAPORE SCIENCE CENTRE

Map pp46–7

☎ 6425 2500; www.sci-ctr.edu.sg; 15 Science Centre Rd; adult/child \$6/3; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🎫 **Jurong East**

With multiple levels of interactive displays (nearly 900 of them in all) covering subjects like the human body, aviation, optical illusions, ecosystems, the universe and robotics, this museum is at once educational and thoroughly absorbing. Our favourite exhibit is the gigantic spark-shooting Tesla-coil on the first level. The outdoor kinetic garden, featuring movable, interactive sculpture, is also great fun.

The Science Centre is a very popular item on the school-trip calendar and you can often find yourself overwhelmed by hordes of jostling, wild, uniformed scamps eager to prevent you from trying out the exhibits.

Travellers with children might want to consider spending a full day to take in the Science Centre and the next-door **Omni-Theatre** (left), perhaps with a visit to nearby **Snow City** (p155) to top things off.



# SENTOSA ISLAND

Drinking & Nightlife [p148](#); Eating [p137](#); Sleeping [p173](#)

Five hundred metres off the south coast of Singapore sits [Sentosa Island](#) (☎ 1800 736 8672; [www.sentosa.com.sg](#); admission \$2), the city's favourite resort getaway. An almost entirely synthetic attraction, Sentosa is a tropical Disneyland where Singaporeans come to frolic on beaches of imported sand as half the world's container-ship traffic passes within shouting distance. Sentosa is in the midst of a major US\$3.6 billion renovation; if all goes according to plan, by 2010 the island will boast a Universal Studios theme-park, a casino to rival Macau, an enclosed 24/7 waterfront walkway, and even more resorts and spas.

Even without the new additions, Sentosa still has plenty to draw locals and tourists alike, including decent museums, a fine aquarium and plenty of outdoor activities including cycling and golf. There are also some lovely hotels and resorts on the island, as well as places to get massages and lounge in mud baths.

Along Sentosa's southern coast are three beaches: Siloso at the western end, Palawan in the middle and Tanjong Beach at the eastern end. As a beach paradise, Sentosa has a long way to go to match the islands of Malaysia or Indonesia, but the imported sand and planted coconut palms do lend it a tropical ambience even if the muddy Singapore Strait and the towering industrial chimneys of Jurong Island in the distance might make you think twice about swimming.

## BUTTERFLY PARK & INSECT KINGDOM

Map [p100](#)

☎ 6275 0013; [www.butterflypark.com.sg](#); adult/child \$10/6; ☎ 9am-6.30pm

Just next to the cable-car station, the Butterfly Park is tropical rainforest in miniature; the caretakers of this park have created a lovely environment for more than 50 species of butterflies, many of these species are endangered and nearly all have been bred in the park itself. In the Insect Kingdom museum there are thousands of mounted butterflies, rhino beetles, Hercules beetles (the world's largest beetles) and scorpions, among others. Children, especially, should be entranced for hours.

## FORT SILOSO [Map p100](#)

adult/child \$8/5; ☎ 10am-6pm

This fascinating slice of the past presents the island's history, dating from the time it was called Pulau Blakang Mati (Malay for 'island behind which lies death', thought to be a reference to a deadly malaria outbreak that killed hundreds of villagers).

Fort Siloso itself was built in the 1880s as a military base to protect, with a series of gun emplacements linked by underground tunnels, Britain's valuable colonial port. Designed to repel a maritime assault, the guns had to be turned around when the Japanese invaded from Malaya in WWII. The fort was later used by the Japanese as a POW camp.

## TRANSPORT: SENTOSA ISLAND

The highly frightening (huge, mazelike and nigh-inescapable) VivoCity Mall is, for all intents and purposes, the gateway to Sentosa. You can catch a shuttle-bus to the island from in front of it (\$3, including the \$2 admission), take the monorail from inside it (same price as shuttle) or even walk to it over the footbridge behind it (free, but at the time of research the bridge was closed). The mall is located on top of the HarbourFront MRT station.

For a more memorable trip with some spectacular views, there is the cable car, which runs from the top of Mt Faber or from the Cable Car Towers adjacent to the World Trade Centre (standard cabins return \$13.90/8.50 adult/child). For \$20/13, you can take the distinctly unsettling glass-bottom cabins, which afford a relaxing view of the sea 60m below your feet. It operates between 8.30am and 9pm. The cable-car ride is one of the best parts of a visit to Sentosa. If the weather is fine, take it at least one way.

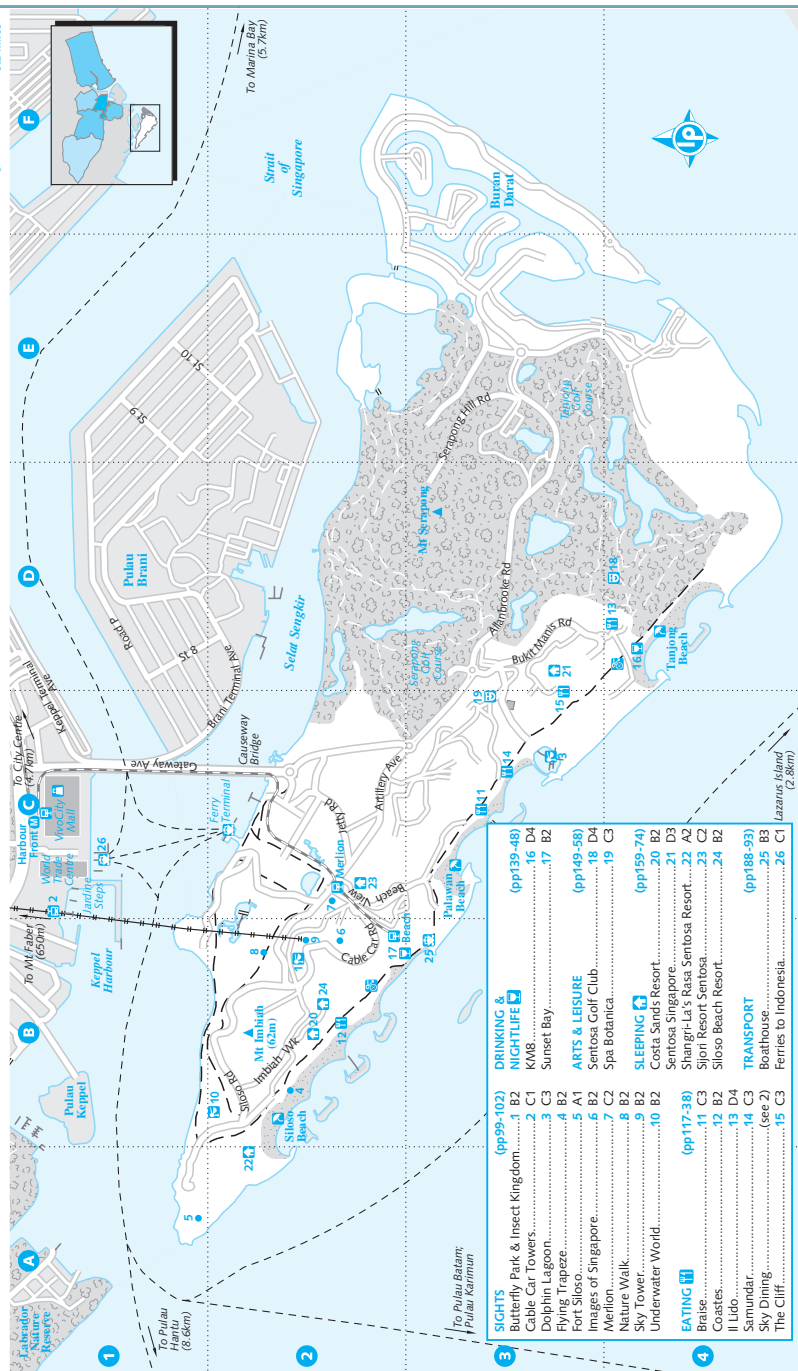
All the transport on the island is covered in the admission price. The monorail that once took visitors on a slow loop around the island's attractions has been shut down, but it's easy to get around using the four colour-coded bus routes linking the island's attractions.

The *Sentosa Island Guide*, a free pamphlet available all over the island, has good maps and transport guides.

You can also hire bicycles and roller blades for between \$5 and \$10 per hour at Siloso and Palawan Beaches or at the Ferry Terminal, which on weekends in particular is a tempting way to avoid the long queues at some of the bus stops.

# SENTOSA ISLAND

0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles



<b>1</b>	To Pulau (8.6km)	To Puloa (5.7km)	To Malacca Bay (5.7km)
<b>2</b>	To Pulau (8.6km)	To Puloa (5.7km)	To Malacca Bay (5.7km)
<b>3</b>	To Pulau (8.6km)	To Puloa (5.7km)	To Malacca Bay (5.7km)
<b>4</b>	To Pulau (8.6km)	To Puloa (5.7km)	To Malacca Bay (5.7km)

<b>SIGHTS</b>	<b>DRINKING &amp; NIGHTLIFE</b>
Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom.....1 B2	KMB.....16 D4
Cable Car Towers.....2 C1	Sunset Bay.....17 B2
Dolphin Lagoon.....3 C3	
Flying Trapeze.....4 B2	<b>ARTS &amp; LEISURE</b>
Fort Siloso.....5 A1	Sentosa Golf Club.....18 D4
Images of Singapore.....6 B2	Spa Botanica.....19 C3
Merlion.....7 C2	
Nature Walk.....8 B2	<b>SLEEPING</b>
Sky Tower.....9 B2	Costa Sands Resort.....20 B2
Underwater World.....10 B2	Sentosa Singapore.....21 D3
	Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort.....22 A2
<b>EATING</b>	Siloli Resort Sentosa.....23 C2
Braise.....11 C3	Siloso Beach Resort.....24 B2
Coaste.....12 B2	
Il Lido.....13 D4	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Samudra.....14 C3	Boathouse.....25 B3
Sky Dining.....(see 2)	Ferries to Indonesia.....26 C1
The Cliff.....15 C3	

The path around the fort leads to the gun emplacements, tunnels and buildings, with jolly wax re-creations and voice-overs about life in a colonial barracks. There's also a small obstacle course on which to try out your army skills.

The tunnel networks have been upgraded with trendily designed information posters and a short historical documentary film about the defence of Singapore.

### IMAGES OF SINGAPORE Map p100

adult/child \$10/7; ☎ 9am-7pm

This diverting historical and cultural museum starts with Singapore as a Malay sultanate and takes you through its establishment as a busy port and trading centre, its trials during WWII, and the subsequent Japanese surrender. Scenes are re-created using lifelike wax dummies, film footage and dramatic light and sound effects.


### MERLION Map p100

adult/child \$8/5; ☎ 10am-8pm

Half-lion, half-fish, all 'symbol of Singapore'. This is one of Sentosa's more kitschy of attractions, but the 37m-tall statue does

offer a nice view. If you've already been to Raffles and had a Singapore sling, well, a trip up the Merlion is the next logical step.

### SKY TOWER Map p100

adult/child \$12/8; ☎ 9am-9pm; shuttle bus from  HarbourFront

A revolving air-conditioned cabin that lifts you up a 110m pole for panoramic views over the city and the southern islands; who says you can't get high in Singapore?

### FLYING TRAPEZE Map p100

Siloso Beach; per swing \$10, 3 swings \$20;

☎ 4-6pm Tue-Fri, 4-7pm Sat, Sun & holidays

Set up on the beach is this flying trapeze on which children (above four) can fly through the air with the greatest of ease. Guaranteed to either cure or cause a life-long fear of heights.

### UNDERWATER WORLD Map p100

☎ 6275 0030; www.underwaterworld.com.sg;

adult/child \$19.90/12.70; ☎ 9am-9pm

This spectacular aquarium is deservedly one of Sentosa's most popular attractions. The star attraction is the 'travellator', an

## OFF THE RAILS IN SINGAPORE

The Lion City is blessed with one of the greatest mass-transit systems on the planet, and one of the best ways to experience the real Singapore is by hopping on the MRT and exploring the neighbourhoods surrounding stations in the outer districts. A trip through these districts, seldom visited by casual tourists, offers far more to intrepid trekkers than a chance to check out the seemingly endless housing blocks that over 85% of Singapore calls home. A few suggestions for some off-the-beaten-tourist-path mini-adventures:

- **Strange Neighbours in Commonwealth** (Green Line) Head through the food court directly south of the station and walk 250m east down the first street you see. This takes you to a spiritual, architectural scene the like of which you'll only see in Singapore: rising like a gigantic crystalline outcropping, the near-cubist design of the **Catholic Church of the Blessed Sacrament** (Map pp92-3) offers a stark contrast to its nearest neighbour, the traditionally designed **Sri Muneeswaran Hindu Temple** (Map pp92-3).
- **Classic Chinese Splendour in Chinese Gardens** (Green Line) Hop off the train and head south into the **Chinese Gardens** (Map pp46-7), a park replete with pagodas, arches and traditional Chinese structures that might make you think you've stepped into a classical Chinese painting.
- **Suburban Mosque of Yishun Station** (Red Line) When you get off the train at Yishun, head west until you get to the **Darul Makmur Mosque** (Map pp46-7). It's a large and modern looking black-and-white mosque with a particularly fetching onion-dome tower, somewhat different from the more traditional mosques of the inner city. There are also a number of smaller temples in the neighbourhood worth checking out.
- **The Nature of Landscaping in Ang Mo Kio** (Red Line) An excellent example of the Singaporean fetish for landscaping perfection, **Ang Mo Kio Park** (Map pp46-7), just across from the station, is one of those magnificently manicured neighbourhood parks in which every tree seems to have been planted equidistant from the last. One stop away is Yio Chu Kang, home of Nanyang Polytechnic, a good place to meet Singapore's next generation of intelligentsia.
- **Shrines and Temples of Eunos** (Green Line) Though not as chock-a-block with temples, shrines and other random spiritual spots as Geylang, the blocks south of the Eunos MRT station offer some interesting surprises for those who care to wander. Especially beautiful are the Malay-style mosques in the area, and the very colourful **Mangara Vihara** (Shrine of Blessing; Map p80) on Jalan Eunos, just a block south of the station.

acrylic tunnel with a moving walkway that takes spectators through the main tanks. There is nothing quite like the sight of 60kg giant groupers, brown stingrays and sharks swimming overhead. The aquarium also offers a dive-with-sharks package. Check the website for more details.

Your ticket to the aquarium also includes entry to the specially constructed **Dolphin Lagoon** (🕒 10.30am-5.30pm) at Palawan Beach. Here you can see the Indo-Pacific hump-

back dolphins, commonly known as pink dolphins, perform in shows at 1.30pm, 3.30pm and 5.30pm daily with an extra 11am session on the weekends, when you can find yourself fighting for seats. It's possible to get in the water to feed and touch the dolphins, too.

For \$120, kids can go on a one-hour Swim with the Dolphins session, which takes place at 9.45am every day.

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