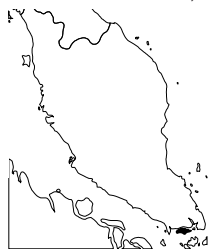


Singapore



Love it or loathe it, Singapore is hard to ignore. It's a long-haul-stopover favourite, and yes, it's guilty on all counts of pandering to hordes of package tourists who get shepherded around on air-conditioned buses.

But stay for more than a few days and you'll find an intriguing brew of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Western cultures all blended into a diverse cultural melting pot. And it's anything but boring. Sure, the graffiti-free trains run on time, and on top of being bilingual (English is the first language here), everyone looks clean-cut and wholesome, but who needs pollution, poverty and chaos?

Food and shopping are the two main preoccupations of Singaporeans. And why not? There are thousands of food outlets serving every conceivable cuisine to suit every budget. Broke? Pull up a plastic chair at a hawker centre and order a Tiger beer and whatever Asian delight the next table is having. Flush? Splash out on a 10-course degustation with paired wines at one of the region's top restaurants. And the shopping? Mall after mall of all the top brands, at reasonable prices too.

But Singapore is never one to rest on its laurels. Two new 'integrated resorts' will lure tourists with glam casinos, theme parks and big-ticket attractions. And the Formula 1 night race and inaugural 2010 Youth Olympics has helped put Singapore on the international sporting stage.

Singapore is the perfect antidote to the brashness, dust and grime of the rest of Asia. Go on, tack on a couple of extra days to your trip and stop by for some pampering and deserved downtime.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 'Bolly' jamming with the teeming masses in **Little India** (p500) over the weekend
- Immersing yourself in the cultural complexities of Straits Chinese culture at the **Peranakan Museum** (p496) or the **Asian Civilisations Museum** (p495)
- Giving thanks to the gods at the busy **Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple** (p497), or spending time on quiet reflection at **St Andrew's Cathedral** (p497)
- Cooing and gushing at the animals in the **Singapore Zoo** (p504) and at the **Night Safari** (p504)
- Rampaging through greenery at **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (p505), **MacRitchie Reservoir** (p505), **Pulau Ubin** (p504) and the **Southern Ridges** (p507)



■ POPULATION: 4.8 MILLION

■ AREA: 710 SQ KM

SINGAPORE IN...

Two Days

Start your day with a stroll at the idyllic **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (p501). After a *kopi* (coffee) and *kaya* (coconut jam) toast breakfast, hit the **Orchard Road** (p557) shops or spend the afternoon museum-hopping. The **Singapore Art Museum** (p496), **National Museum** (p494), **Peranakan Museum** (p496) and **Asian Civilisations Museum** (p495) are all within striking distance of each other. Break up the gallery crawl with a circuit through **Fort Canning Park** (p496). Find time for an afternoon tippie with a Singapore Sling at the **Raffles Hotel** (p496) and make your way along the Singapore River for **dinner** (p539). End your night with a drink at the **New Asia Bar** (p547) on the 70th floor of Swissôtel, the Stamford.

Day two begins with an MRT (Mass Rapid Transport) trip out to **Little India** (p500). Do some shopping at the massive **Mustafa Centre** (p557), have some delish Indian feed for lunch and do some temple-spotting. Grab a taxi to the **Singapore Zoo** (p504) for some daytime animal action and stay on for nocturnal animal action at the **Night Safari** (p504). If animals aren't your thing, make it out to **Kampong Glam** (p500) for a hit of Malay culture, and stay for kebabs and *sheeha*. Wind yourself down or rev yourself up with revellers at **Clarke Quay** (p549).

Four Days

If you're staying a couple more days, kick off day three with a cable-car ride from **Mt Faber** (p507), then cross to **Sentosa Island** (p509) – at least a day's frivolous indulgence. Retreat to the all-night bustle of the **Maxwell Road Food Centre** (p542) in Chinatown for dinner before boogieing on down at the **St James Power Station** (p551).

Go green on day four – make it out to the treetop walk at the **MacRitchie Reservoir** (p505), blitz through the snaking trails of the **Southern Ridges** (p507) or just take a bumboat out to **Pulau Ubin** (p504) for some cycling and mangrove boardwalks.

On the way back from Ubin, pay your respects at the **Changi Museum & Chapel** (p503) or drop by **Chinatown** (p498) for temples and shopping before a show at the **Esplanade** (p495) or a slap-up pepper-crab feast at the **East Coast Seafood Centre** (p542) as the ships of the world bump and sway in the Straits of Singapore.

HISTORY

Singapore has hardly looked back since Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles stepped into the mud in 1819 hell-bent on making the island a bastion of the British Empire (see p34). Despite a few ups and downs – invasion by the Japanese in WWII (p36) and getting booted out of the nascent federation of Malaysia in 1965 (p39) – the island has prospered in its role as a free-trade hub for Southeast Asia.

The downturn in the worldwide economy in 2009 had its effect on Singapore. Exports shrunk, unemployment increased and the government announced a S\$20 billion economic-stimulus package. Despite all this, to the casual spectator, Singaporeans' love of shopping and dining out continues unabated.

In March 2009, a move by the elections department to update registers and adjust polling-district boundaries sparked election talk – might the People's Action Party (PAP) be planning to call a snap election before the fear of further worldwide recession caused

the electorate to turn to new leadership? As of September 2009, there was no news. The next elections are due by February 2011.

ORIENTATION

Singapore is a city, an island and a country all rolled into one. It's about 45km west to east, 25km north to south. While there are built-up, high-density areas all around the island, the main city area is in the south.

The City

Downtown Singapore nestles around the Singapore River in the south, which, after decades of decline, has re-established itself as the city's watery heart. South of the river are the stalagmites of the CBD and the tourist epicentre of Singapore's cultural life, Chinatown. Immediately north of the river is the Colonial (also referred to as the Civic) District, dappled with elegant colonial architecture, museums galore, gargantuan shopping malls and the iconic Raffles Hotel.

Lining the river itself are Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay, once swampy, nefarious warehouse districts, now progressive entertainment and eating precincts. The Marina Bay area at the river mouth is being heavily redeveloped – expect a mass of building sites that will only be fully cleared up by 2011.

Most of Singapore's tourist action revolves around Chinatown and along the mall-littered Orchard Rd, just north of the Colonial District. Heading slightly northeast, one will find the unfettered, colourful Little India district, and the gracious Kampong Glam, Singapore's Muslim quarter.

Singapore Island

To the island's west are the predominantly industrial areas of Jurong and Tuas, which are peppered with tourist attractions, many surprisingly family-oriented. Heading south you'll bump into Sentosa Island – Singapore's recreational playground. Within sight of Sentosa are the southern islands: St John's, Kusu and Lazarus.

East Coast Park stretches east from the city – imported sand on reclaimed land. Inland from here are the unpolished Geylang and Katong areas, with the *lorongs* (alleys) off Geylang Rd harbouring Singapore's surprisingly saucy (some say sleazy) red-light district. The much-lauded Changi Airport occupies the eastern corner of the island. Changi Village and Pulau Ubin are north of here. Not far from Changi is Pasir Ris, home to a quiet strip of beach and family-friendly amusement parks.

The central north of the island has much of Singapore's undeveloped land, tracts of primary and secondary rainforest, reservoirs, the Singapore Zoo and Night Safari, and the Sungei Buloh Nature Park.

Addresses

Singapore is well laid-out, with signposted streets and logically numbered buildings. Most addresses are preceded by the number of the floor and then the shop or apartment number. Addresses do not quote the district or suburb. For example, 05-01, the Heeren, 260 Orchard Rd, is outlet No 01 on the 5th floor of the Heeren building at 260 Orchard Rd.

SIGHTS

COLONIAL DISTRICT

The Colonial District owes its name and location to the British. Not long after Sir Stamford Raffles 'discovered' Singapore in 1819, he found that the area had all the necessities of a place of governance – it was central and close to the ports – and made Fort Canning Hill a base of operations. Squalid warehouses eventually made way for an ordered city grid. Most of these colonial elements were left in place even after Singapore gained independence in 1965. Like the rest of Singapore the district is constantly being tinkered with. The government has pumped millions of dollars into revitalising the waterfront for the Formula 1 motorcar night race and the building of the Marina Bay Sands integrated resort. The area is also home to the Marina Barrage, a 10,000-hectare freshwater reservoir that doubles as a park. An intriguing mix of colonial architecture and ubermodern sights, the Colonial District is a perfect introduction to Singapore.

At the river mouth is Singapore's water-spouting mascot, the funky 1960s **Merlion** (Map p517) – half-fish, half-lion. The local media went into a frenzy when the statue took a lightning bolt to the dome in early 2009. Repairs were made in double-quick time, much to the relief of locals who were sick of reading about it on the front page of local rags.

National Museum of Singapore

A facelift in 2006 has turbocharged this once-dull **museum** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 5642; www.nationalmuseum.sg; 93 Stamford Rd; adult/child S\$10/5, Living Gallery free 6-9pm; 🕒 History Galleries 10am-6pm, Living Galleries 10am-9pm). The colonial-era facade is deceptive – through the huge rotunda, the building opens up to a cavernous modern extension stretching towards Fort Canning Hill.

The basement hosts classy travelling exhibitions such as the costumes of Christian Lacroix and is a great starting point. The engaging 'Singapore Story' exhibition begins on the top floor and spirals down over two floors. Visitors are greeted upon entry by a stunning two-storey-high *Koyaansiqatsi*-esque video installation. Every conceivable slice of Singaporean life, from opium pipes (!)

VIVA LAS SINGAPORE...OR HOW SINGAPORE IS GETTING A CASINO OR TWO!

That constant hammering and drilling you hear around the Marina Bay area isn't from your hangover. There are several huge projects set to finish in 2010. The biggest and most controversial being the construction of the massive Marina Bay Sands casino...oops...we mean Integrated Resort (IR; the government's preferred euphemism for casino). Once completed, the **complex** (Map p517; www.marinabaysands.com) will span three wedge-shaped buildings. The crowning glory will be a rooftop swimming pool the size of three football fields, which connects across all three buildings. Singaporeans can now trade their casino cruises for a post-gambling swim.

In addition to the Sands complex, the government has spent millions sprucing up the flora in the area. **Gardens by the Bay** (Map p517; www.gardensbythebay.org.sg) is a 101-hectare space comprising three parks that connect the Marina Bay area.

Not to be outdone, the Genting Group is building another IR on Sentosa. Also set to open in 2010, **Resorts World Sentosa** (Map pp514-15; www.rwsentosa.com) will include a Universal Studios theme park (hurrah, parents have a place to dump their kids while feeding money into the slot machines), six accommodation options and several other attractions.

The introduction of the IRs was not without controversy. Debate about the social ills of gambling raged in the local rags. There was constant assurance that checks such as phone help lines and hefty casino entry charges would be put in place to address these issues. In the end commercial sense prevailed and the IRs were given the green light.

Singaporeans seem to have come round to the idea, though: in the latest 2009 recruitment drive, over 2000 people applied for jobs at Marina Bay Sands. Some Singaporeans have even quit their day jobs and spent astronomical sums on casino-dealer courses. Social ills? I'll see your \$10 and raise you \$50.

to grainy videos of a young Lee Kuan Yew at a rally, is on display.

Try to book a meal at Chef Chan's (p537) before you start your visit.

Asian Civilisations Museum

Inside a grand old Empress Place building (1865) named in honour of Queen Victoria, this **museum** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 7798; www.acm.org.sg; 1 Empress Pl; adult/child S\$8/4, free after 7pm Fri; 🕒 1-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, Fri 9am-9pm) is a must for any Singapore visit – escape the humidity, put your watch in your pocket and enter a timeless realm. Ten thematic galleries explore traditional aspects of pan-Asian culture, religion and civilisation, with exquisite, well-displayed artefacts from Southeast Asia, China, India, Sri Lanka and even Turkey. The exploration of Islam and its influence in the region is particularly compelling, though the boys might be more interested in the large display of *krisses* (daggers).

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Architecturally out of this world, Singapore's S\$600-million **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (Map p517; ☎ 6828 8377; www.esplanade.com; 1 Esplanade Dr; admission free, guided tours adult/child S\$10/8; 🕒 10am-6pm, box office noon-8.30pm) is the poster-boy for

contemporary Singapore. Architects wanted to challenge ingrained conservatism, and they succeeded – the centre has been compared to flies' eyes, melting honeycomb and two upturned durians, and called a whole lot of rude words we can't repeat here. The controversial aluminium shades reference Asian reed-weaving geometries and maximise natural light. Eight years on, the building has been accepted as part of the local landscape. There's a nonstop program of international and local performances, some great restaurants and free outdoor performances. Book tickets through **SISTIC** (☎ 6348 5555; www.sistic.com.sg).

Singapore Flyer

People in cities around the world are paying money to get into a gigantic Ferris wheel for glorious views. Why not? The **Singapore Flyer** (Map p517; ☎ 6333 3311; www.singaporeflyer.com.sg; 30 Raffles Ave; adult/child S\$29.50/20.65) is an expensive 30-minute ride with views towards the Colonial District, CBD, Marina Bay, the high-rise housing landscape to the east and out to the South China Sea. You're better off going on a clear day than at night, if only to avoid the annoying flashing neon lights outside the cabin.

Raffles Hotel

An adored Singaporean institution and architectural landmark, **Raffles Hotel** (Map p517; ☎ 6337 1886; www.raffleshotel.com; 1 Beach Rd) was opened in December 1887 by the Sarkies brothers, immigrants from Armenia. At first a modest 10-room bungalow, the main building followed in 1899 and the hotel soon became synonymous with Oriental opulence, attracting the British elite and literary luminaries such as Somerset Maugham. The Singapore Sling was invented here by bartender Ngiam Tong Boon, and (far less gloriously) the last Singaporean tiger, which escaped from a travelling circus nearby, was shot beneath the Billiard Room in 1902.

By the 1970s, Raffles was a shabby relic, dodging the wrecking ball in 1987 with National Monument designation. In 1991 it reopened after a S\$160-million facelift. If you want to stay here, rooms start at S\$750 a night. The lobby is open to nonguests, but dress sharp – no shorts or sandals. There are some top-notch restaurants, and high tea is served in the Tiffin Room, or sip a Singapore Sling and throw peanut shells on the Long Bar's floorboards.

You could easily dismiss the **Raffles Museum** (Map p517; 3rd fl, Raffles Hotel Arcade; admission free; ☎ 10am-10pm) as an exercise in self-aggrandisement, but it's actually interesting. Old photos, memorabilia and advertisements sit alongside 'thank you' notes from celebrity guests such as Somerset Maugham and Noël Coward.

Peranakan Museum

Singapore's newest **museum** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 7591; 39 Armenian St; adult/child S\$6/3; ☎ 1-7pm Mon, 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun, to 9pm Fri) stands as a testament to the Peranakan (Straits-born Chinese) cultural revival in the Lion City. Opened in 2008, it has 10 thematic 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 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.

Singapore Art Museum & 8Q SAM

The **Singapore Art Museum** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 3222; www.singart.com; 71 Bras Basah Rd; adult/child S\$8/5; ☎ 10am-7pm Sat-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri) occupies the former St Joseph's Catholic boys' school. The gallery champions the arts in an economics-obsessed nation, with exhibitions ranging from classical Chinese calligraphy to electronic arts, though it seems content to hide away its permanent collection. The exhibition spaces are in a constant state of flux, always closed for maintenance or in preparation for the next show. You might get lucky and chance upon some of the S\$70-million worth of Wu Guangzhong's donated art.

Round the corner from SAM, the art museum's new extension, **8Q SAM** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 3200; www.singart.com/8qsam; 8 Queen St; adult/child S\$3/1.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Sat-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri), is named after its address and has a revolving-door focus on quirky installations, interactivity and contemporary art.

There's free admission to both spaces from noon to 2pm daily and 6pm to 9pm Fridays.

Fort Canning Park

Mall-crazy Singaporeans often overlook this gem of a **park** (Map p517; ☎ 6332 1200; www.nparks.gov.sg; entry via Hill St, Canning Rise, River Valley Rd, Canning Walk; ☎ 24hr). Fourteen sights are crammed into this 18-hectare space, the centre being **Fort Canning Centre** (Map p517), a 1926 barracks.

When Raffles rolled into Singapore and claimed it for the mother country, locals steered clear of Fort Canning Hill, then called Bukit Larangan (Forbidden Hill), out of respect for the sacred shrine of Sultan Iskandar Shah, ancient Singapura's last ruler. Raffles built a modest *atap* (thatched roof) residence on the summit in 1822, which acted as Government House until the military built Fort Canning. The latter was named in honour of Viscount Canning, first viceroy of India.

Visitors are greeted by the comforting call of crickets, and mossy paths criss-cross the grounds tempting visitors to veer from sight to sight. Stop at the spice garden and take in the scents of tamarind and cinnamon.

Visit the **Battle Box Museum** (Map p517; ☎ 6333 0510; 2 Cox Terrace; adult/child S\$8/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), the former command post of the British during WWII, and get lost in the eerie and deathly quiet 26-room underground complex. War veterans and Britain's Imperial War Museum helped recreate the authentic bunker

environs; life-sized models re-enact the fateful surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. Japanese Morse codes are still etched on the walls.

Over the weekend, you can gawk at newly-weds melting in the sun as they pose for wedding photos (the Registry of Marriages is located in the park). The entire park circuit can be completed in a few leisurely hours.

The hill hosts several outdoor events and concerts each year including WOMAD (August to October) and Ballet under the Stars (July).

Churches & Cathedrals

The peaceful **St Andrew's Cathedral** (Map p517; ☎ 6337 6104; www.livingstreams.org.sg; 11 St Andrew's Rd; ☒ visitors centre 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) stands in stark contrast against the cityscape.

Completed in 1838 but torn down and rebuilt in its present form in 1862 after lightning damaged the original building (twice!), the cathedral has a 63.1m tall tower, towering naves and lovely stained glass above the west doors.

Dedicated to St Gregory the Illuminator, Singapore's oldest church (1836) is the neo-classical **Armenian Church** (Map p517; ☎ 6334 0141; 60 Hill St), designed by eminent colonial architect George Coleman. Pushing up orchids in the graveyard is Agnes Joaquim, discoverer of Singapore's national flower – the *Vanda Miss Joaquim* orchid.

All of these churches are open during the day, with the usual Sunday services.

Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

In the heart of Waterloo St (which we swear has more vibrancy and soul than glossy Chinatown), **Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple** (Map p517; 178 Waterloo St; admission free) is lively and colourful. Dedicated to Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, it's usually busy. Flower sellers and fortune tellers swarm around the entrance. Devotees stream into the temple daily, offering joss sticks and shaking *kau cim* (fortune telling) sticks, all under the gaze of the magnificent golden Buddha.

Next door is the polychromatic Hindu **Sri Krishnan Temple** (Map p517; 152 Waterloo St; admission free), which has a magnificent silver-and-gold shrine. Pragmatic worshippers from the Kuan Im Temple also burn joss sticks here for extra insurance.

THE QUAYS

Splitting the Colonial District from the CBD is the Singapore River, the site of British landfall and Singapore's main trade artery for over a century. Once the dirty commercial hub that was the lifeline of Singapore's flourishing trade, a determined government clean-up in the 1980s saw the many *godowns* (warehouses), bumboats and commercial craft moved and the Singapore River 'cleaned up'. With the area now shiny and sparkly, the government quickly admitted that it lacked 'soul' and immediately embarked on yet another initiative to fill the area with bars and restaurants.

Boat Quay

Closest to the river mouth, **Boat Quay** (Map p517) 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, businesses having shifted to hi-tech cargo centres elsewhere on the island. Declared a conservation zone by the government, the area has become a major entertainment district filled with colourful restaurants and bars. You'll find riverfront restaurants serving all manner of Singaporean delicacies, though the restaurant touts are aggressive. Parallel with Boat Quay one block to the south is **Circular Road** (Map p517), where there are dozens of bars. After work thirsty businessmen swarm here from the CBD.

Clarke Quay

Clarke Quay (Map p517) has had more comebacks than John Travolta and Mickey Rourke. This quay, named after Singapore's second colonial governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, was developed into a dining and shopping precinct in the early 1990s and most recently revamped with a slew of bars and clubs in 2006.

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: lily pad umbrellas straight out of a Dr Seuss colouring book, and many once-dignified shophouses now painted in ultrabright shades.

On the western end of Clarke Quay is the **Royal Selangor Pewter Gallery** (Map p517; ☎ 6268 9600; www.royalselangor.com.sg; 01-01 Clarke Quay; ☒ 9am-9pm). Walk through the back where pewter-casting demos are run, then

STREET SCULPTURE

Singapore is dappled with a healthy collection of public sculpture by acclaimed local and international artists. Check out these babies:

Abundance (Map p517; Suntec City) By Sun Yu Li.

Between Sea & Sky (Map p517; Marina Mandarin Hotel, 6 Raffles Blvd) By Olivier Strehelle.

Bird (Map p517; UOB Plaza, Boat Quay) By Fernando Botero.

First Generation (Map p517; Cavenagh Bridge) By Chong Fat Cheong.

Homage to Newton (Map p517; UOB Plaza, Boat Quay) By Salvador Dalí.

Love (Map p517; near Dhoby Ghaut station on Penang Rd) By Robert Indiana.

Millennium (Map p517; Empress Pl) By Victor Tan.

Reclining Figures (Map p517; OCBC Bldg, Chulia St) By Henry Moore.

Seed (Map p517; Esplanade waterfront garden) By Han Sai Por.

Six Brushstrokes (Map p517; Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd) By Roy Lichtenstein.

gawp at or buy the shiny stuff in the retail cabinets. It also runs pewtersmithing courses (p529).

Robertson Quay

The most remote and thus least visited of the Quays, **Robertson Quay** (Map p517) features a desultory collection of restaurants, hotels, bars, a really garish bridge and a club selling cheap drinks (accounts for its popularity with the young 'uns). This area was once used for storage of goods that had come west up the Singapore River.

The white-walled, polished concrete spaces of the **Singapore Tyler Print Institute** (Map p517; ☎ 6336 3663; www.stpi.com.sg; 02-41 Robertson Quay; admission free; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) hosts international and local exhibits, showcasing the work of resident print- and paper-makers. Exhibitions often have a 'how to' component, and there's an impressive program of visual arts courses year-round.

Officially known as the Sri Thandayuthapani Temple, the open-walled, blue-green **Chettiar Hindu Temple** (Map p517; ☎ 6737 9393; 15 Tank Rd; admission free; ☒ 8am-noon & 5.30-8.30pm) was completed in 1984, replacing a temple built by Indian *chettiers* (moneylenders). Dedicated to the six-headed Shaivite god, Lord Subramaniam, it's at its most active during the Thaipusam festival.

Undergoing massive renovations at the time of research, the **Hong San See Temple** (Map p517; 31 Mohamed Sultan Rd; admission free; ☒ 6am-7pm) was completed in 1913 and set up on a hill. The temple is built in a southern Chinese fashion, with sloping tiled roofs and ornamented columns.

THE CBD

Immediately south of the Singapore River is the central business district (CBD), Singapore's financial hub. **Raffles Place** (Map pp526-7) is a rare slice of green above the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) station, surrounded by gleaming towers of commerce. There are some great sculptures (see above) around here and along the river nearby.

Strewn among the high-rise landscape are a few colonial relics. The **Fullerton Hotel** occupies the former general post office and is no less elegant than the Raffles Hotel. Further south is **Lau Pa Sat** (p539), a popular hawk centre beneath an elaborate wrought-iron structure imported from Glasgow in 1894.

Also check out the Taoist **Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple** (Map pp526-7; cnr Phillip & Church Sts; admission free; ☒ 7.30am-5.30pm), which translates as Calm Sea Temple. Dating from 1826, it's an atmospheric place – giant incense coils smoulder over an empty courtyard while a village of tiny plaster figures populates the roof.

CHINATOWN

Singapore's celebrated cultural heart is Chinatown, roughly bounded by Church St to the north, New Bridge Rd to the west, Maxwell Rd to the south and Cecil St to the east. It's a strange mix of ebullient commerce and slightly rough nightlife, tempered with memories of more desperate times when impoverished immigrants survived on their wits, hard work, prayers and good fortune. Restoration projects and numerous clean-ups have created pockets of artificiality, and some locals are of the opinion that the 'soul' of Chinatown has been lost. Wandering off the main thoroughfares, away from the busloads

of tourists, is probably the best way to catch a glimpse of the Chinatown that still endears itself to locals.

Buddha Tooth Relic Temple

The massive and jaw-dropping five-storey **Buddha Tooth Relic Temple** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6220 0220; www.btrts.org.sg; 288 South Bridge Rd; admission free; 🕒 4.30am-9pm) opened to great fanfare in 2008, its main drawcard being what is believed to be a sacred tooth of the Buddha (dental experts have expressed doubts over its authenticity).

The main worship hall greets visitors at the entrance: swirling joss smoke and all-day chanting combine in hypnotising fashion. The tooth relic itself sits on a pedestal in a stupa made with 420kg of gold donated by worshippers. Want to see the tooth? It's only brought out on the first day of the Chinese New Year and on Wesak day.

The top floor opens into a peaceful garden with a revolving prayer wheel and the other floors house exhibits and a comprehensive display on the history and building of the temple. There's a teahouse serving a wide range of teas and vegetarian food on the second level. This is also the only temple that – to our knowledge – has its own underground parking garage.

Thian Hock Keng Temple

Also known as the Temple of Heavenly Happiness, **Thian Hock Keng Temple** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6423 4616; 158 Telok Ayer St; admission free; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm) is one of Singapore's oldest and most eye-popping temples. Dedicated to Ma Cho Po, Goddess of the Sea, it was built by early Chinese Hokkien immigrants in gratitude for safe passage to Singapore.

Declared a National Monument in 1973 and renovated in 2000, the temple's twin rooftop dragons represent the principles of yin and yang. Stone lions guard the door, and as security back-up, fierce-looking portraits of door gods prevent evil spirits from entering. Inside, gilded ceilings feature intricate carvings of Chinese folkloric stories and heroes. Locals favour the Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple (opposite).

Sri Mariamman Temple

Paradoxically cast in the middle of Chinatown, the **Sri Mariamman Temple** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6223 4064; 244 South Bridge Rd; admission free; 🕒 7.30am-8.30pm) is the oldest Hindu temple in Singapore, originally built in 1823, then rebuilt in 1843. The

\$33 fee for taking photos is a rip-off, but tourists still descend in droves – and many trigger-happy snappers ignore the fees.

You can't miss the incredible technicolour 1930s *gopuram* (tower) above the entrance, key to the temple's South Indian Dravidian style. Sacred cow sculptures graze the boundary walls, while the *gopuram* is covered in over-the-top plasterwork images of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. In October each year the temple hosts the Thimithi Festival – devotees queue along South Bridge Rd to hot-foot it over burning coals. Wander around the back for great views of the temple structure set against the skyscrapers of the CBD.

Chinatown Heritage Centre

Set on three floors of an old shophouse, the **Chinatown Heritage Centre** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6325 2878; www.chinatownheritagecentre.sg; 48 Pagoda St; adult/child \$5/10/6; 🕒 9am-8pm) is an engaging museum focusing on the arduous everyday lives of Singapore's Chinese settlers. Reconstructed living environments are festooned with artefacts. The cramped quarters of shophouse living are decked out with startling reality (right down to the fake poop inside the bucket toilet – thankfully, scent-emitting technology won't be invented until 2050). The oral and video histories of local people are genuinely moving...if the projectors and screens decide to work.

Singapore City Gallery

The Urban Redevelopment Authority's **Singapore City Gallery** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6321 8321; www.ura.gov.sg/gallery; URA Bldg, 45 Maxwell Rd; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) provides a rather compelling insight into the government's resolute and much-admired policies of high-rise housing and land reclamation. Highlights include an 11m x 11m scale model of the city, and a voyeuristic bird's-eye-view roof camera. Would-be property investors would do well to visit for the displays detailing future plans for suburbs in Singapore.

Baba House

You've got to ring and book a visit to the **Baba House** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6227 5731; babahouse@nus.edu.sg; 157 Neil Rd; admission by appointment \$5/10; 🕒 Wed & Thu), but the one- to two-hour guided tour of this pre-war terrace house built in the elaborate Peranakan style is worth every cent.

Built in the 1890s and formerly home to shipping tycoon Wee Bin, the house was donated to the National University of Singapore. A two-year restoration was completed in September 2008. Every detail, from the carved motifs on the blue facade of the building down to the door screens, has been attended to. The house is a living museum and is furnished as it was in the 1920s. Knowledgeable tour guides weave tales of Peranakan life with every detail: secret peepholes behind screens allowed shy Nonya ladies to spy on visitors in the central hall.

The no-photos-and-video policy is a little draconian but is enforced with the intention of creating a mysterious allure to the place.

LITTLE INDIA

Worlds apart from the rest of Singapore, Little India (Map p522) was originally a European enclave, blooming into an Indian cultural centre after a Jewish-Indian businessman started farming buffalo here. Today Little India teems with men on two-year contracts from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka doing the dirty construction jobs that Singaporeans won't stoop to. The weekends are truly an eye-opener for locals and tourists alike. Produce, spices and other trinkets spill onto the streets and crowd the five-foot walkways. Many businesses operate late into the night (some even run 24 hours) and traffic slows to a messy crawl.

Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple

Dazzlingly colourful, the bustling Shaivite **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (Map p522; ☎ 6293 4634; 141 Serangoon Rd; admission free; 🕒 8am-noon & 4-8.30pm) is dedicated to Kali, bloodthirsty consort of Shiva. Kali's always been big in Bengal, birthplace of the labourers who built this temple in 1885. Inside, Kali is pictured draped with a garland of skulls, disemboweling victims, and also sharing peaceful moments with her sons Ganesh and Murugan.

Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

Dedicated to Vishnu, the **Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** (Map p522; ☎ 6298 5771; 397 Serangoon Rd; admission free; 🕒 5.45am-noon & 5-9pm) dates from 1855, but the 20m-tall *gopuram* is a S\$300,000 1966 addition. Inside is a statue of Vishnu (aka Perumal), his sidekicks Lakshmi and Andal, and his bird-mount Garuda. Sri Srinivasa Perumal is the starting point for

the parade to the Chettiar Hindu Temple (p498) during the Thaipusam festival.

Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple (Temple of 1000 Lights)

In 1927 a Thai Buddhist monk founded the **Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** (Map p522; ☎ 6294 0714; 366 Race Course Rd; admission free; 🕒 8am-4.30pm), usually called the Temple of 1000 Lights. The entrance is flanked by a leopard and tiger, the latter in midleap, snarling jaws open. Inside is a 15m-high, 300-tonne Buddha alongside an eclectic collection of deities including Guan Yin (Chinese Goddess of Mercy) and the Hindu deities Brahma and Ganesh. At the base of the Buddha's back is a low door into a small prayer room. Around the Buddha's base are 'Buddha - This Is Your Life!' models and, of course, at least 1000 electric lights.

Leong San See Temple

Across the road from the Temple of 1000 Lights (above) is the gorgeous Taoist **Leong San See Temple** (Dragon Mountain Temple; Map p522; ☎ 6298 9371; 371 Race Course Rd; admission free; 🕒 6am-6pm), dedicated to Guan Yin, Goddess of Mercy. Built in 1917 using traditional joinery and intricately carved ceiling beams in a style similar to that of Thian Hock Keng (p499), this temple has an effervescent, happy atmosphere. The smiling Buddha welcomes you at the door; to promote good feng shui, walk around clockwise.

KAMPONG GLAM

Neatly self-contained Kampong Glam, roughly bounded by Victoria St, Jln Sultan and Beach Rd, all immediately northeast of Bugis MRT, is Singapore's Muslim centre. Its name derives from the Malay for village (*kampung*) and *gelam*, a type of tree that once grew here. By day, the area is a great place for visiting mosques and shops selling clothing, raw cloth and dry goods. By night, hip youths come out and smoke *sheesha* at one of the many Middle Eastern joints. The offbeat Haji Lane has cool boutiques and eateries.

Sultan Mosque

Kampong Glam's gold-domed epicentre is **Sultan Mosque** (Map p522; ☎ 6293 4405; 3 Muscat St; admission free; 🕒 5am-8.30pm), named after Raffles' buddy Sultan Hussein Shah. Originally built in 1825 with a grant from Raffles and the East India Company, it was replaced 100 years later

with the current edifice. The prayer hall can accommodate 5000 worshippers; a glaring red digital clock compromises the atmosphere a little, but at least everybody knows when to pray. The massive rug on the prayer hall (no entry to non-Muslims) is a gift from a Saudi Prince, whose emblem is woven onto it.

Malay Heritage Centre

This dignified terracotta-tiled **heritage centre** (Map p522; ☎ 6391 0450; www.malayheritage.org.sg; 85 Sultan Gate; adult/child \$54/3, performances \$511; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, 1-6pm Mon) is set back against a large garden and was once the Malay royal *istana* (palace), built in 1843 for Singapore's last sultan, Ali Iskandar Shah. An agreement allowed the palace to stay in the sultan's family as long as they continued to live there. This was repealed in 1897, but the family stayed on for another century, the palace gradually sliding into ruin.

The restored building opened as a museum in 2004, celebrating Singapore's Malay heritage with a reconstructed *kampung* house upstairs, spare but wordy displays throughout and cultural performances (available by website-booking only).

Other Mosques

Painted cream and brown, the **Hajjah Fatimah Mosque** (Map p522; ☎ 6297 2774; 4001 Beach Rd; admission free; 🕒 7am-8pm) was built in 1846 and named after the mosque's wealthy Malaccan-born Malay benefactor. Equally curious is its 'Leaning Tower of Kampong Glam' – a European-style minaret tilting about 6 degrees off-centre. The outbuildings are also well out of kilter.

Located on a busy street corner, the sky-blue hexagonal-tiled **Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath Mosque** (Map p522; ☎ 6294 3862; 471 Victoria St; admission free; 🕒 7.30am-7pm) is hard to miss. Malabar Muslims from the southern Indian state of Kerala have worshipped here since 1963. Overgrown with time and tree roots, the **Royal Cemetery** is behind the mosque, its shambolic tombstones slowly succumbing to gravity.

ORCHARD ROAD

Singapore's premier shopping strip is really a massive shrine devoted to the Gods of Retail. And locals flock here in droves to pay homage and make offerings. It's a far cry from the verdant and ordered nutmeg and pepper plantations found here in the 19th century.

Orchards have been replaced with towering malls and ubiquitous five-star hotels that induce some tourists to scream with delight and others to run screaming. Shopping aside, there are several pockets that still delight.

Singapore Botanic Gardens

If Singapore's urban planners could manufacture paradise, it wouldn't look too different from the **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (Map p524; ☎ 6471 7361; www.sbg.org.sg; 1 Cluny Rd; admission free; 🕒 5am-midnight). The front entrance leads to an idyllic koi pond. On weekends, laughing children feed the multicoloured fish. Right behind, a waterfall gurgles and birds hop around the water's edge, at ease with the locals.

Established in 1859 and covering 52 hectares, the gardens were originally a testing ground for potential cash crops such as rubber. Today they host a herbarium, a library of archival materials dating back to the 16th century, wide-open spaces, manicured gardens and a 4-hectare patch of the primary rainforest that once blanketed the island.

The **National Orchid Garden** (Map p524; ☎ adult/child \$55/2.50; 🕒 8.30am-7pm) is also here, with over 60,000 plants and a cool house showcasing pitcher plants and orchids from cooler climes. Don't miss the *Vanda Miss Joaquim*, Singapore's national flower, which Agnes Joaquim discovered in her garden in 1893.

The gardens are at their busiest on Sunday mornings. Domestic helpers congregate here on their day off for impromptu small-group church services. Families come out in full force and share the pavement with joggers and pet owners being dragged by leashed dogs. Free open-air concerts are held on the last Sunday of the month at the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage – call or check the website.

Buses 7, 77, 105, 106, 123 and 174 all run to the gardens from the Orchard MRT exit on Orchard Blvd.

Cathay Gallery

Film buffs will go ga-ga at the **Cathay Gallery** (Map p524; www.thecathaygallery.com.sg; 02-16 the Cathay, 2 Handy Rd; admission free; 🕒 noon-8pm Mon-Sat), housed in Singapore's first high-rise building. The displays here trace the history of the Loke family, early pioneers in film production and distribution in Singapore and founders of the Cathay Organisation. Check out old movie posters, cameras, and programs that capture the golden age of local cinema.

Istana

Constructed between 1867 and 1869 by Indian convicts transported from Bencoolen on Sumatra, the **Istana** (Map p524; ☎ 6737 5522; www.istana.gov.sg; Orchard Rd) is where Singapore's presidential SR Nathan hangs out. The neo-Palladian structure, set 750m back from Orchard Rd in beautifully maintained grounds, was originally Government House, built at great expense to impress the visiting Duke of Edinburgh. It's only open to the public on selected holidays (eg New Year's) – bring your passport to get past the gun-toting guards. Call, or check the website, for details.

Emerald Hill Road

Take some time out to wander through the pedestrianised Peranakan Pl to residential Emerald Hill Rd (Map p524), where original Peranakan terrace houses reside in states that run the gamut from glamorous decay to immaculate restoration. The quiet atmosphere around here feels a million miles from shop-till-you-drop Orchard Rd. All the walking will mean you need to grab a beer from one of the many bars at the Orchard Rd end of Emerald Hill (p549).

EASTERN SINGAPORE

Heading east of the city centre, the sleazy red-light Geylang district is also home to temples, mosques, churches and some of the best eating spots in Singapore. It connects up to Geylang Serai, a largely Malay district rarely frequented by foreign visitors. Further on is the popular East Coast Park. Next door, the Katong district is a gentrified neighbourhood, once filled with old Peranakan homes, now a hotbed of condominiums. Further east is Pasir Ris Park, the Changi Museum and Chapel; and snoozy Changi Village, the jumping-off point for leafy Pulau Ubin.

Geylang

Nowhere else in Singapore are food, commerce, religion, culture and sleaze more at ease with each other than in Geylang (Map pp514–15). It's nothing more than a vaguely busy road during the day, but once night falls, it transforms.

You might see a crowd rubbing shoulders with prostitutes after spilling out onto the streets from evening prayer at a mosque. And if the sights haven't yet gotten to you, the smell of food soon will. You'll see hordes of

HARRY LEE KUAN YEW'S HUMBLE ABODE

If you're planning a jaunt down Orchard Rd, make a short detour along **Oxley Road** (off Map p524). The father of modern Singapore, Harry Lee Kuan Yew, lives along this street. In order to keep out the plebs and crazies, car gantries are installed at either end of the road. Pedestrians are free to walk through, but expect to be hurried along by heavily armed Gurkhas. Go on, walk on the side of the guards for a closer look. We dare you.

people sweating over plates of fried beef *hor fun* and frogs' leg porridge.

Come see the circus. Take the MRT to Kallang. Cross the road and head south towards all the lights across the street.

Geylang Serai

Geylang Serai is a Malay residential area, but you're not going to see any traditional *atap* houses or sarong-clad cottage-industry workers. This is strictly high-rise country.

Trundle out to Paya Lebar MRT station, from where it's a short walk along Sims Ave to the temporary home of **Geylang Serai Wet Market** (Map pp514-15; Sims Ave; ☎ 7am-10pm). The original market across the street is getting a facelift and has already missed its 2008 reopening deadline. Expect a crowded, traditional Asian wet market with meat hanging on hooks, baskets of sloshing fish, squirming frogs, slippery eels and people haggling over the produce. Watch your step! There's a **food centre** next to the wet market that achieved some notoriety in April 2009 after more than 100 people got food poisoning from eating contaminated Indian *rojak* (salad with peanut-sauce dressing). If you push further into the complex, you'll find textiles and clothes – a perfect place to pick up traditional Malay dress.

Katong

Down Joo Chiat Rd from the Malay Cultural Village is the Katong district. Along Koon Seng Rd just east of Joo Chiat Rd are some of the finest **Peranakan terrace houses** (Map pp514–15) in Singapore, decorated with plaster stucco columns, dragons, birds, crabs and brilliantly glazed tiles. *Pintu pagar* (front saloon doors) are also typical, letting the breezes in and keeping peering eyes out.

Joo Chiat Rd and traffic-plagued East Coast Rd have some top-notch Peranakan restaurants (see p541). Also in this area is the **Katong Antique House** (Map p528; ☎ 6345 8544; 208 East Coast Rd; admission free; 🕒 11am-6pm). Owner Peter Wee will show you his large collection of Peranakan antiques including beautifully beaded slippers, wedding costumes and traditional ceramics and furniture.

Further along East Coast Rd are **Kim Choo's Kitchen** (Map p528; ☎ 6741 2125; 208 East Coast Rd; admission free; 🕒 11am-6pm) and **Rumah Bebe** (Map p528; ☎ 6247 5781; 113 East Coast Rd; admission free; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm). You can catch demonstrations of how to make *bak chang* (rice dumplings) at the former. Both places also sell traditional *kebaya*s (Nonya-style blouses with decorative lace) and beaded shoes, and run beading classes. Don't forget to buy some *bak chang* or *kueh* (bite-sized tittbits) before you go.

The nearby **Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple** (Map p528; 17 Ceylon Rd; admission free; 🕒 11am-6pm) is stunning, with its intricate yet understated facade. The temple eschews colour on the exterior and instead stuns visitors with its devotional art inside.

Heading west back to the city, East Coast Rd becomes **Mountbatten Road** – there are some grand old bungalows around here, dating from the early 20th century. From East Coast Rd, buses 12 and 32 head into the Colonial District, while bus 14 goes down Stamford Rd and then Orchard Rd.

East Coast Park

This waterside park (Map p528), stretching for 10km along East Coast Parkway (ECP), is where Singaporeans come to take a dip in the soupy Straits of Singapore, windsurf, cable-ski, eat, cycle, in-line skate and chill out on the sand. The beach is built on reclaimed land – it won't win any tropical-paradise awards, but it's popular with families, and the park has some great seafood restaurants (p542) and a busy hawker centre (p542). Bikes and in-line skates can be rented from kiosks that line the busiest areas of the park. You can also camp in the park (see p532).

Bus 401 runs from Bedok MRT station to Mountbatten Rd and stops along the park's service road.

Pasir Ris Park & Downtown East

Paris Ris Park (Map pp514–15) is a 71-hectare waterside park with family-friendly activities

galore. Rent a bike or in-line skates to get around. Or hoof it and explore the 6-hectare **mangrove boardwalk** – go during low tide to see little crabs scurrying in the mud. Speaking of hooves, kids will love the pony rides at **Gallop Stables** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6583 9665; www.gallopstable.com; 61 Pasir Ris Green; rides S\$10; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sun).

Head to **Downtown East E! Hub** (Map pp514-15; www.downtowneast.com.sg; cnr Pasir Ris Dr 3 & Pasir Ris Close). It's the building with the Ferris wheel built inside (rides S\$6.50). The standouts here are the **Escape Theme Park** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6583 9665; www.escapethemepark.com; admission adult/child S\$17.70/8.90; 🕒 8am-8pm Sat, Sun, public & school holidays) and **Wild Wild Wet** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6583 9665; www.wildwildwet.com; admission adult/child S\$15.50/10/50; 🕒 1-7pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, Sun, public & school holidays). Price of admission allows access to unlimited rides: go-kart, slide, ride and splash around till you're wrinkled, sunburnt and sore.

There are lots of restaurants and food stalls to keep the energy levels up. To get here, take the MRT to Pasir Ris and walk to the park. A free shuttle bus serves Downtown East. Or take bus 12, 354, 358 or 403.

Changi Museum & Chapel

The **Changi Museum & Chapel** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6214 2451; www.changimuseum.com; 1000 Upper Changi Rd Nth; admission free, guided tour adult/child S\$8/4; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) poignantly commemorates the WWII Allied POWs who suffered horrific treatment at the hands of the invading Japanese. Stories are told through photographs, letters, drawings and murals; tales of heroism and celebration of peace temper the mood. There are also full-sized replicas of the famous **Changi Murals** painted by POW Stanley Warren in the old POW hospital. The originals are off limits in what is now Block 151 of the nearby Changi Army Camp.

The museum's centrepiece is a replica of the original Changi Chapel built by inmates as a focus for worship and as a sign of solidarity and strength.

Bus 2 from Victoria St or Tanah Merah MRT will take you past the entrance. The bus terminates at Changi Village.

Changi Village

On the far northeast coast of Singapore, **Changi Village** (Map pp514–15) is an escape from the city mayhem. The low-slung buildings are modern, but there's still a village atmosphere;

the lively hawker centre next to the bus terminus is the focal point. Changi Beach (where thousands of Singaporean civilians were executed during WWII), lapped by the polluted waters of the Straits of Johor, is lousy for swimming, but there's a good stretch of sand. The ferry terminal for catching a bumboat to Pulau Ubin is located opposite the hawker centre. Bus 2 from Tanah Merah MRT runs here.

Pulau Ubin

A chugging 10-minute bumboat ride (one way S\$2.50, trips between 7am and 8pm) from Changi Point Ferry Terminal at Changi Village lands you on the shores of Pulau Ubin (Map pp514–15). There's no timetable; boats depart when 12 people are ready to go.

Singaporeans like to wax nostalgic about Ubin's *kampung* atmosphere, and it has thus far resisted the lure of cashed-up developers. It remains a rural, unkempt expanse of jungle full of fast lizards, weird shrines and cacophonous birdlife. Tin-roofed buildings bake in the sun, chickens squawk and panting dogs slump in the dust.

The best way to get around is by mountain bike (rental per day S\$2 to S\$10). Don't bother with the cheaper clunkers as your bum will appreciate proper suspension. Veer right from the jetty to the **Pulau Ubin information kiosk** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6542 4108; www.nparks.gov.sg; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), pick up a map, and sniff around the exhibition on Ubin's culture, history and wildlife.

Trundle off on your bike and see where the road takes you. For those keen on scraping their knees, there's **Ketam Mountain Bike Park** (Map pp514–15), with over a dozen trails of varying difficulty. You can also take a trip to the **Chek Jawa Wetlands** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) in the island's east. A 1km coastal boardwalk takes you out to sea and loops back through the mangrove swamp and the 20m-high **Jejawi Tower** offers stunning views of the area.

There are plenty of places to eat near the ferry terminal – complete your island adventure with some chilli crab and Tiger beer as the Bee Gees wail shamelessly from the stereo.

For those inclined to stay on the island, you can rent a basic but comfortable **chalet** (☎ 6385 6166; marinacountryclub.com.sg; 1-2-bedroom chalets S\$120/240; 📺) run by the Marina Country Club. Rates plunge on weekdays.

NORTHERN & CENTRAL SINGAPORE

Apart from the major sights listed below you'll also probably find yourself visiting **Dempsey Hill** (Map pp520-1; Tanglin Village, Dempsey Rd), a once-crumbling army barracks now packed with several very 'see and be seen' restaurants and bars as well as furniture stores and even an art gallery. The nearby busy expat enclave of **Holland Village** (Map pp514–15) is also a prime dining destination.

Singapore Zoo

Set on a peninsula jutting into the Upper Seletar Reservoir, the **Singapore Zoo** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6269 3411; www.zoo.com.sg; 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$18/9; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) is world class. Its 28 landscaped hectares and open concept (no cages) are a far cry from the sad concrete confines some zoos retain.

There are more than 2530 residents here and most of them, with the possible exceptions of elephants used in a ride, seem pretty happy. Attractions such as the 'The Great Rift Valley of Ethiopia' enclosure convey entire ecosystems: animal, mineral, vegetable and human. Visitors can stand behind a window in 'Ethiopia' and watch 50 shameless red-bummed baboons doing things that Singaporeans still get arrested for. The popular proboscis monkeys sit on tree branches in two different enclosures, scratching and swinging more than their arms.

Children will be entertained by the list of shows and feeding sessions that seem to require a PhD to decipher. You can get around the zoo on foot or by tram (adult/child S\$5/2.50). To get here take bus 138 from Ang Mo Kio MRT or bus 927 from Choa Chu Kang MRT. A taxi to/from the city costs around S\$18.

Night Safari

Next door but completely separate from the zoo is the **Night Safari** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6269 3411; www.nightsafari.com.sg; 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$21/11; ☎ 7.30pm-midnight). You can walk around the three trails in the 40-hectare forested park but the best experience is via the tram (adult/child S\$10/5), even though we think it's a little cheeky (and greedy) that you have to pay for the atmospheric 45-minute jungle tour past a parade of 120 different spot-lit nocturnal species.

The tram takes you past tigers, elephants, anteaters and lions, and some species, like the

sambar deer, often sidle up close to the side of the tram. It's best to come early as the animals would have just been fed and are happy to come out to play. Don't use the flash on your camera, as it unsettles the animals.

The impressive and humorous 'Creatures of the Night' show (7.30pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm and, on weekends, 10.30pm) will make you wonder why we ever bothered to evolve. You can save some money with a combined Zoo and Night Safari ticket (adult/child S\$32/16).

After the Night Safari catch a return bus by 10.45pm to ensure you make the last train from Ang Mo Kio (11.30pm) or Choa Chu Kang (midnight). There's a taxi rank at the zoo entrance.

Mandai Orchard Gardens & Orchidville

Cultivating orchids is big business in Singapore – **Mandai Orchard Gardens** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6269 1036; www.mandai.com.sg; 200 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$5/1; 🕒 8.30am-7pm), four flowery hectares near the zoo, is the place to see them. **Orchidville** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6552 7003; www.orchidville.com.sg; 10 Lg Lada Hitam, Mandai Agrotechnology Park; admission free; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9.30pm Sat & Sun) is similar to the Mandai Orchard Gardens, but has the bonus of a fantastic on-site restaurant, **Forrest** (mains from S\$12; 🍽️ lunch & dinner). To get to these two sights, see the transport details to the zoo (opposite).

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

Singapore's steamy heart of darkness is **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 1800-468 5736; www.nparks.gov.sg; 177 Hindhede Dr; admission free; 🕒 6.30am-7pm), a 164-hectare tract of undeveloped primary rainforest clinging to Singapore's highest peak, Bukit Timah (163.63m). Established as a reserve in 1883, Bukit Timah has never been logged.

Guffawing British naturalist David Bellamy once noted that the reserve holds more tree species than the entire North American continent. The unbroken forest canopy of the reserve also shelters what remains of Singapore's native wildlife, including long-tailed macaques (monkeys), pythons and literally dozens of bird species.

There are four well-established **walking trails** through the reserve, which take from 20 minutes to one-hour return. The most popular and easiest is the concrete-paved route straight to the summit, though you should leave time to explore the less busy side trails. The steep

paths are sweaty work, so take plenty of water, embalm yourself in mosquito repellent, and don't feed the monkeys no matter how politely they ask. There is also 6km of **cycling trails** circumnavigating the forest – pick up a trail map from the **visitors centre** (🕒 8.30am-6pm).

To get here catch bus 171 from Orchard MRT, bus 75 from the CBD or bus 170 from Queen St Bus Terminal. Get off at the Bukit Timah Shopping Centre; the park's entrance is about 1km north along Hindhede Dr.

MacRitchie Reservoir

Bring lots of water and wear good walking shoes...this ain't no ordinary hike in the park. In the middle of the 2000-hectare Central Catchment Nature Reserve is the **MacRitchie Reservoir** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6256 4248; www.nparks.gov.sg; Lornie Rd; admission free; 🕒 6.30am-6pm). The mirror-surfaced reservoir is surrounded by a 12km, five-hour, circular jungle trail. Though less popular, the six trails here are no less beautiful than the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve walks and provide more of a challenge. Pick up a map from the rangers' office along Lornie Rd or at the start of the Pierce Track.

The standout attraction here is the **treetop walk** (🕒 9am to 5pm Tue-Fri, 8.30am to 5pm Sat & Sun). Yes, it's a hard slog to get here, but once you're standing in the middle of the narrow 250m suspension bridge, all tiredness will fade. You can see glimpses of Lower Seletar Reservoir, and if you look down at the forest canopy, your naked eye alone will easily be able to spot at least nine different species of flora.

For those not inclined to walking up rocky trails, you can also hire a kayak (p513) or go fishing.

Kids will delight at the monkeys that appear along the trails...but don't feed them, no matter how cute they look.

Bus 157 runs here from Toa Payoh MRT station.

Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Attention bird-nerds! The 87-hectare **Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6794 1401; www.sbrw.org.sg; 301 Neo Tiew Cres; admission free Mon-Fri, adult/child S\$1/0.50 Sat & Sun; 🕒 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 7am-7pm Sun) overlooks the Straits of Johor in the far northwest of the island. The park sustains 140 bird species, most of which are migratory, and features mangrove boardwalks, walking trails enclosed by thick foliage, observation huts and guided tours on Saturdays (9am,

TOTO, WE'RE NOT ON ORCHARD ROAD ANY MORE...

After years of being overshadowed by the commerce of Orchard Rd, the farm owners in Kranji decided to form a collective, **Kranji Countryside Association** (www.kranjicountryside.com) to promote awareness of their existence. Thus far, they've done a great job considering they don't have the multimillion-dollar advertising budgets of retail heavies, but hey, anyone who decides to make a living selling goats' milk deserves special mention.

These **farms** (Map pp514-15) are open to the public, so you'll get a chance to sample and purchase organic vegetables, fruit and, yes, even goats' milk. Other farms specialise in seafood (consumable) and koi (not consumable), pottery, frogs and wheatgrass. There are cafes and restaurants located on some farms. To complete the 'out of Orchard' experience, stay in a plush villa at **D'Kranji Resort** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6862 9717; www.dkranji.com.sg; d/tr from S\$230/330).

The best way to check out the farms is via a shuttle bus (adult S\$2/1) that runs every 1½ hours daily from outside the Kranji MRT. The bus stops at 12 farms along the return loop.

10pm, 3pm and 4pm). 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). BYO binoculars and mosquito repellent.

Take bus 925 from Kranji MRT to the Kranji Reservoir bus stop – it's a 15-minute hike from here. The bus stops at the park entrance on Sundays. There's also a shuttle bus from Kranji MRT that does rounds past Kranji farms (see the boxed text, above).

Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

Nestled in a corner of the Toa Payoh HDB housing estate, the photogenic **Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6259 6924; 184E Jln Toa Payoh; ☎ 7am-5pm), aka Siong Lim Temple, is a little out of the way, but well worth the journey. The original temple structure at the back of the compound is rather blah, no thanks to the many Frankenstein renovations done through the years. The sprawling mass built up around it, though, is something out of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Shaded pathways connect massive halls covered in gold, red and blue. A massive white reclining Buddha greets visitors in one room. Look for 12 large mythical-style paintings telling the story of the temple's founding abbots.

Next door, the **Cheng Huang Temple** (☎ 9am-5pm) is constantly buzzing with locals paying their respects. Dedicated to a god who administers justice in the netherworld (must explain the crowd), the atmospheric interior of the 1912 structure soars up to red- and ochre-hued ceilings, thick beams stained with decades of incense smoke.

The monastery and temple is about 1km east of Toa Payoh MRT station – follow the signs down Kim Keat Link off Lg 6 Toa Payoh, or take bus 238 three stops from Toa Payoh bus interchange.

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Take a few hours to explore the **Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6453 5300; www.kmspks.org; 88 Bright Hill Rd; admission free; ☎ gates 6am-9pm, halls 8am-4pm), Singapore's largest (12 buildings) and most stunning. 'Don't speak unless it improves the silence' is the creed here, the resultant quiet a surreal counterpart to dragon-topped pagodas, shrines, plazas and lawns linked by Escher-like staircases.

On the premises is a large columbarium, several different halls devoted to various guises of the Buddha and even a dining hall that serves up free vegetarian meals to devotees. Finish your visit by reflecting under a bodhi tree beside the Hall of Precepts (the tree is claimed to be a descendant of the sacred bodhi tree at Buddha Gaya).

Buses 52 and 410 (white plate) run here from Bishan MRT station.

Kranji War Memorial

Near the Causeway off Woodlands Rd, the austere white structures and rolling lawns of the **Kranji War Memorial** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6269 6158; www.cwgc.com; 9 Woodlands Rd; admission free; ☎ 24hr) contain the WWII graves of thousands of Allied troops. It's hard to believe that this area was once a hospital and ammunitions dump.

Headstones (more than a few simply inscribed with 'A Soldier of the 1939-1945 War') are lined in neat rows across manicured

grass. Walls are inscribed with the names of 24,346 men and women who lost their lives in Southeast Asia. Row 262 has the name of a suspected (but never convicted) Japanese spy, Patrick Balcombe Heenan. Register books are available for inspection. The bodies of Singapore's first two prime ministers are interred at the front. To get here catch the MRT to Kranji then walk 10 minutes, or take bus 170 two stops west.

SOUTHERN & WESTERN SINGAPORE

Mt Faber & the Cable Car

Mt Faber (Map pp520-1) stands proud (if not tall) at 116m on the southern fringe of the city, opposite the HarbourFront Centre, VivoCity and not far from Sentosa Island. From the summit, the strange splendour of Singapore rolls away to the horizon in all directions. To the south are scenes of Keppel Wharves and industrial Pasir Panjang. Turn around to the north and the landscape does a 180. The sheer density and homogeneity of Singapore's high-rise buildings are set in a perfect panorama.

To get to the top, ride the spectacular **cable car** (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6270 8855; www.mountfaber.com.sg; 109 Mt Faber Rd; adult/child 1-way S\$18.90/9.50; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) from the HarbourFront Centre or take bus 409. Walking is difficult but rewarding, a maze of steep trails taking you through twisted copses of dense, buzzing forest, with strategically positioned seats, pavilions, lookouts and colonial-era black-and-white bungalows along the way. The summit is also part of the Southern Ridges span of parks (see below).

Impress the pants off the object of your desires with **Sky Dining** (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6377 9688; per couple S\$115-198; ☎ 6.30-8.30pm) in the cable car – a romantic three-course dinner with pluming 60m-high views. An interesting spot to get steamy; a bad place to break up.

Southern Ridges – Kent Ridge Park to HortPark

Mt Faber is connected to Kent Ridge Park via HortPark in a 9km-long chain known as the Southern Ridges. Set aside a day, pack lots of water and start at **Kent Ridge Park** (Map pp514-15; Vigilante Dr; ☎ 24hr). This park commands views over the port and the southern islands and is nearly always deserted. The walk will take you through a treetop boardwalk with the call of crickets your only companion. Look out for signs directing you to HortPark. Don't forget

to visit Reflections at Bukit Chandu (below) en route.

The idyllic leafy shade of Kent Ridge quickly gives way to the wide-open gardens of...don't laugh...**HortPark** (Map pp514-15; 33 Hyderabad Rd; free admission; ☎ 24hr). This Hort(icultural) Park has more than a horrid name and a lack of shelter from the merciless sun. Walk past prototype glasshouses (sadly not open to the public) filled with all manner of flora. There are interactive displays for kids to learn about exciting gardening methods (hydroponics is cool kids!). Buy gardening tools and supplies at the **HortMart** before stopping for a Thai lunch at Kha.

Cross the leaf-like Alexander Arch bridge from HortPark and follow the gently ascending walkways up to the stunning **Henderson Waves**. This undulating sculptural pedestrian bridge is Singapore's highest, suspended at 36m above ground. It connects pedestrians to Telok Blangah Hill Park. If you're really keen on further testing the limit of your sweat glands, you could walk on through to Mt Faber (left).

The nearest bus stops to Kent Ridge Park (for buses 10, 30, 51 and 143) are on Pasir Panjang Rd, from where it's a steep hike up the hill. A taxi from the nearest MRT station, at Queenstown, will cost around S\$6. You can also take bus 61, 93, 97, 100, 166, 408 or 963 from HarbourFront MRT station to HortPark.

Reflections at Bukit Chandu

Atop Bukit Chandu (Opium Hill), this WWII **interpretive centre** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6375 2510; www.s1942.org.sg; 31K Pepys Rd; admission S\$2; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is set inside a tiny renovated villa. The focus is on the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Malay Regiment, who bravely (and unsuccessfully) defended the hill against the 13,000 Japanese in the Battle of Pasir Panjang in February 1942.

The nearest bus stops (for buses 10, 30, 51 and 143) are on Pasir Panjang Rd, from where it's a steep hike up the hill. A taxi from Orchard Rd will cost around S\$10. Combine this sight with a walk through the Southern Ridges (left).

Labrador Nature Reserve & Labrador Secret Tunnels

Believe it or not, this was an overgrown patch of jungle, slated to be turned into a theme park

in the late '80s. Some locals had the sense to protest, and the discovery of WWII gun batteries put a stop to dreams of Disneyland. A lush **park** was carved into the hillside instead.

In addition to old gun placements on top of casemates, there's the intriguing **Labrador Secret Tunnels** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6339 6833; Labrador Villa Rd; admission adult/child S\$8/5; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun). This series of storage and armament bunkers leads to the base of a 9.2in-circumference gun emplacement. Look for the buckled and caved-in walls from a direct hit from a Japanese bomb. Ring before visiting, as the tunnels aren't regularly manned.

Bus 408 from HarbourFront MRT takes you here. A taxi from HarbourFront costs S\$6.

Haw Par Villa

There's no accounting for taste, really. Millionaire philanthropist and co-inventor of the Tiger Balm, Aw Boon Haw, certainly didn't hold back when he built the **Haw Par Villa** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6872 2780; 262 Pasir Panjang Rd; admission free; 🕒 9am-7pm), an unbelievably weird (some say tacky) and undoubtedly kitsch theme park.

Inspired by Chinese literature and mythology, the park is filled with thousands of statues set in dioramas depicting scenes from disparate sources including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and Confucianism. The park's crowning glory is the 'Ten Courts of Hell', where grotesque statues depict sinners' fates in gory detail (impaling seems to be a popular form of punishment). Recompose yourself and calm your now-disturbed children at the nearby laughing Buddha.

Located on a hill within the compound is the **Hua Song Museum** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6872 2780; adult/child S\$8.60/5.35; 🕒 9am-6pm). As classy as the villa is tacky, this museum offers visitors a glimpse into the lives, enterprises and adventures of Chinese migrants around the world in a more studious fashion than those in Haw Par Villa.

Bus 200 from Buona Vista MRT runs here as well as buses 10, 30 and 143 from HarbourFront MRT.

NUS Museums

Ask any local about the trio of small **art museums** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6516 4617; www.nus.edu.sg/museums; 50 Kent Ridge Cres; admission free; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) in the National University of Singapore (NUS) campus and you'll probably

get a blank stare before they reply, 'Huh? NUS has got a museum?' Which is a shame, as these galleries are top-notch and house a more exciting collection than the heavily advertised Singapore Art Museum (p496).

On the ground floor is the **Lee Kong Chian Art Museum** with artefacts and works spanning 7000 years of Chinese art. Look out for ceramic pillows (ouch) and delicate funerary jars from the Song dynasty. The concourse level features the **South & Southeast Asian Gallery** with art from across the region, including textiles and sculptures, all expertly curated. When we visited, there was a huge display of art by Jendela, an Indonesian collective.

Upstairs is the **Ng Eng Teng Gallery**, displaying 1106 paintings, drawings and sculptures by Ng Eng Teng (1934-2001), one of Singapore's foremost artists, specialising in imaginative, sometimes surreal, bodily depictions. There's a human, sometimes self-deprecating, element to the work, perhaps best seen in a display of bloodied cotton balls (the artist had tuberculosis).

Visit the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (below) while you're on campus. Catch bus 95 from Buona Vista MRT to get here.

Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research

If examining stuffed animals and creatures preserved in large jars gets your pulse racing, the small **Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6874 5082; www.rnbr.nus.edu.sg; Block 56, Level 3, NUS Faculty of Science, Science Dr 2, Lower Kent Ridge Rd; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), on the NUS campus, will give your adrenal glands a workout.

There are stuffed and preserved examples of rare and locally extinct creatures, including a 4.42m king cobra (clubbed to death when it slithered into the Singapore Country Club) and a banded leaf monkey (mauled by dogs... do we sense a theme here?) eerily floating in a tank, arms held up by strings.

It's not exactly on the tourist trail, but it's worth the trip if you combine it with the NUS Museums (left) nearby. Catch bus 95 from Buona Vista MRT.

Jurong Bird Park

This ageing attraction is still popular with school kids, families and nature photographers. The **Jurong Bird Park** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6265 0022;

SINGAPORE'S LAST KAMPUNG (VILLAGE)

As if willed into existence from an old black-and-white photograph from the 1950s, Lg Buangkok's *kampung* (Map pp514–15), in an urbane corner of Singapore, is mainland Singapore's last little blip of resistance against the tide of modern development.

Hidden behind a wall of trees, this little swath of land houses a ramshackle collection of wooden houses, many with zinc roofs. The few residents live an idyllic existence not unlike how many Singaporeans did before the development frenzy. Chickens roam the grounds, dogs flick flies away with a flap of their ears, crickets and birds hum and chirp in the background, and the 28 families here have carefree sensibilities not common in the general populace (the cheap S\$30 per month rents must help). The *kampung* is busiest during the weekend when curious locals and photo clubs descend for a slice of nostalgia.

Sadly, the owner of the land, Sng Mui Hong, might not be able to preserve this family legacy. Master plans by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore have revealed that the land the *kampung* stands on is slated to be, what else, redeveloped into housing and schools.

To get here, either catch a taxi from the city (roughly S\$15) or take bus 88 from Pasir Ris or Toa Payoh and get off on Ang Mo Kio Ave 5 just after Yio Chu Kang Rd. Go north up Yio Chu Kang Rd and turn right onto Gerard Dr. Continue until you find Lg Buangkok. Look for an unpaved road leading into the village. Good luck, for it might have been bulldozed by the time this goes to print.

www.birdpark.com.sg; 2 Jurong Hill; adult/child S\$18/9, panoramic S\$5/2.50; ☎ 8am–6pm) is home to 8000 birds – 600 species, 30 of them endangered. Visitors walk through themed enclosures along 1.7km worth of trails: pelicans gawp at passers-by along a boardwalk, leggy pink flamingos stand proud by a lake, penguins nosedive through water in air-conditioned comfort and cutting through it all is the escapable scent of bird poop.

Other highlights include the penguin feedings at 10.30am and 3.30pm, the Waterfall Aviary (with its 30m-high man-made waterfall, the highest in the world), and the nocturnal World of Darkness. There are various floppy-bird shows throughout the day and a 'panorail' to shunt you around if you're feeling lazy.

To get here take bus 194 or 251 from Boon Lay MRT.

Singapore Science Centre

The endearingly geeky **Singapore Science Centre** (Map pp514–15; ☎ 6425 2500; www.science.edu.sg; 15 Science Centre Rd; adult/child S\$6/3; ☎ 10am–6pm Sat–Thu, 10am–9pm Fri) is chock-full of exhibits covering a variety of themes, from optical illusions to maths (ugh), the human body and even climate change. Many displays are of a push/pull/twist-and-see-what-happens variety but our favourite is the gi-normous Tesla coil that frenetically shoots up sparks to the ceiling. No touching, kids!

Outside is the free **Kinetic Garden**, an interactive scientific sculpture garden. Next door, the **Omni-Theatre** (Map pp514–15; adult/child S\$10/5; ☎ 11am–8pm) projects films (of the nature-documentary variety) onto a 23m hemispheric screen and blasts your eardrums with 20,000 watts of sound.

Jurong East is the nearest MRT station – take the left-hand exit, walk through a row of stores and across Jurong Town Hall Rd. A taxi from Orchard Rd costs around S\$18.

SENTOSA ISLAND

Five hundred metres off the south coast of Singapore is **Sentosa Island** (Map pp514–15; ☎ 6736 8672; www.sentosa.com.sg; adult/child S\$2; ☎ 7am–midnight), the city's unfailingly popular resort getaway. The Brits turned the island into a military fortress in the late 1800s. In 1967 it was returned to the Singaporean government, who developed it into a holiday resort. These days, a concerted effort to transform the island from tacky second-rate to tacky world-class is under way. By 2010, the entire northern front will be home to a Universal Studios Theme Park and a casino (see the boxed text, p495).

Like its beaches with imported sand, fake boulders and piped tin-drum renditions of 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' and 'Summer Holiday', Sentosa is an almost entirely synthetic attraction, but kids love the flashy rides and there are some substantial museums and outdoor activities for adults to chew on.

There's easily enough here for a full day's entertainment; if that's not enough time, you can stay overnight (see p534). The improving crop of restaurants and bars will keep you fed and watered.

Most attractions cost extra, which really adds up if you want to see them all. Ticket packages are a solid option at adult/child S\$38.90/26.90. The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) branches have all the details. Free stuff on the island includes the buses and beaches.

Underwater World

Sentosa's saving grace, Gracie the dugong is the star performer at **Underwater World** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 0030; www.underwaterworld.com.sg; adult/child S\$22.90/14.60; ☎ 9am-9pm). Leafy sea dragons and wobbling Medusa jellyfish are mesmeric, while stingrays and 10ft sharks cruise inches from your face as the traveller takes you through the Ocean Colony's submerged glass tubes. Watch divers feeding the fish, or muster some nerve for the 30-minute *Dive with the Sharks* experience (\$120 per person; call for details and bookings). The lights are turned off after 7pm and the aquarium takes on an eerie torchlit atmosphere.

Entry includes admission to **Dolphin Lagoon** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 10.30am-6pm) at Palawan Beach, where Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphins (aka pink dolphins) dutifully perform at 11am, 1pm, 3.30pm and 5.30pm. For S\$150 you can swim with the dolphins (call or check the website for bookings).

Fort Siloso

Dating from the 1880s, when Sentosa was called Pulau Blakang Mati (Malay for 'island behind which lies death'), is **Fort Siloso** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$8/5; ☎ 10am-6pm). Three self-guided tours lead you around the various gun emplacements, tunnels and buildings, with waxwork recreations and voice-overs. When it came to the crunch in the WWII Japanese invasion, Siloso's guns were all pointing the wrong way (you can see the view from the southernmost gun emplacement). The Japanese used the fort as a POW camp.

From 1989 until 1992, Siloso housed Sentosa's most unusual 'attraction', political prisoner Chia Thye Poh. Arrested in 1966 for alleged communist sympathies, Chia served 23 years in jail before being placed under house arrest in Siloso – Sentosa's holiday delights sprang up around him.

Images of Singapore

This diverting historical and cultural **museum** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$10/7; ☎ 9am-7pm) kicks off with Singapore as a Malay Sultanate then takes you through its consolidation as a port and trading centre, WWII and the subsequent Japanese surrender. Scenes are recreated using lifelike wax dummies, film footage and dramatic light-and-sound effects. Recreations of local customs and tradition are particularly interesting. A well-worn attraction on the school-excursion trail.

Beaches

Sentosa's three southern beaches – **Siloso** to the west, **Palawan** in the middle and **Tanjong** to the east – will never match the beaches in Malaysia or Indonesia, but that doesn't seem to matter to the Singaporeans who flock here. The sandy coconut vibe is soporific, even if the muddy Straits of Singapore are a little uninviting.

Other Attractions

Songs of the Sea (Map pp514-15; admission S\$10; ☎ 7.40 & 8.40pm) is set out on *kelongs* (offshore fishing huts) and nightly combines musical gushings with a spectacular S\$4-million sound, light and laser extravaganza – worth hanging around for.

You'll be fluttered by more than 50 species of butterfly inside the **Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$16/10; ☎ 9am-6.30pm). The Insect Kingdom museum has thousands of mounted butterflies, rhino beetles, Hercules beetles (the world's largest), scorpions, and other critters and varmints – kids stare wide-eyed while adults feign disinterest.

Among the trashier of Sentosa's attractions is the **Merlion** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$8/5; ☎ 10am-8pm), a 37m hybrid lion-mermaid statue towering over the island; the view is great but it's better from the cable car.

Cineblast, **4D Magix** and **Desperadoes** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$18/11; ☎ 10am-9pm) offer different 4-D virtual-reality thrill rides and shows per admission – the 'fourth' dimension being the water sprayed at you (how rude!). There are several nature trails including the **Dragon Trail Nature Walk**, which has been typically livened up with plaster dragons and fossils. There are also plenty of long-tailed macaques about – keep your food hidden!

The 'overt too quickly' **Sentosa Luge** (Map pp514-15; per ride & chairlift S\$11; ☎ 10am-6pm) is a 650m downhill blitz on a wheeled toboggan.

Make like a dotcom dork on a Segway ride with **Gogreen Segway Eco Adventure** (Map pp514-15; rides from S\$10; ☎ 10am-9.30pm). Get perpendicular on this two-wheeled vehicle and scoot round a circuit (10 minutes, S\$10) or opt for a longer jaunt to Tanjong or Siloso Beach (45 minutes, S\$35).

Resembling a camembert impaled on a carrot, the former Carlsberg Sky Tower has had a fresh coat of paint and been rebadged the **Tiger Sky Tower** (Map pp514-15; adult/child S\$12/8; ☎ 9am-9pm). Take the slow ride up the 110m column for magical Singapore views. Thankfully, the Carlsberg Float – a beer and ice-cream monstrosity at the bar – was not replaced with a Tiger version.

Getting There & Away

The easiest way to get to Sentosa is via shuttle bus (S\$3) from HarbourFront Bus Interchange, running every 15 minutes from 7am to 11pm Sunday to Thursday, and until 12.30am on Friday and Saturday.

You can also catch the Sentosa Express rail link (Map pp514-15; return ticket S\$3; ☎ 7am-midnight) from the 3rd floor of the mammoth VivoCity mall, next to HarbourFront MRT.

For a more memorable trip, take the cable car to Sentosa from the top of Mt Faber or HarbourFront Tower Two (see p507). Standard cabins cost S\$18.90/9.50 for adults/children one way; the cable car operates between 8.30am and 11pm.

Getting Around

Transport on the island is included in the admission price. There are three colour-coded bus lines zooming between attractions, and motorised trams connecting the beaches. The island is small enough to walk around but some parts are steep. You can also hire bikes and in-line skates from S\$5 to S\$10 per hour at Palawan and Siloso Beaches – very tempting when weekend bus queues start to burgeon.

SOUTHERN ISLANDS

Three other islands popular with castaway-fantasising locals are St John's, Kusu and Lazarus. On weekends they're mildly crowded but during the week they can be almost deserted... unless your visit clashes with a school camp – still, they're great for fishing, swim-

ming, a picnic and guzzling BYO six-packs. St John's and Kusu Islands have changing rooms and toilets.

St John's Island (Map pp514-15) is the largest of the three. It was once a quarantine station for immigrants, a drug-rehabilitation centre and a detention centre. These days, there isn't much there except retro-looking low-lying bungalows, a swimming lagoon and local flora. Bring a fishing rod and expect to snag some snappers or groupers – just as well, because the culinary offerings here are nonexistent.

You can stay overnight in air-conditioned colonial-style bungalows (from S\$53.50 per night) – contact the **Sentosa Development Corporation** (☎ 1800-736 8672) for details. You could also camp for free along the beach.

Lazarus Island (Map pp514-15) is now connected to St John's via a concrete walkway. If St John's is quiet, then Lazarus is a ghost town. It's popular with anglers and local campers. At night, it's pitch black except for the twinkling of lights from shipping boats moored not far off the coast.

Kusu Island (Map pp514-15) is more culturally interesting; devotees coming to pray for health, wealth and fertility at its Taoist temple and Malay *kramat* (shrine). There's a turtle sanctuary (awww) and the Tua Pek Kong Temple next to the ferry jetty. Entering the temple is akin to entering someone's home: a lazing resident dog stares at you, fishing nets and laundry lie drying in the sun, and a mango tree out the back tempts you with its juicy fruit (no, don't try).

A canary yellow-painted *kramat* is at the top of some steep steps on a small hill. Strangely enough, there's a Chinese altar at the front of the *kramat* and the caretaker offers you Chinese-style joss sticks for S\$2. Pray for wealth and pick a 4D lottery number.

You can visit both temple and shrine in less than an hour, leaving you the rest of the day to loll around on the beach. Kusu is also home to the only place in Singapore with sea water that's actually clear! The swimming lagoon that faces Indonesia is pure joy and most visitors spend most of their time frolicking here. BYO food and drinks. The 'hawker centre' marked on the map is empty.

The liveliest time to visit Kusu is during the annual pilgrimage of Taoists in the ninth lunar month (around October).

Getting There & Away

The ferry from **Marina South Pier** (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6275 03888; www.islandcruise.com.sg; 31 Marina Coastal Dr; adult/child return S\$15/12; ☎ 10am & 2pm Mon-Fri, 9am, noon & 3pm Sat, every 2hr 9am-5pm Sun) runs to St John's, stopping for 20 minutes before heading to Kusu. You can spend a few hours at each island by getting the first ferry to St John's, getting off and catching the next one on to Kusu before getting the last one back to Marina South. To get to Marina South Pier, take bus 402 from outside the Marina Bay MRT station.

Some harbour cruises also pass St John's Island and stop at Kusu for 20 minutes or so (see p529).

ACTIVITIES

ADVENTURE SPORT

If you like your highs quick, intense and somewhat brutal, the **G-max Reverse Bungy** (Map p517; ☎ 6338 1146; www.gmax.com.sg; 3E River Valley Rd; per ride S\$45; ☎ 1pm-1am Mon-Thu, 1pm-2am Fri, noon-2am Sat, noon-1am Sun) might be for you. You are strapped into padded chairs inside a metal cage, which is propelled skyward to a height of 60m at speeds exceeding 200km/h before being pulled back down by gravity.

A relatively more gentle high ('relatively' is the key word here) is offered right next door on the **GX-5** (Map p517; ☎ 6338 1146; www.gmax.com.sg; 3E River Valley Rd; per ride S\$40; ☎ 1pm-1am Mon-Thu, 1pm-2am Fri, noon-2am Sat, noon-1am Sun). The GX5 swings riders up and over the Singapore River at a less nauseating velocity. Many patrons sign up in a fit of alcohol-fuelled courage, as these rides are located next to the bar-filled Clarke Quay.

CYCLING

You can hire a bike and trundle along the foreshore at East Coast Park (p503), at Pasir Ris Park (p503) or on Pulau Ubin (p504) for between S\$5 and S\$10 per hour, depending on the quality of the bike. There are tandem bikes.

There's a 5.7km **bicycle track** looping around Sentosa Island that takes in most of its attractions. Hire a bike at Siloso or Palawan Beaches – see p511.

For a more challenging workout tackle the mountain-bike trails around Bukit

Timah Nature Reserve (p505) and at Pulau Ubin (p504).

Two Wheel Action (☎ 6471 2775; www.twa.com.sg) organises Sunday rides in collaboration with the Singapore chapter of the Hash House Harriers. You bring your own bike, meet at a prearranged point, then propel yourself into it. It costs S\$10 per session.

GOLF

Golf is big business in Singapore, and big status too.

There are two 18-hole golf courses at the **Sentosa Golf Club** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 0022; 18 holes S\$305-425).

Most other clubs are members only, but the following courses will let you tee-off for S\$30 to S\$50 for nine holes on weekdays, or S\$50 to S\$180 on weekends:

Executive Golf Course (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6556 0600; Upper Seletar Reservoir, Mandai Rd)

Jurong Country Club (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6560 5655; 9 Science Centre Rd)

Marina Bay Golf Course (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6345 7788; 80 Rhu Cross)

GYMS

Most big hotels have gyms, or gym junkies can head to **Fitness First** (Map p524; ☎ 6737 7889; 05-01 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun), **California Fitness** (Map p524; ☎ 6834 2100; Orchard Bldg, 1 Grange Rd; ☎ 6am-midnight Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) or **True Fitness** (Map p517; ☎ 6820 9000; 07-0011 Suntec City Mall, 3 Temasek Blvd; ☎ 6am-11pm Mon-Thu, 6am-10pm Fri, 6am-9pm Sat, 8am-8pm Sun).

POOL & SNOOKER

Singaporeans *love* to play pool. Chalk your cue at **Pool Fusion** (Map p517; ☎ 6339 9225; 01-04 Beach Centre, 15 Beach Rd; per hr S\$12; ☎ noon-3am), or bend elbows with raucous teens at **SuperCue** (Map p517; ☎ 6334 1000; www.superbowl.com.sg; 03-200 Marina Sq, 6 Raffles Blvd; per hr S\$12; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat).

ROCK CLIMBING

Dairy Farm Quarry (Map pp514-15; Dairy Farm Rd) near Bukit Timah is the only legal place to climb in Singapore. Most of the 20-plus routes are bolted and can be tackled with a 50m rope; bring your own gear. Groups of climbers come here regularly on weekends – check www.indoorclimbing.com/singapore.html for details.

SPAS & MASSAGE

Massage, beauty treatments and reflexology are regulation Singaporean indulgences – everyone seems to have clear skin, clean nails and lustrously flowing hair. Every mall seems to have a spa or massage joint of some sort, so you're never too far from an overhaul!

Willow Stream Spa (Map p517; ☎ 6432 5600; www.willowstream.com; 06-01 Fairmont Singapore, 80 Bras Basah Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) covers all the bases – massages, facials, wraps, manicures pedicures, waxing – and keeps you relaxed for hours. Prices start at S\$40 and go sky high.

With branches scattered throughout the city, **Kenko Wellness Boutique** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6223 0303; www.kenko.com.sg; 211 South Bridge Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) is the McDonald's of Singapore's spas, but there is nothing drive-thru about its foot reflexology (30 minutes S\$33).

Spa Botanica (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6371 1318; www.spabotanica.com; Sentosa Resort & Spa, 2 Bukit Manis Rd, Sentosa; ☎ 10am-10pm) was Singapore's first indoor/outdoor spa. The signature Galaxy Steam Bath (S\$95) is a 30-minute wallow in medicinal chakra mud in a specially designed steam room.

SWIMMING

Given the polluted waters, Singapore's beaches aren't particularly swim-friendly, although there are safe swimming areas at East Coast Park and on Sentosa and the southern islands. Alternatively, Singapore's 50m public swimming pools (per adult S\$1 to S\$1.30, child S\$0.50 to S\$0.70, open from 8am to 9.30pm) are winners:

Delta Swimming Complex (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6474 7573; 900 Tiong Bahru Rd)

Jalan Besar Swimming Complex (Map p522; ☎ 6293 9058; 100 Tyrwhitt Rd)

Katong Swimming Complex (Map p528; ☎ 6344 9609; 111 Wilkinson Rd)

River Valley Swimming Complex (Map p517; ☎ 6337 6275; 1 River Valley Rd)

TENPIN BOWLING

Just what the government ordered – good, clean family fun! **SuperBowl** (Map p517; ☎ 6334 1000; www.superbowl.com.sg; 03-200 Marina Sq, 6 Raffles Blvd; per game S\$4-4.30; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat) has 16 lanes of bowl-o-rama.

WATER SPORTS

Aquabikes, canoes, kayaks and sailboards are available for hire on Sentosa's beaches for around S\$15 per hour.

Water-Venture (off Map p528; ☎ 6444 0409; www.water-venture.org.sg; 1390 East Coast Parkway; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sun) offers windsurfing classes (S\$35) and courses (S\$55 to S\$150).

The **Singapore Waterski & Wakeboard Federation** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6348 9943; www.swwf.org.sg; Water Sports Centre, 269A South Bridge Rd) runs waterskiing and wakeboarding lessons (from S\$90 per hour on weekdays, S\$120 on weekends).

Ski360° (Map p528; ☎ 6442 7318; www.ski360degree.com; 1206A East Coast Parkway; per hr Mon-Fri S\$32, per hr Sat & Sun S\$42; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun) is a daredevil cable-ski installation at East Coast Lagoon where, if you can master the launch technique, you're dragged around the lagoon on a wakeboard by a circular cable system.

The Singapore Canoe Federation rents kayaks from the **Paddle Lodge** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6258 0057; Lornie Rd, MacRitchie Reservoir; 1/2hr rental S\$12/15; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) at MacRitchie Reservoir.

YOGA

The **Shambhala Yoga Centre** (Map p524; ☎ 6735 2163; www.comoshambhala.bz; 06-05 Forum, 583 Orchard Rd; 1½hr class S\$34; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat & Sun) has Hatha, Iyengar, Vinyasa and Ashtanga classes, and Pilates. It sometimes offers a free class for first-time visitors.

Absolute Yoga (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6732 6007; www.absoluteyogasingapore.com; 02-01 Valley Point, 491 River Valley Rd; 1½hr class S\$34; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat & Sun) offers 'Hot Yoga', Hatha and Iyengar classes along with Pilates.

COURSES

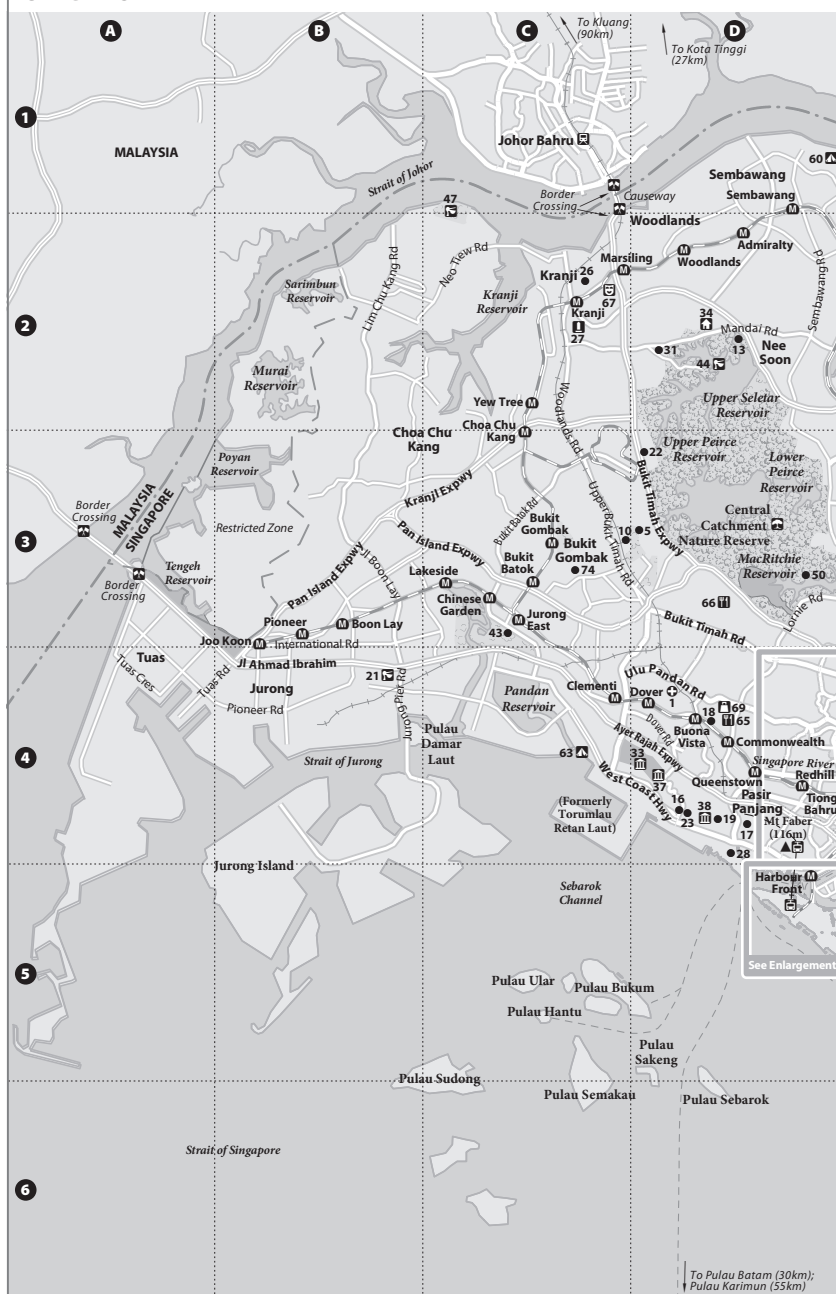
COOKING

You've eaten the food, now learn how to cook it yourself, Singapore-style! Cooking classes generally run from two to four hours. Many are hands-on; some are instruction only. Check websites or call for bookings and schedules.

at-sunrice (Map p517; ☎ 6336 3307; www.at-sunrice.com; Fort Canning Centre, Fort Canning Park; classes from S\$107) Banish your dinner-party woes. Half-day classes with a spicy hands-on emphasis equip you with the skills to prepare a three-course meal.

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SINGAPORE






SINGAPORE (p514-15)

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COLONIAL DISTRICT & THE QUAYS (p517)

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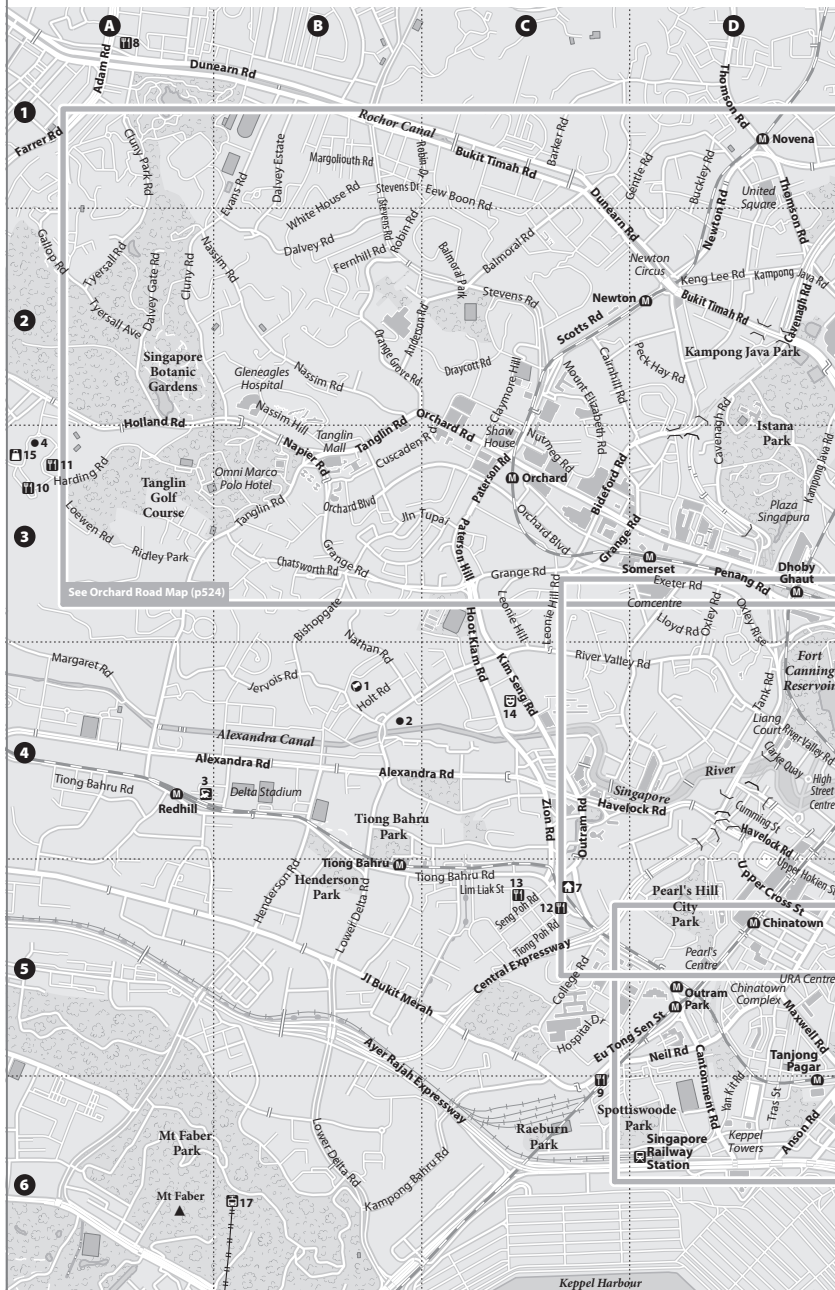
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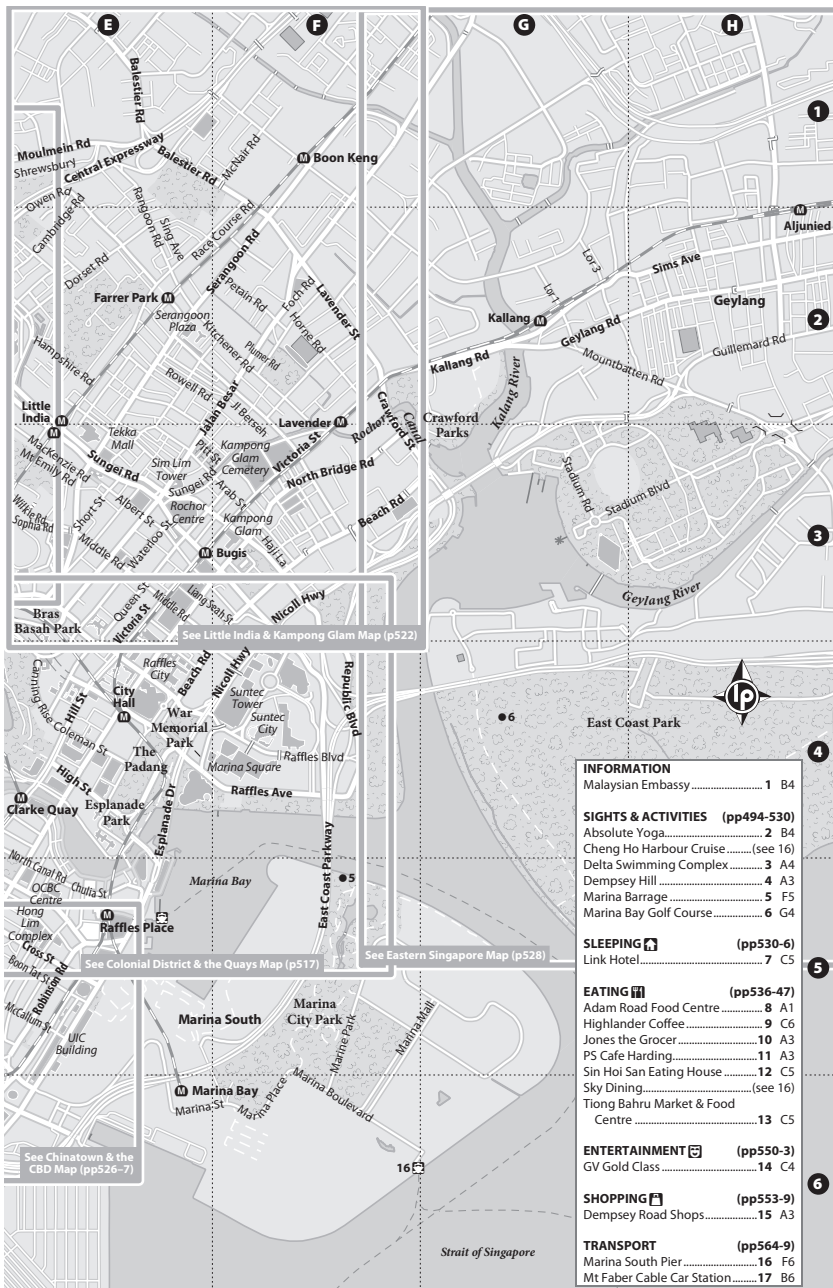
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CENTRAL SINGAPORE



0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM



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See Colonial District & the Quays Map (p517)

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LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM (p522)

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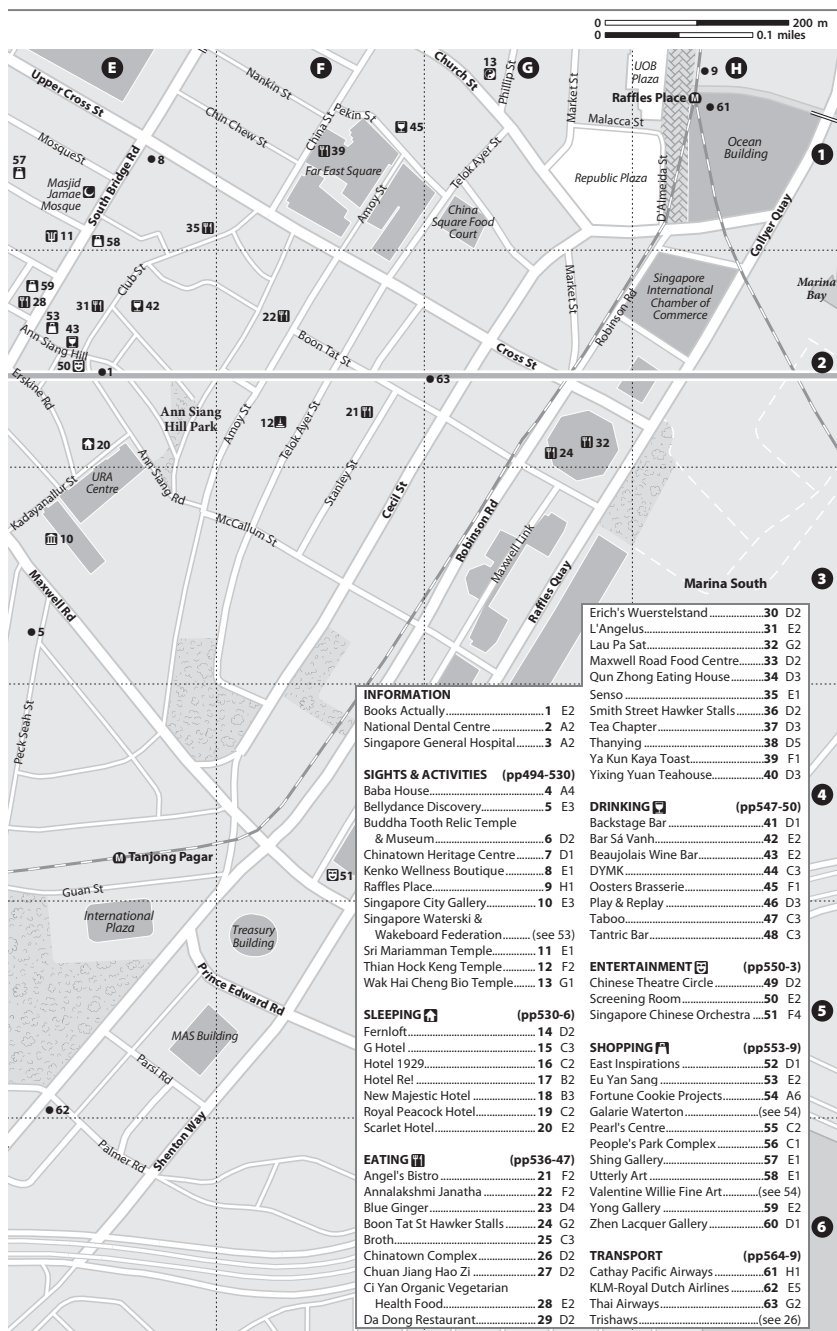
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CHINATOWN & THE CBD







(Continued from page 513)

Cookery Magic (Map p528; ☎ 6348 9667; www.cookerymagic.com; Haig Rd, Katong; classes S\$65-130) Ruqana conducts standout Asian-cooking classes in her own home. She also conducts classes on an ecofarm (harvest your own veggies before cooking!) and on Pulau Ubin (in an old *kampung* home). Splash out for the hands-on classes.

Raffles Culinary Academy (Map p517; ☎ 6412 1256; www.raffleshotel.com; 03-03/04 Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Rd; sessions S\$95-140) Take cues from the Raffles chefs and cook up a storm at the academy's new digs. Hands-on courses cover an international range of cuisines... pastries too!

Shermay's Cooking School (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6479 8442; www.shermay.com; 03-64 Block 43 Jln Merah Saga, Chip Bee Gardens; classes S\$89-159) Singaporean, Thai, Peranakan, chocolate and guest chefs are Shermay's faves! Hands-on classes cost more. Catch bus 7, 61 or 77.

Spice Queen (Map p522; ☎ 6255 2440; www.spice-queen.com; 24 Race Course Rd; classes from S\$40) Local celebrity chef Devagi Sanmugam conducts Indian cooking demos in a kitchen above her restaurant. Shopping trips are a highlight.

DANCING

Belly Dance Discovery (Map pp526-7; ☎ 9879 9980; www.bellydance.com.sg; 03-00, 20 Peck Seah St) Master the Middle Eastern art of booty shaking. The S\$5 introductory classes are popular. Eight-lesson courses cost S\$175. Guys will have to continue nursing their belly-dancer aspirations; strictly female-only.

Jitterbugs Swingapore (Map p517; ☎ 6887 0383; www.jitterbugs.com; 03-02 Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd) Beautiful teachers instruct participants in the art of shimmying and shaking (there's even pole dancing). Walk-in classes are S\$20 and eight-week classes are S\$160.

PEWTERSMTIHING

Royal Selangor (p497) runs the **School of Hard Knocks** (Map p517; ☎ 6268 9600; www.royalselangor.com

SCARE YOUR PANTS OFF

For the last few years, **Singapore Paranormal Investigators** (www.spi.com.sg/news/tours/index.htm) have been supplementing their work by taking groups of people around Singapore's 'haunted' sites and generally frightening the wits out of them. This is no theme-park haunted-house thrill trip, though – these guys are serious. Email ghoulish@spi.org.sg for upcoming trips.

.sg; 01-01 Clarke Quay), at which groups of 12 bash pewter into malleable masterpieces. Thirty-minute courses cost S\$30; you get to keep the inscribed dish you make and your natty SOHN apron.

TOURS

The Singapore Tourism Board (p563) books a range of tours and publishes a handful of free, self-guided walking-tour brochures. The SIA Hop-On, CityBuzz, City Hippo and Singapore Trolley tourist buses (p568) traverse Singapore's most-loved sites. See also the Trishaws boxed text (p567).

FOOD TOURS

Food Safari Tours (☎ 6438 4038; www.makansutra.com) Runs four-hour foodie tours (from S\$160), usually including three pit-stops. Options include the North-South-East-West Tour (street food), Multicultural Tour (Little India, Chinatown, Geylang and Katong), Uniquely Singapore Tour (*bak kut teh*, fish-head curry, chicken rice etc) and Midnight Tour (duh!).

I Eat, I Shoot, I Post Makan Sessions (http://ieatishootipost.sg) Not strictly a food tour. Leslie Tay is a doctor by day and a foodie by life. He organises monthly *makan* (eating) sessions. These are usually reasonably priced multicourse meals at great local restaurants. Check the blog and forums for details. There are also impromptu eating sessions organised by forum members.

HARBOUR CRUISES

Cheng Ho Harbour Cruise (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6533 9811; www.watertours.com.sg) A 2½-hour tour on the *Cheng Ho*, a gaudy Ming-dynasty-junk replica, bobbing around the harbour, port and Kusu Island. Tours leave Marina South Pier at 10.30am (adult/child S\$27/14) and 3pm (S\$32/16 with afternoon tea). Its two-hour dinner cruise (adult/child S\$55/29) leaves at 6.30pm and loops past Sentosa.

COMING SOON: THE YOUTH OLYMPICS 2010

Singapore fended off a late charge from Russia to snag the rights to host the inaugural Youth Olympics in 2010. If you're in town from 14 to 26 August, try to make time to catch some of the events happening. Who knows, you might get to see the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps on the cheap. Check www.singapore2010.sg for more details on ticketing and schedules.

Duck Tour (Map p517; ☎ 6338 6877; www.ducktours.com.sg; adult/child S\$33/17) A one-hour romp in the 'Wacky Duck', a Vietnam War amphibious curio, departing from Suntec City. Check out the city's sites from the road then hit the water for a harbour cruise. A good one for the kids! Adults will be comprehensively embarrassed.

RIVER CRUISES

A super way to get a feel for central Singapore and its history is to take a river cruise. Bumboat cruises depart from various jetties along the Singapore River including Clarke Quay, Raffles Landing and Boat Quay, as well as Merlion Park and the Esplanade Jetty on Marina Bay, generally running between 9am and 11pm.

Hippo River Cruise (Map p517; ☎ 6338 6877; www.ducktours.com.sg) This is a 30-minute open-top boat ride (adult/child S\$13/9) departing from Clarke Quay every 25 minutes. You can opt for a day pass (adult/child S\$23/13), which allows ticket holders to hop on/off at nine stops along the Singapore River.

Singapore Explorer (Map p517; ☎ 6339 6833; www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg) Offers trips up and down the river in a glass-top boat (adult/child S\$15/6, 45 minutes) or traditional bumboat (adult/child S\$12/6, 30 minutes). Commentary ensures you know what you're looking at.

Singapore River Cruises (Map p517; ☎ 6336 6111; www.rivercruise.com.sg) Offers bumboat tours (adult S\$13-18, child S\$8-10, 30 to 45 minutes) from the Merlion at the river mouth upstream to Robertson Quay, plus everything in between.

SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

Original Singapore Walks (☎ 6325 1631; www.singaporewalks.com; tours from adult/child S\$25/15) Conducts irreverent but knowledgeable off-the-beaten-track walking tours through Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam, the Colonial District and war-related sites. Rain-or-shine tours last from two to three hours; check its website for a schedule.

Geraldene Lowe-Ismail (☎ 6737 5250; geraldenes_tours@hotmail.com) Offering a wealth of information, Singapore-born Geraldene has been conducting Singapore walking tours for more than 40 years. Her various private tours (starting from S\$90 per hour) lend a unique insight into Singapore's history, architecture, religions, botany and culture. She will happily tailor a tour to suit your particular interests. Group tours start from S\$40.

Diana Chua (☎ 9489 1999; dianachua1999@yahoo.com.sg) Another recommended walking-tour guide, Diana charges S\$90 an hour and offers similar tours to Geraldene, often aligning tours with festivals. She also touches upon more esoteric and less touristy areas such as feng shui and cemeteries.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

With so many cultures and religions, there are an astounding number of colourful celebrations in Singapore. Some have fixed dates, but Hindus, Muslims and Chinese follow a lunar calendar that varies annually. Check out www.visitsingapore.com.sg for exact dates and full listings of other events.

Thaipusam (see the boxed text, p52) A procession from Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple to Chettiar Hindu Temple marks this dramatic Hindu festival usually held in February.

Chingay (www.chingay.org.sg) Singapore's biggest street parade is held on the 22nd day after the Chinese New Year.

Mosaic Music Festival (www.mosaicmusicfestival.com) A 10-day feast of music in March held at the Esplanade theatre that includes many free events.

Singapore Food Festival (www.singaporefoodfestival.com.sg) A month-long celebration of eating held in March/April that also includes the World Gourmet Summit (www.worldgourmetsummit.com).

Singapore International Film Festival (www.filmfest.org.sg) This showcase of world cinema, usually held in early April, is a rare chance to see movies from somewhere other than Hollywood.

Singapore Arts Festival (www.singaporeartsfest.com) June sees the National Arts Council organise this premier arts festival.

Singapore National Day (www.ndp.org.sg) A nationalistic frenzy of military and civilian parades followed by fireworks. 9 August.

Formula One Grand Prix (Map p517; ☎ 6728 6738; www.singaporegp.sg; tickets from S\$38-1388) Singapore has bragging rights for hosting the first Formula 1 race held at night... though ironically, the track is flooded with bright lights. From 25 to 27 September.

SLEEPING

Singapore's hotel accommodation is some of the most expensive (and competitive) in Southeast Asia. Though the published hotel rates we supply are high, a mind-boggling array of discounts from 25% to 50% are common. The best deals mean you often get top-end hotels at midrange prices. For the nitty gritty on hotel pricing, see p559.

Until quite recently, Singapore's budget accommodation was unspeakably ordinary – cubicle-like, cramped, windowless – but a new breed of hostel around Little India and Kampong Glam has raised the bar...if

YMCA (IT'S FUN TO STAY AT THE...)

Singapore has two YMCAs and a YWCA providing consistent midrange accommodation. They're not the bargain they used to be but they remain popular. Non-YMCA members pay an additional S\$3 for temporary membership.

The cheapest rooms at the rather dated **YMCA Metropolitan** (Map p524; ☎ 6839 8333; www.mymca.org.sg; 60 Stevens Rd; dm incl breakfast S\$45, d incl breakfast S\$200-270; 🚿 📺 📺) don't have windows, but they're spacious and well appointed. Dorms have air-con and are single-sex only. It's a good 1km walk north of Orchard Rd; take bus 105, 132 or 190, or there's a morning shuttle bus to Orchard Rd from Monday to Saturday.

YMCA International House (Map p517; ☎ 6336 6000; www.ymcaih.com.sg; 1 Orchard Rd; dm/d/f incl breakfast S\$35/180/215; 🚿 📺 📺) has a fantastic location at the start of Orchard Rd. Rooms have been upgraded with LCD TVs, birch-coloured walls, and carpets the colour of streaky bacon. Roomy four-bed dorms have an attached bathroom. It has a restaurant, a fitness centre, a rooftop pool, squash and badminton courts and a billiard room. Staff attitudes have markedly improved since we last visited.

The **YWCA Fort Canning Lodge** (Map p517; ☎ 6338 4222; www.ywcaflodge.org.sg; 6 Fort Canning Rd; dm/d/f incl breakfast from S\$80/200/380; 🚿 📺 📺) has a similar list of facilities to the YMCA International House albeit with higher prices (and a trek up Fort Canning too). There are only four female-only dorm beds; standard rooms are just that...standard.

only slightly. Most budget places offer both air-con and cheaper (and less common) fan rooms.

Solid midrange options line the Singapore River, while Orchard Rd groans under the weight of high-end chain hotels. Boutique midrange hotels in old shophouses convene around Chinatown. Some shophouse rooms don't have windows, and some shophouse hotels don't have lifts. If you want to be close to the beach, head to Sentosa (see the boxed text, p534).

With most hotels, weekend rates and occupancy levels are higher than midweek. Rates are also higher during holidays and during large international events such as the Formula 1 night race. Unless otherwise indicated, budget rooms have shared bathrooms; mid-range and above have private bathrooms.

BUDGET**Colonial District & the Quays**

Note that the midrange YMCAs and YWCA (see the boxed text, above) also have dorm beds.

Backpackers Cozy Corner (Map p517; ☎ 6339 6128; www.cozycornerquest.com; 490 North Bridge Rd; dm S\$12-17, d incl breakfast S\$36-60; 🚿 📺) Yes, we'll say it – this place can get a little too cosy when it's busy (and it usually is). The location is a huge plus, though rooms are dark and a little cramped. Ask for a dorm facing away from North Bridge Rd unless you like the noise of

heavy traffic and merrymakers from the street. Expect to wait for internet access.

Bugis Backpackers Hostel (Map p522; ☎ 6338 5581; www.bugisbackpackers.com; 162B Rochor Rd; dm/s/d S\$20/45/59; 🚿 📺) Barely four years old, this busy place 50m from Bugis MRT started out clean and has managed to stay that way. It has good security (lockers and key pads), mixed and single-sex dorms, and a relaxed vibe. Shower facilities are limited and the kitchen is basic, but who wants to cook in Singapore?! The only way to book a room or bed is via the website.

Summer Tavern (Map p517; ☎ 6338 2381; www.summertavern.com; 87 Victoria St; dm/s/d incl breakfast S\$40/90/180; 🚿) Still among the most popular hostels in Singapore despite the high dorm-bed price, Summer Tavern offers fine dorm beds, medium-sized rooms good for one or two, and a rooftop beer lounge. A recent expansion includes a second building across the street, in which you'll find deluxe rooms with queen-sized beds and attached bathrooms.

Chinatown

ourpick Fernloft (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 6696, www.fernloft.com; 02-82, 5 Banda St; dm/d incl breakfast S\$20/60; 🚿 📺) Fernloft is set in a traditional Singapore housing development block and offers visitors a chance to live like a local. Chinatown, with all its food and sights, opens up down a flight of stairs. The dressed-up common corridor is not a bad place to chill with a beer, gaze across

CAMPING IT UP

The **National Parks Board** (Map p522; ☎ 6391 4488; www.nparks.gov.sg; 18-01/08 Gateway West, 150 Beach Rd) maintains five camp sites around Singapore: **Changi Beach** (Map pp514-15), **East Coast Park** (Map p528), **Sembawang Park** (Map pp514-15), **West Coast Park** (Map pp514-15) and the east end of **Pasir Ris Park** (Map pp514-15). You need a permit to camp during the week. Get a permit online (www.axs.com.sg) or from the AXS (ATM-like) machines found in most malls. You can camp a maximum of eight days per month.

Permits are \$51 and there's a small fee to use the barbecue pits and shower facilities. On Pulau Ubin you can camp at **Noordin** or **Maman Beach** (Map pp514-15) on the island's north coast. The sites are free, but very basic. There's no drinking water, so bring your own. You can also camp on the **southern islands** (Map pp514-15) for free. BYO drinking water too.

the open field towards South Bridge Rd, and share stories with fellow travellers. There are limited beds and only two large (windowless) private air-con rooms, so book in advance. There's only one shower.

G Hotel (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 6696, www.ghotel.com.sg; 22 Teck Lim Rd; s & d from S\$80; 🏠 📺 📶) Formerly the stodgy Tropical Hotel, it's amazing what a renovation, mood lighting and a name change does for a place. This converted shophouse is now one of the more attractive sleeping options in the area. Rooms have slate floors and comfy beds. Some singles are windowless; larger balcony rooms go for S\$140. Renovations were still under way during research but ask for a renovated room just in case plans stall.

Kampong Glam

Sleepy Sam's (Map p522; ☎ 9277 4988; www.sleepysams.com; 55 Bussorah St; dm/s/d incl breakfast S\$29/59/89; 🏠 📺) Prices at this budget hostel mainstay have gone steadily upwards over the years. But the ambience is more boutique hotel than hostel. Expect lots of woody, earthy tones, little nooks, chairs and cushions in the common areas. The location, on a pedestrianised street, is right in the middle of a bohemian district and steps away from the imposing Sultan Mosque.

Superb Hub (Map p522; ☎ 6299 0993; superbhub@yahoo.com.sg; 1148 Arab St; s & d from S\$50-70; 🏠 📺) Positioning itself in between a full-fledged dorm and a motel, Superb Hub offers small-ish, windowless one-, two- or three-bed rooms with ample privacy but an uncongenial atmosphere. Where are the people lounging on common couches and watching bad cable TV? Owner Ronnie is extremely helpful and is ready to dispense bottled water and tourist information.

Little India

InnCrowd (Map p522; ☎ 6296 9169; www.the-inn-crowd.com; 73 Dunlop St; dm/d/tr incl breakfast S\$20/59/79; 🏠 📺 📶) As close to a typical backpacker hostel as you'd find in Singapore. Clean accommodation, living areas where travellers like to hang and saccharine-sweet staff. The atmosphere's decidedly convivial, with free lockers and internet, discounted tickets to sights and cheap Tiger draft beer on tap.

Prince of Wales (Map p522; ☎ 6299 0130; www.pow.com.sg; 101 Dunlop St; dm/d S\$20/60; 🏠 📺 📶) This Australian-style pub and hostel has a raucous beer-and-sawdust rock bar downstairs (p552) and clean, high-ceilinged dorms upstairs. The two private rooms share a bathroom. Not everyone wants to rock-out, but it's a lively place in an ace location.

Fragrance Backpackers Hostel (Map p522; ☎ 6295 6888; www.fragrancebackpackers.com.sg; 63 Dunlop St; dm S\$22-25; 🏠 📺) The evergrowing midrange Fragrance chain has sniffed out a sweet-smelling niche in the budget market. Its Little India outfit is sparkingly clean, with leather couches in the (small) TV lounge, great security, chunky mattresses and backpack-sized lockers. Avoid the basement dorms, which are sans windows.

Footprints Backpacker Hostel (Map p522; ☎ 6295 5134; www.footprints hostel.com.sg; 25A Perak St; dm S\$22-30, d S\$70-80, tw S\$80; 🏠 📺) This recent addition to the swath of backpacker joints in the area is also one of the largest. Dorms are narrow but clean, and the communal area is decorated like the set of a bad Hong Kong movie: bright colours, chunky leather couches and, oh my god, the chandelier. Breakfast is included in the rates.

hangout@mt.emily (Map p522; ☎ 6438 5588; www.hangouthotels.com; 10A Upper Wilkie Rd; dm/d/tr incl breakfast S\$40/100/200; 🏠 📺 📶 📷) Prices for

the comfy seven-bed dorms are a relative bargain considering the location, nestled in Mt Emily's leafy glades. Private rooms were a little ordinary and cramped, though the place is undergoing renovations, which should freshen these up. You'll find a lovely rooftop terrace with a 'standing pool', a library, a cafe, free internet and cosy lounge areas with a large plasma TV.

MIDRANGE

Colonial District & the Quays

South-East Asia Hotel (Map p522; ☎ 6338 2394; www.seahotel.com.sg; 190 Waterloo St; d/tr/f incl breakfast S\$100/118/140; 🏠 📺 📺) Right next to one of Singapore's busiest temples, this cash-only 'mom and pop' hotel is perfect for visitors who want to live smack bang in the middle of one of Singapore's liveliest streets. Rooms are a little dated but spacious. The bathrooms are akin to upright coffins. Breakfast is served at the great vego restaurant downstairs.

Hotel Bencoolen (Map p517; ☎ 6336 0822; www.hotelbencoolen.com; 47 Bencoolen St; s/d incl breakfast S\$110/178; 🏠 📺 📺) Rooms at the 'Uncoolen' are far from stylish, but they've been recently renovated and decked out in somewhat uninspired shades of green and cream. The single rooms are tiny with a shower to match. Larger double rooms will get you an LCD TV and a bathtub. The outdoor spa pool is almost big enough for a soak.

Beach Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6336 7712; www.beachhotel.com.sg; 95 Beach Rd; r S\$140-170; 🏠 📺 📺) Just down the block from the Park View Hotel (which views no park) is the Beach Hotel (which has no beach). Rooms, prices and amenities are much the same here as there, though online discounts of up to 35% make this hotel a bargain.

Ibis Singapore on Bencoolen (Map p522; ☎ 6593 2888; www.ibishotel.com; 170 Bencoolen St; r S\$150; 🏠 📺 📺) With brand-spanking new rooms decked out in pine and orangey hues, and with LCD TVs, comfy beds and great city views, the Ibis group probably hopes visitors extend their stay to match the length of the hotel's name.

Bayview Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6337 2882; www.bayviewhotels.com/singapore; 30 Bencoolen St; r incl breakfast S\$176-235; 🏠 📺 📺) The Bayview won't get your knickers in a knot – thanks to recent renovations, rooms are swisher and more modern than most midrangers in this lot. There's a self-serve laundry on the roof be-

side the pool, so you can cool off while your unknotted knickers are in the wash.

Robertson Quay Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6735 3333; www.robertsonquayhotel.com.sg; 15 Merbau Rd; s & d S\$200; 🏠 📺 📺) Probably the best-value hotel along the river, this medieval castle-like circular tower has immaculate but unadventurous rooms with cheesy wallpaper and throwaway wall art, and a surprisingly pretty palm-fringed rooftop swimming pool. Internet discounts of up to 35% are often available.

Park View Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6338 8558; www.parkviewhotel-singapore.com.sg; 81 Beach Rd; s & d incl breakfast S\$220-280; 🏠 📺) Park View is centrally located to the Bugis shopping area. All rooms have bathtubs but some of the cheaper rooms are windowless. Don't be scared off by the high rack rate. When we last checked, rooms cost S\$140 to S\$180.

Gallery Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6849 8686; www.galleryhotel.com.sg; 1 Nanson Rd; d incl breakfast from S\$320; 🏠 📺 📺) Its grey fascia studded with primary-coloured window boxes, the Gallery remains one of Singapore's truly boutique hotels. Sure, guests have to switch elevators on the 4th floor to get to the rooms but knock-down online deals bring you top-end rooms at midrange prices. Rooms feature retro furnishings, steel beams and frosted-glass bathroom walls. The glass rooftop pool and free internet access are bonuses.

Chinatown

Royal Peacock Hotel (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6223 3522; www.royalpeacockhotel.com; 55 Keong Saik Rd; s/d incl breakfast S\$135/155; 🏠 📺 📺) Beautiful lobby and peacock-palette rooms with gilt-edged mirrors and cramped bathrooms are the order of the day here. Cheaper rooms are windowless and some have sloping ceilings. Management assured us that renovations would refresh rooms by 2010.

Hotel 1929 (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6347 1929; www.hotel1929.com; 50 Keong Saik Rd; s/d/ste S\$200/230/350; 🏠 📺 📺) The rooms at this groovy boutique hotel border on diminutive (even the suites are a bit tight), but the architects have maximised limited space, cheerily festooning rooms with vintage designer chairs (look out for reproduction Eames and Jacobson) and technicolour mosaics. Rooftop suites have private terraces and outdoor clawfoot baths. Online promos yield 30% discounts.

Link Hotel (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6622 8585; www.linkhotel.com.sg; 50 Tiong Bahru Rd; s & d S\$200-300;

SENTOSA NIGHTS

If you feel like bunking down on Sentosa Island (p509) after a day basking on the beach, there are several (mainly top end) options to choose from, each newer addition outdoing the last in terms of design and comfort. The opening of Resorts World in 2010 will add six hotels to the fray.

The midrange **Costa Sands Resort** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 1034; www.costasands.com.sg; 30 Imbiah Walk; huts from S\$80, d from S\$150; 🏠 📺 🚿) is Sentosa's cheapest option, with motel-style rooms and 15 small wooden huts sleeping up to four (air-conditioned, with shared bathrooms). Rates soar and availability dips over the weekend and during school-holiday season. The cliff-top pool is good for those who want to avoid the crowded beach.

our pick Siloso Beach Resort (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6722 3333; www.silosobeachresort.com; 51 Imbiah Walk; r incl breakfast from S\$230; 🏠 📺 🚿) is a sanctuary unto itself and designed with lots of ecofriendly touches (the natural spring-fed pool has its own filtration system, gardens on top of buildings lower ambient temperatures and some rooms are built around trees). Rooms are comfortable enough to tempt you into staying in, but the landscaped grounds, 95m-long pool and nearby Siloso Beach will ensure you get your fix of the sun.

The salubrious five-star **Sentosa Resort & Spa** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 0331; www.thesentosa.com; 2 Bukit Manis Rd; r from S\$260; 🏠 📺 🚿) is a low-rise cliff-top belle, replete with contemporary furnishings, the romantic Cliff restaurant, Singapore's only garden spa – Spa Botanica (p513) – and peacocks wandering aimlessly underneath frangipani trees. Check the website for promo deals.

Singapore's only beachfront resort, **Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 0100; www.shangri-la.com; 101 Siloso Rd; d incl breakfast from S\$290; 🏠 📺 🚿) is shaped like a bent cruise ship and is immensely popular with families. There is a huge swimming pool if you don't fancy swimming in the murky Straits of Singapore. Splash out for sea-facing rooms, all of which have spacious balconies.

The five-star **Amara Sanctuary** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6825 3888; www.amarasanctuary.com; 1 Larkhill Rd; r/ste/villa from S\$280/450/950; 🏠 📺 🚿) looks like it was transported direct from the pages of a *Wallpaper* magazine spread with its infinity pool, glass walls and furniture in every shade of 'resort brown'. Stunning (and expensive) villas have outdoor baths and plunge pools or opt for suites housed in former British army barracks for a touch of colonial-style living

The **Capella** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6275 0331; www.capellasingapore.com; 1 the Knolls; r from S\$550, villa from S\$1800; 🏠 📺 🚿) resort is probably the crème de la crème of Sentosa's, possibly even Singapore's, accommodation options. Visitors will be greeted by the majestic whitewashed colonial 'Tanah Merah' building as they crest the driveway. Walk through to the cleverly hidden modern extension. Pools and gardens are organically spread down along the ridgeline of the hill. Guests will be delighted, as rooms offer every conceivable comfort and the mighty Capella gives even the Raffles Hotel a run for its money.

🏠 📺) What else do you do with abandoned art-deco housing development flats? Why, you turn them into a boutique hotel, of course! Rooms in these former walk-up apartments are compact, with wooden floors and views of suburban Singapore. It's far from a train station but extremely close to great local food joints and Singapore's best club, Zouk (p551).

Hotel Re! (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6827 8288; www.hotelre.com.sg; 175A Chin Swee Rd; d from S\$320-350; 🏠 📺 🚿) Whoa! Groovy baby. Austin Powers would approve of this hotel – but we're not entirely sure that's a good thing. This is a '60s/'70s-themed hotel decorated in

loud tones, with silhouettes of Travolta, Abba and the Bee Gees on the walls. The only thing missing are the disco balls and waterbeds (oh wait, the suites have them). Ignore ridiculous published rates and check online for whopping 50% discounts!

Little India

Perak Hotel (Map p522; ☎ 6299 7733; www.peraklodge.net; 12 Perak Rd; s & d incl breakfast S\$148-168; 🏠 📺 🚿) The Peranakan-style Perak Hotel (formerly Perak Lodge) is deservedly popular. Interiors feature lashings of natural timber and ceramics, and a bubbling fountain eases you through breakfast. There are many nooks and

spaces for sitting and meditation. Cheaper rooms don't have windows, but they're well-furnished and have cable-TV access. No lifts, so you'll be hefting luggage up the stairs.

Albert Court Hotel (Map p522; ☎ 6339 3939; www.albertcourt.com.sg; 180 Albert St; s & d from S\$200-220; 🏠 📶) At the southern fringe of Little India, this is a slightly dated colonial-era hotel in a shophouse redevelopment that now shoots up eight storeys. An external glass elevator takes you to your room. Rooms are quiet and have the usual mod cons and charming ceiling fans. Promotional rates almost nudge budget levels.

Orchard Road

Lloyd's Inn (off Map p524; ☎ 6737 7309; www.lloyddinn.com; 2 Lloyd Rd; s & d S\$100-120; 🏠 📶) You'll find Orchard Rd's cheapest rooms at Lloyd's, a sprawling California-style motel surrounded by crumbling mansions. Sure, rooms are in need of a revamp, but at these prices they fill up quick. Ask for one with a garden view. On your way to town, head northeast up Oxley Rd and go past the gun-toting guards outside Lee Kuan Yew's ancestral home (see the boxed text, p502).

Hotel Grand Central (Map p524; ☎ 6737 9944; www.ghihotels.com; 22 Cavenagh Rd; r from S\$160; 🏠 📶) This large (hence Grand) 390-room hotel buzzes with tourist and business traffic. Its low pricing, central location and inoffensive rooms decked out in the earth tones so popular in Singapore must account for its popularity. Corridors smell of Chinese medicine and some rooms are a little musty. Fingers crossed you get a room with a renovated bathroom. Premium rooms come with LCD TVs.

Elizabeth Hotel (Map p524; ☎ 6885 7888; www.theelizabeth.com.sg; 24 Mt Elizabeth Rd; r from S\$160; 🏠 📶) One of a cluster of three hotels located in a quiet nook off Orchard Rd, the Elizabeth is old but has aged gracefully. Rooms are warm and welcoming, with lots of wooden furniture and soft lighting. Guests can chomp on excellent wood-fired pizzas at in-house Modesto's, which has an extremely soothing waterfall-side dining room.

ourpick Quincy (Map p524; ☎ 6738 5888; www.quincy.com.sg; 22 Mt Elizabeth Rd; r S\$268; 🏠 📶) Many middle-of-the-rung hotels have started dubbing themselves 'boutique' in order to stand out. Many don't. The Quincy does. It impresses with its sleek, ultramodern sensibilities, slightly gimmicky three cooked meals

per day (with Orchard Rd at the doorstep, who has three meals at a hotel restaurant?), free wi-fi and, best of all, free-flowing drinks from 6pm to 8pm daily.

TOP END

Colonial District & the Quays

Naumi (Map p517; ☎ 6403 6000; www.naumihotel.com; 41 Seah St; r from S\$400; 🏠 📶) Lying in the shadow of the Raffles Hotel, Naumi is dressed so sharp in glass and steel you could get cut just by looking. It balances cool looks with lots of silk and leather and fluffy pillows. Its infinity pool offers jaw-dropping views across to Raffles Hotel and the Swissôtel.

Swissôtel the Stamford (Map p517; ☎ 6338 8585; www.swissotel-thestamford.com; 2 Stamford Rd; d from S\$450; 🏠 📶) Everyone raves about IM Pei's iconic Swissôtel, the tallest hotel in Southeast Asia. It boasts one of Singapore's hippest dining complexes (Equinox), the views are sublime, and service standards are as elevated as the building. Rooms are predictably decked out in corporate-friendly hues and patterns. Yep, lots of cream and brown.

Ritz-Carlton (Map p517; ☎ 6337 8888; www.ritzcarlton.com; 7 Raffles Ave; r from S\$550; 🏠 📶) No expense was spared, no feng shui geomancer went unconsulted and no animals were harmed in the building of this six-star establishment. Guests will be torn between taking a romantic soak in the bath (oh, the unimpaired views!) or taking a self-guided audio tour to view the in-house art collection (oh, the Hockney, Warhol, Stella and Chihuly pieces!).

Raffles Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6337 1886; www.raffleshotel.com; 1 Beach Rd; r/ste from S\$750/850; 🏠 📶) The grand old dame of Singapore's Colonial District has had many facelifts in her 121 years and is looking as spritely as ever. She's seen many a famous visitor in her time, from Somerset Maugham to Michael Jackson, and it's easy to see what the fuss is about (cost be damned). Rooms are all class – expect a spacious parlour, rattan furniture, verandahs, lazily swirling ceiling fans and a Singapore Sling from the Long Bar.

Chinatown

New Majestic Hotel (Map pp256-7; ☎ 6511 4700; www.newmajestichotel.com; 31-37 Bukit Pasoh Rd; r from S\$280-550; 🏠 📶) Its terrazzo-tiled open lobby is dressed like a 1940s Shanghai movie set and oozes boutique sleekness. Designer-themed rooms are fun! Local theatre legend

WHAT? YOU HAVEN'T BOOKED A ROOM?

The Singapore Hotel Association 24-hour desks at Changi Airport **Terminal 1** (☎ 6542 6966), **Terminal 2** (☎ 6545 0318) and **Terminal 3** (☎ 6542 0442) can help you book a hotel across all ranges for S\$10. You can also book hotels on the association's website: www.stayinsingapore.com.sg.

If you're only in Singapore for a short time or have an endless wait between connections, try the **Ambassador Transit Hotel** (Map pp514-15; ☎ Terminal 1 6542 5538, Terminal 2 6542 8122, Terminal 3 6507 9788; www.airport-hotel.com.sg; s/d S\$58/65; ♿ ♿). Rates quoted are for the first six hours and each additional hour block thereafter is S\$13; rooms don't have windows and there are budget singles (S\$35) with shared bathrooms. The Terminal 1 branch has a sauna, gym and outdoor pool.

The only swish option at Changi Airport is Terminal 3's **Crowne Plaza Hotel** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6823 5300; www.cpchangiairport.com; r from S\$250; ♿ ♿ ♿). The business-oriented focus shows through its sleek lines, geometric-patterned carpets and (over)use of wood panels.

Glen Goei's room is awash in red silk, hanging lanterns and Chinese motifs. Other highlights include private balconies and voyeuristic portals in the restaurant ceiling looking up into the swimming pool (skinny-dip at your peril).

Scarlet Hotel (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6511 3333; www.thescarlethotel.com; 33 Erskine Rd; d/stc from S\$320/780; ♿ ♿) Sexy Scarlet has seduced Singapore's boutique hotel market. Occupying a string of gorgeous 1924 shophouses, 84 (smallish) rooms are lustily decorated with deep velvet, gilt-framed mirrors, ebony timbers and plush Arabic cushions – you'd think you had walked into a boudoir. Dizzying corridors to the rooms are like walking down Alice's rabbit hole. The rooftop bar, Breeze, is perfect for predinner drinks.

Orchard Road

Goodwood Park Hotel (Map p524; ☎ 6737 7411; www.goodwoodparkhotel.com.sg; 22 Scotts Rd; r from S\$385; ♿ ♿ ♿) Dating from 1900, this Tudor-inspired remnant was here when tigers roamed Orchard Rd's pepper plantations. Old-world opulence strays into slightly schizo territory here and there (dark bathrooms, mazy building extensions and naff greyish-green paint), but it's worth tolerating for the history whispering from the walls. Poolside suites are the pick of the plantation.

EATING

Singaporeans are food-crazy. Over 6500 restaurants and more than 12,000 food stalls are packed into a country that's a mere pinprick on the map. All kinds of international cuisine lines Singapore's collective stomach,

but Chinese, Indian, Malay and regional Peranakan (Malay-style sauces with Chinese ingredients) dishes are what you're here for.

Be adventurous. Looking out for the long queues at hawker centres and joining in is a sure way to partake in the familiar Singaporean ritual of food worshipping. Each ethnic group has its own food rules; if unsure, look around to see what others are doing. It's OK to ask for a fork!

Reservations are essential for upmarket eateries; a smart-casual dress code usually applies. A service charge will be added to your bill (10% + 7% GST); additional tipping is optional. All restaurants (except hawker stalls) are nonsmoking.

Most restaurants serve lunch from around 11.30am to 2.30pm and dinner from 6pm to 10.30pm. If a place opens for breakfast, it's usually from around 10am till noon. Hawker centres listed under Quick Eats sections are generally open from 10am until late (some 24 hours); most hawker dishes range from S\$3 to S\$6.

COLONIAL DISTRICT**Cafes**

Ah Chew Desserts (Map p517; ☎ 6339 8198; 01-10/11, 11 Liang Seah St; desserts S\$1.50-4.50; ☎ 12.30-11.30pm Mon-Thu, to 12.30am Fri, 1.30pm-12.30am Sat, 1.30-11.30pm Sun) Packed with locals wanting a sweet post-dinner fix, this place boasts a massive menu featuring a variety of Chinese desserts. If you've never had honeydew sago or sesame paste before, now is your chance to go Ah Chew! Bless you!

Chinese

YY Kafei Dian (Map p517; ☎ 6336 8813; 37 Beach Rd; meals from S\$3; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This

modern coffee shop pays homage to the Hainanese eateries of days past, with its ceiling fans, linoleum floors, round marble-top tables and wooden chairs. For breakfast, order the soft *kaya* (coconut jam) buns, half-boiled eggs (go nuts with the condiments) and a thick, sweet *kopi* (coffee). For lunch, try the Hainanese chicken rice. There's an extensive à la carte menu at dinner, so order with abandon.

Yet Con (Map p517; ☎ 6337 6819; 25 Purvis St; mains S\$8-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) We doubt that much has changed in the 50-odd years that Yet Con has been in business. The chicken rice and steamboat are popular dishes at this retro eatery... just look around. The air-con is the only modern (and welcome) addition to this joint.

Empire Café (Map p517; ☎ 6337 1886; Raffles Hotel, 2 Stamford Rd; mains S\$10-20; ☎ 11am-11pm) Not everyone wants to get sweaty at a hawker centre over a plate of *char kway teow* (broad noodles, clams and eggs fried in chilli and black-bean sauce), Hainanese chicken rice or other local delights. Those people should visit the faux-1920s-style coffee house Empire Café. For those who want to get sweaty, there are al fresco seats facing busy North Bridge Rd.

Space @ My Humble House (Map p517; ☎ 6423 1881; 02-25 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Ave; mains S\$10-25; ☎ lunch

& dinner) Serves up humble, affordable, local favourites with just a touch of flair from the same kitchen as My Humble House. Try chef Sam Leong's chicken rice the way his mum cooks it or the wagu beef *hor fun*.

Wah Lok Cantonese Restaurant (Map p517; ☎ 6311 8188; Level 2, Carlton Hotel, 76 Bras Basah Rd; mains from S\$18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Long-running Cantonese restaurant popular with families. Staff are happy to offer suggestions if you're unable to make a decision past the exquisite Peking Duck and dim sum selections.

My Humble House (Map p517; ☎ 6423 1881; 02-27/29 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Ave; mains S\$30-45; ☎ lunch & dinner) The irony of the restaurant's name is quite apparent when diners are seated in the *Alice in Wonderland*-meets-Phillipe Starck dining room. Chow down on subtly flavoured abalone, truffles, wagu and seafood from an elaborate menu that changes weekly. Dress snazzy; reservations essential.

Chef Chan's Restaurant (Map p517; ☎ 6333 0073; 01-06 National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Rd; meals from S\$80; ☎ lunch & dinner) Eponymous chef gets sick of cooking for over 200 people in his large restaurant, closes shop and opens tiny restaurant with seven tables, serving from a daily changing set menu. The restaurant is decked out with Chef Chan's exquisite antique

ALL DAY DINING, SINGAPORE STYLE

Do as the locals do and dine on the cheap at hawker centres and roadside coffee shops. Just go with an empty stomach and expect to pay an average of S\$3 to S\$6 per dish.

For breakfast, head out to **Tiong Bahru Market & Food Centre** (Map pp250-1; 30 Seng Poh Rd; ☎ 7am-11pm). Go up to the 2nd floor, park yourself at a bench, look out for any stall selling coffee and order a *kopi* or *teh* (thick coffee or tea sweetened with condensed milk) and *kaya* toast (a heady coconut jam slathered with butter over thin charcoal-toasted bread). When you've polished that off, look for Jian Bo Shui Kueh (a market stall) and order some *chee kueh* – S\$1 will get you four steamed rice cakes topped with *chai poh* (fried preserved radishes) and chilli.

Come lunchtime, take a taxi to **328 Katong Laksa** (Map p528; 216 East Coast Rd; ☎ lunch & dinner). The namesake dish is a bowl of thin rice noodles in a light curry broth made with coconut milk and Vietnamese coriander and topped with shrimps and cockles. Order some *otah-otah* (spiced mackerel cake grilled in a banana leaf) to accompany the laksa.

For dinner, make your way to **Lor 9 Beef Kway Teow** (Map pp514-15; 237 Geylang Lg Nine; ☎ dinner-late). Once you've stopped gawking at the street-walkers across the road in this red-light district, order the beef *hor fun* (flat rice noodles wok-fried with tender slices of beef in black-bean sauce) and some *tian ji zhou* (frog's leg porridge). The frog is cooked in a claypot with dried chilli, spices, spring onion and soy sauce. It tastes like chicken, only crunchier. Wash it all down with copious amounts of Tiger beer.

If you think that's gross, we'll leave you with these words by local food guru KF Seetoh: 'There's nothing I will not try. Whale sperm? Been there done that. It's like a savoury jelly. Fried scorpions, shark's liver, snake skin, the list goes on. If it's good, I don't care what it is. There's only good food and bad food.'

furnishings, which still pale in comparison to the food. Book ahead.

French

Gunther's (Map p517; ☎ 638 8955; www.gunthers.com.sg; 36 Purvis St; mains from S\$38, lunch sets S\$38; ☑ lunch & dinner) The dining room is akin to a museum crossed with a tomb but the service (immaculate), presentation (classy) and the food (tasty) will soon distract you from the sombre environs. If you can't decide what to order, the maitre d' does a very good show and tell using the day's produce.

Indian

Rang Mahal (Map p517; ☎ 6333 1788; 3rd fl, Pan Pacific Hotel, 7 Raffles Blvd; mains S\$16-40; ☑ lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily) Much-praised Indian in sophisticated stone and teak subcontinental surrounds. The vegetarian selection offers silky dhals, and the lunch buffets are perfect for stuffing your face – it's a holiday right?

International

Zatenine (Map p517; ☎ 6338 0789; 01-10/12 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Ave; tapas from S\$12; ☑ lunch & dinner) Euro-Asian tapas (think dishes such as crisp *kurobuta* pork belly with iberico cheese) accompany the long list of drinks at this popular bar-cum-restaurant. Sit outside and watch the bartenders twist and hurl cocktails into the air with careless abandon.

Equinox (Map p517; ☎ 6837 3322; 70th fl, Swissôtel the Stamford, 2 Stamford Rd; mains S\$25-50; ☑ lunch & dinner) Adjectives struggle to describe the jaw-dropping views from this 70th-floor restaurant. Soaring ceilings, Asiatic wall hangings and plush fabrics are mere backdrops. The view rates a 10, the food a little less. Book early for a window seat.

Italian

Garibaldi (Map p517; ☎ 6837 1468; www.garibaldi.com.sg; 01-02, 36 Purvis St; mains S\$28-48; ☑ lunch & dinner) Swish, sequestered Garibaldi is the pick of Singapore's Italian crop (and Singapore tries hard): Italian chefs and debonair staff, and over 150 Italian wines. The menu is *classico*; try the antipasti, then the homemade *tortellini di granchio e cozze* (handmade crab tortellini with mussels, zucchini and saffron sauce).

Japanese

Ichiban Boshi (Map p517; ☎ 6423 1151; 02-14 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Ave; sushi from S\$2.50; ☑ noon-10.30pm

Sun-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat) Conveyor-belt sushi at reasonable prices in the sassy Esplanade Mall complex. It's a couple of rungs up from others of its ilk in Singapore.

Kuriya (Map p517; ☎ 6883 2020; 01-07, Raffles City Shopping Centre, 252 North Bridge Rd; mains from S\$25; ☑ lunch & dinner) Singaporeans are more accustomed to the ubiquitous 'conveyor-belt' sushi bars, and Kuriya is a sneering 'up yours' to such plebian Japanese dining experiences. Seasonal seafood and vegetables are flown in from Japan and diners are charmed by waiters in a classy setting.

Shiraishi (Map p517; ☎ 6338 3788; 03-01/02 the Ritz-Carlton, 7 Raffles Ave; dishes S\$30-100; ☑ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Don't let the casual *izekaya* appearance fool you. This restaurant is strictly for those seeking an exquisite Japanese dining experience (and who have the cash to spare). Prop yourself at the sushi bar and watch sushi chefs bark orders before proceeding to make masterpieces from hunks of raw fish.

Quick Eats

Colonial District food courts and hawker centres fill with a strange mix of suits and locals during lunch time. Come evening, locals fill up on beer and are content to watch English Premier League on large-screen TVs.

Victoria Street Food Centre (Map p517; 143 Victoria St; ☑ 10am-3am) Seemingly manifested to fill a space between high-rises, and with its small shrine outside, this is a great fallback when every other place is closed. Locals wheel and deal, friends neck bottles of beer, solo guys read books.

Coffee Express 2000 Food Court (Map p517; 01-79 Bras Basah Complex, 232 Victoria St; ☑ 24hr) Has over 10 stalls serving up a range of Chinese, Malay and Indian food and is air-conditioned.

Glutton's Corner (Map p517; ☑ lunch & dinner) Food celebrity KF Seetoh took the hard work out of finding great hawker food by inviting the best ones here, beside the Esplanade Mall. You can't go wrong with dishes such as oyster omelette, satay and barbecued stingray. You have to try the divine *kaya* fondue.

For an ultracheap feed, pull up a table at one of several **steamboat restaurants** (Map p517; cnr Beach Rd & Liang Seah St; ☑ dinner), where S\$15.50 to S\$19 will buy you an 'all you can eat' spread of meats, seafood and veggies.

Toss it all into the large steamboat in the middle of the table.

The basement and 3rd floor of **Raffles City** (Map p517; 252 North Bridge Rd; ☎ 11am-10pm) and the basements of **Funan DigitalLife Mall** (Map p517; 109 North Bridge Rd; ☎ 10.30am-8.30pm) and **Bugis Junction** (Map p522; 200 Victoria St; ☎ 9am-10pm) have fluoro-lit, hygienic food courts.

CBD & THE QUAYS

Asian Fusion

IndoChine Waterfront (Map p517; ☎ 6339 1720; 1 Empress Pl; mains from S\$16; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) The IndoChine cartel's riverside operation boasts Boat Quay views and sumptuous surrounds – dark leather chairs and glittering chandeliers. The menu is a sophisticated collation of Vietnamese-, Cambodian- and Laotian-inspired dishes. No MSG, colouring or preservatives are used in cooking. You'll have a similar experience (at cafe prices) at Siem Reap II (☎ 6338 7596) next door.

Cafes

Epicurien (Map p517; ☎ 6734 7720; 01-02 the Quayside, 60 Robertson Quay; mains S\$4-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun) The worn coffee-shop tables and breakfast bench here are a result of diners frantically shovelling down walnut bread French toast with orange butter, *laksa* pesto and other delights. Weekend breakfast single-handedly breathes life into this largely ignored quay.

Chinese

One on the Bund (Map p517; ☎ 6221 0004; Clifford Pier, 80 Collyer Quay; mains S\$15-38; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Marina Bay waterfront is hardly like the real Bund, but that's not stopping restaurateurs from calling it so. Housed in the former Clifford Pier, One on the Bund has replaced boat services with Shanghainese food service. The cavernous atmosphere is a little too art gallery/mausoleum but the smoked duck helps warm you up.

Si Chuan Dou Hua Restaurant (Map p517; ☎ 6535 6006; 60-01 UOB Plaza 1, 80 Raffles Pl; mains S\$17-35; ☎ lunch & dinner) Order with haste so you can start enjoying 60th-floor views. Standout dishes like braised abalone with mushrooms and smooth beancurd with wolfberries will temporarily tear your eyes away from the windows. Ask for a tea performance: tea masters assume martial-arts stances while pouring the drink out of a long-spouted tea-

pot. There's a branch at Parkroyal Beach Rd (Map p522).

French

Saint Pierre (Map p517; ☎ 6438 0887; 01-01 Central Mall, 3 Magazine Rd; mains from S\$40; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) While we're naturally sceptical of self-styled 'celebrity' chefs, the peroxide blond Mr Stroobant has earned his fame. The modern French menu is often inspired, and though the six types of foie gras might test the patience of animal lovers, it pulls in the crowds.

Japanese

Bon Goût (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6732 5234; 01-01 the Quayside, 60 Robertson Quay; mains S\$6-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) This eccentric place (not to be misread as 'Bong Out') is weird enough to be straight out of Tokyo. It's a second-hand bookshop/CD store/restaurant full of students and literati, reading, laughing and slurping *ramen* (noodle soups), Japanese curries and Tiger beer (sometimes all at once).

Marutama Ramen (Map p517; ☎ 6534 8090; 03-90/91 the Central, 6 Eu Tong Sen St; ramen S\$12; ☎ 11.30am-10pm) When the *ramen* stock runs out, the restaurant closes up for the day. It does happen because it's that good. Sadly, ingredients are on the skimpy side and you'd best shell out extra for side dishes (S\$1 to S\$8) or risk succumbing to McDonald's later. There's a branch at Liang Court (Map p517).

Seafood

Palm Beach Seafood (Map p517; ☎ 6227 2332; 01-09 One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Rd; mains S\$12-60; ☎ lunch & dinner) There's not a palm or a beach in sight (name inherited from its parent branch at East Coast Parkway), but the bay views from this split-level diner are pretty good. Groups of suits spin the lazy Susan, enjoying baked, steamed and fried crabs.

Vegetarian

Angel's Bistro (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6220 4344; www.angelsbistro.com.sg; 28 Stanley St; meals from S\$6; ☎ lunch) Diners here leave with uplifted spirits thanks to the organic, vegetarian produce at this no-frills restaurant. Watch the spritely 'aunties' behind the counter whip into action...must be the food.

Quick Eats

Lau Pa Sat (Map pp526-7; 18 Raffles Quay; ☎ 24hr) Originally used for a market (Lau Pa Sat

THE ART OF TEA APPRECIATION

Taking time out in a Chinatown teahouse is a great way to relax and to learn about local teas and customs. Start at **Yixing Yuan Teahouse** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 6961; 30/32 Tanjong Pagar Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm), where reformed corporate banker Vincent Low explains everything you need to know about sampling different types of tea. Demonstrations with tastings last around 45 minutes to two hours (S\$20 to S\$40). The dim sum lunch is popular.

Once you know your green tea from your oolong, duck around the corner to **Tea Chapter** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6226 1175; 9-11 Neil Rd; ☎ 10am-11pm), where Queen Elizabeth dropped by for a cuppa in 1989. If you don't know the tea-making drill, the waiter will give you a brief demonstration. Downstairs, all manner of tea paraphernalia are precariously balanced on display shelves and can be purchased.

If you're out in Katong, check out **Amoy Tea** (Map p528; ☎ 6346 0929; 331 Joo Chiat Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm), which imports a huge range of ready-packed and loose-leaf Chinese teas.

means 'old market' in Hokkien), this handsome wrought-iron canopy was freighted out from Glasgow in 1894 and lays claim to being the most popular hawker centre. Wander the aisles and take pleasure in picking out your food.

Boon Tat Street hawker stalls (Map pp526-7; ☎ 7pm-3am Mon-Fri, 3pm-3am Sat & Sun) In the evenings, additional hawker stalls specialising in satay set up along this street beside Lau Pa Sat. Satays go for 80¢ a pop; the chilli crab is excellent too.

Ya Kun Kaya Toast (Map pp526-7; 01-01 Far East Sq, 18 China St; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Though a chain of outlets have mushroomed across Singapore, this outlet most closely matches the original 1940s stall selling strong coffee, runny eggs and *kaya* toast, which so many Singaporeans love.

CHINATOWN

Chinese

Da Dong Restaurant (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6221 3822; 39 Smith St; yum cha S\$2.80-4.80, mains from S\$12; ☎ 11am-10.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10.45pm Sat & Sun) One of Chinatown's longest lasting restaurants first opened its doors in 1928. These days, it still serves up some of the best dim sum in town. Longevity hasn't equated to great service, but with *char siew* (barbecue pork) buns this good, who cares?

Chi Yan Organic Vegetarian Health Food (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 9026; 2 Smith St; mains S\$5-10; ☎ noon-10pm) Organic, 100% vegetarian food cooked sans garlic and onion is surprisingly delish. Tiny wooden tables and chairs and the spiritual book selection give this place

a schoolhouse atmosphere to complement your rising sense of worthiness.

Qun Zhong Eating House (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6221 3060; 21 Neil Rd; mains S\$8-10; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) Lunchtime queues conga onto the street for seafood, pork and vegetable dumplings expertly rolled by a crew of old ladies up the back of this shophouse. The red-bean pancake is a knock-out dessert.

Sin Hoi San Eating House (Map pp520-1; 01-59, 55 Tiong Bahru Rd; mains S\$12-45; ☎ 5pm-5am) The pre- and post-clubbing crowd love to pile onto the plastic chairs and load up on a variety of *sze char* (cooked to order) dishes. If you want to splash out, try the chilli crab. Yes, the crabs and seafood are taken from one of the many aquarium tanks that line the walls of the restaurant.

Chuan Jiang Hao Zi (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 1518; 12 Smith St; steamboats from S\$25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Look around. You're not the only one choking on the fiery broth at this Sichuan steamboat restaurant. Still, locals flock here for what is arguably the best hot pot in town. Two tips: don't put veggies into the chilli stock; and do order lots of beer.

French

L'Angelus (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 6897; 85 Club St; mains from S\$16; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Comfort-food staples at this unpretentious Provençal bistro make it one of Singapore's better French eateries. Launch into the cassoulet, escargots and the famous hot chocolate cake.

Indian

Annalakshmi Janatha (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6223 0809; 104 Amoy St; meals S\$5-10; ☎ 11am-3pm Mon-Sat) No-frills

'pay what like' Indian eatery whose profits are donated to various charities. The range of vegetarian curries and dhals are served in all-you-can-eat buffet style and are popular with the white-collar lunch crowd. There's another branch in Chinatown Point (Map p517; B1-02 Chinatown Point, 133 New Bridge Rd).

International

Broth (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6323 3353; 21 Duxton Hill; mains from S\$20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat) In a leafy oasis atop sleepy Duxton Hill, past a row of sleazy KTV bars, this welcoming bistro has friendly staff, bentwood chairs, ceiling fans and a wall of wine and cookbooks. The menu is typically modern with dishes such as lamb loin, steaks and risottos.

Italian

Senso (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 3534; 21 Club St; mains S\$24-38; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Grab a drink from the bar before retreating to the courtyard for dinner. Get a senso(ry) overload with the homemade pasta with super-fresh lobster (live from in-house tanks) and pan-roasted king prawns in saffron cream sauce.

Peranakan

Blue Ginger (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6222 3928; 97 Tanjong Pagar Rd; mains S\$10-28; ☎ lunch & dinner) Blue Ginger serves traditional Peranakan cuisine in a homely shophouse, enlivened by local artist Martin Loh's striking contemporary paintings. Its claim to fame is the *ayam panggang* (grilled chicken in coconut milk and spices).

Thai

Thanying (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6222 4688; 2nd fl, Amara Hotel, 165 Tanjong Pagar Rd; mains S\$18-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) Thanying is one of Singapore's best Thai restaurants. Meticulously prepared Royal Thai curries and stir-fries are shuffled out by efficient, unintrusive staff in a slightly ostentatious setting. There's a recently opened branch in Sentosa (Map pp514-15).

Quick Eats

Highlander Coffee (Map pp520-1; 49 Kampung Bahru Rd; sandwiches from S\$3.90; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat) If you're tired of the weak coffee they call lattes at Starbucks, head here for your fix. Highlander blends and roasts its own beans and the owners, Phil and Cedric, are happy

to talk coffee all day. Have a smoked duck ciabatta to accompany the brew. Or sign up for a coffee-making class.

Chinatown Complex (Map pp526-7; cnr Sago & Trengganu Sts; ☎ 9am-11pm) As you'd expect, the large, eternally busy hawker centre here has some great Chinese food stalls. The choice is vast, the smoky atmosphere appropriately unkempt.

Eric's Wuerstelstand (Map pp526-7; Stall 2 & 3 Trengganu St; ☎ 10am-8pm) Eric, an eccentric Austrian, hawks low-priced sausages and sauerkraut from a street stall.

Smith Street Hawker Stalls (Map pp526-7; Smith St; ☎ 4-11pm) Some vendors have also set up along this street, beneath red umbrellas – rivulets of water run down unwitting shirt backs when it rains. It's very touristy, but locals eat here too.

Maxwell Road Food Centre (Map pp526-7; cnr Maxwell & Neil Rds; ☎ 24hr) Generally esteemed as one of Singapore's best hawker centres, this is in an open-sided food barn with over 100 stalls under the roof. Don't miss the raw fish congee (Zhen Zhen, stall 54). Can't decide what to eat? Look for the stall with the longest queues and get to the end of the line pronto.

EAST COAST Chinese

Eng Seng Coffeeshop (Map p528; 247/249 Joo Chiat Pl; mains from S\$15; ☎ 5-9pm) The definitive Singapore dish – black-pepper crab – is so good here that locals are 1) willing to queue over an hour to order and 2) be rudely told how many crabs they can order by the proprietress. The sticky honeylike peppery sauce makes it worth arriving at 4.30pm for an early dinner.

Peranakan

Guan Hoe Soon (Map p528; ☎ 6344 2761; 214 Joo Chiat Rd; mains from S\$8; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This modest brick-fronted restaurant is the oldest Peranakan restaurant in Singapore (established 1953). Lee Kuan Yew gets his takeaway here. The definitive Peranakan *ayam buah keluak* (chicken with black nut) is a standout. Ask for the *babi panggang* (charcoal grilled pork) on weekends.

Charlie's Peranakan Food (Map p528; ☎ 6344 8824; 205 East Coast Rd; mains S\$10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) When chef Charlie Tan retired over 10 years ago, people kept begging him to cook for them – so he went back into business! The essential Peranakan staple is *ayam buah keluak* – Charlie's version is brilliant.

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN HAWKER CENTRES

Essential to any Singapore visit is at least one hawker-centre meal, washed down with a cold bottle of Tiger beer. Here are seven of the best:

Adam Road Food Centre (Map pp520-1; cnr Adam & Dunearn Rds; ☎ 6am-3am) Try the *char kway teow* (broad noodles, clams and eggs fried in chilli and black-bean sauce) or barbecued stingray.

Chinatown Complex (Map pp526-7; Smith St; ☎ 9am-11pm) One hundred and fifty cheap, grungy and magically authentic stalls. Lubricate some roast duck and rice with a *kopi*.

Chomp Chomp (Map pp514-15; Kensington Park Rd; ☎ 6pm-1am) Wander the smoky aisles to see what takes your fancy. It's out of the way in the north of the island – you'll probably be the only tourist in sight.

Lau Pa Sat (Map pp526-7; 18 Raffles Quay; ☎ 24hr) Steamed dim sum, chilli crab and sizzling satay under a magnificent wrought-iron structure.

Lavender Food Centre (Map p522; cnr Jln Besar & Foch Rd; ☎ 11am-3am) Much less touristy than most and stays open until the wee smalls. The won-ton noodles are worth queuing for.

Maxwell Road Food Centre (Map pp526-7; cnr Maxwell & Neil Rds; ☎ 24hr) A breezy open-sided food hall with 103 stalls. Locals rack up empty beer bottles next to chubby school kids, who obviously spend too much time here.

Tekka Centre (Map p522; cnr Bukit Timah & Serangoon Rds; ☎ 10am-late) A hectic, malodorous wet market with Indian, Muslim, Kerala, Sri Lankan and vegetarian food stalls; don't miss the *roti prata* (unleavened flaky bread).

Gd O' Times (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6542 2382; 01-2017, 5 Changi Village Rd; mains from S\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) A relatively late player in the Peranakan food game, but boy has this restaurant got game. Its *ayam buah keluak* and Assam fish head are family recipes and stand toe to toe with the best of them.

Seafood

No Signboard Seafood (Map p528; ☎ 6842 3415; 414 Geylang Rd; mains S\$15-30; ☎ noon-1am) The irony of the 30ft crustacean-embellished neon signboard seems to escape the diners here – they're too busy munching plates of white-pepper crab with spring onions and garlic under a fluoro-lit marquee. There's another branch at the East Coast Seafood Centre (below).

East Coast Seafood Centre (Map p528; 1202 East Coast Parkway; mains S\$15-55; ☎ dinner) Overlooking the Straits of Singapore in the salty breeze, this renowned seafood centre boasts several excellent Chinese and Thai restaurants, all with outdoor seating. Don't miss the chilli crabs and the intoxicating 'drunken' prawns. Standout places include Jumbo, Long Beach, No Signboard and Red House.

Vegetarian

Naive (Map p528; ☎ 6348 0668; 99 East Coast Rd; mains from S\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner) The cosy dining room has communal tables, so you can rub shoulders with other diners enjoying

a feel-good vegetarian fix. The menu features meatless variations on local favourites such as Golden Oat, where tofu (instead of prawns) is deep fried and coated with sweet oats. Portions are a little small.

Western

Charlie's Corner (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6542 0867; 01-08 Changi Village Hawker Centre; dishes S\$10-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Charlie's Corner is something of an institution, run by an old fella who's been a fixture here for years. The endless varieties of beer and the fish and chips are the main draws. The prices are a little high for a hawker-centre stall, but after a few beers you won't notice.

Quick Eats

East Coast Lagoon Food Village (Map p528; East Coast Park Service Rd; dishes S\$3-15; ☎ 10.30am-11.30pm) There are few hawker centres with a better location. Tramp barefoot off the beach, order up some satay, seafood, or the uniquely Singaporean *satay bee hoon* (rice vermicelli) from Meng Kee at stall 17. Expect to queue. Cheap beer available.

Changi Village Food Centre (Map pp514-15; Lg Bekukong; dishes S\$3-6; ☎ 10.30am-11.30pm) This small but extremely popular food centre is home to various stalls selling *nasi lemak* (p61). Stall 157 is the most popular but the surrounding ones are just as good minus the long queues.

HOLLAND VILLAGE & BUKIT TIMAH

French

Au Petit Salut (Map p524; ☎ 6475 1976; 40C Harding Rd; mains S\$30-50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Au Petit serves up familiar French fare in peaceful environs. Down tenderly cooked beef cheeks, the speciality dish, to the chirping of crickets. An extensive wine list tops the experience off. The set menu (typically three courses) offers similar food to the à la carte menu but with better value.

Indian

Samy's Curry Restaurant (Map p524; ☎ 6472 2080; Civil Service Club, 25 Dempsey Rd; mains from S\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner) For 25 years the ceiling fans have spun above Samy's munificent curries in this leafy, open-walled, timber-shuttered colonial throwback. Recent renovations have removed some of the charm but the fish-head curry is still sublime. Come early for a verandah table.

Italian

Michelangelo's (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6475 9069; 01-60 Chip Bee Gardens, 44 Jln Merah Saga; mains S\$24-45; ☎ lunch & dinner) Michelangelo's offers an artistic selection of pastas (penne sambuca and penne vodka help uninhibit conversations), salads and meat-oriented mains. Choose between the fan-cooled streetside terrace or the romantic dining room with its Sistine Chapel-esque ceiling efforts.

Vegetarian

Original Sin (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6475 5605; 01-62 Chip Bee Gardens, 43 Jln Merah Saga; mains S\$24-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) The originally (and strictly vegetarian) sinful menu ranges from towering ricotta cakes to melt-in-your-mouth moussaka and excellent risottos, not to mention an expansive/expensive Antipodean wine list. Book a mosaic-topped outdoor table.

Quick Eats

Holland Village Food Centre (Map pp514-15; Lg Mambong; meals from S\$3; ☎ 10am-late) Avoid the raft of expat locals dining at pricey restaurants across the street and join the in-the-know locals for cheap Singapore grub. A small clutch of stalls sell chicken rice, prawn noodles and other classics. Walk off the calories with a visit to the wet market behind.

Da Paolo Gastronomica (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6475 1323; 01-74 Chip Bee Gardens, 43 Jln Merah Saga; meals from S\$6;

☎ 9am-9pm) Have your travelling companion nab one of the precious few stone stables outside while you nip inside this deli for gourmet-topped pizza slices, black-truffle tagliatelle and made-to-order sandwiches.

Riders Cafe (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6466 9819; 51 Fairways Dr; mains S\$10-35; ☎ 8am-10pm) It's a S\$10 taxi ride to get here from Orchard Rd but where else in Singapore can you chow down on eggs Benedict while watching horses being groomed and trained? The nonair-conditioned setting, in an utterly charming retro black-and-white colonial bungalow, completes the experience.

Jones the Grocer (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6476 1512; 9 Dempsey Rd; mains from S\$20; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) This rather trendy deli also serves up a decent feed. Or is it a restaurant with a full-service deli? It's hard to tell, as Jones has craftily blended the two into a beautiful high-ceilinged, airy space. The cheese room is a delight, as is the open-faced wagyu burger. The espresso-based coffees are top-notch too.

KAMPONG GLAM

Indian & Malay

Zam Zam (Map p522; ☎ 6298 7011; 699 North Bridge Rd; meals S\$4-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) These guys have been here since 1908, so we figure they know what they're doing. Tenure hasn't bred complacency – the touts try to herd passers-by through the door as frenetic chefs whip up *murtabaks* (flaky, flat bread filled with mutton, chicken or vegetables).

Pariaman Warong Nasi (Map p522; ☎ 6292 2374; 738 North Bridge Rd; meals S\$6-10; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm) Cars roll up for quick takeaways at lunchtime at this corner coffee shop, where you'll smell the food before you see the crowd waiting to order the Malay dishes. The *beef rendang* (dry beef curry) and *sambal goreng* (long beans, tempeh and fried bean curd) are dishes to try.

Middle Eastern

Cafe Le Caire (Map p522; ☎ 6292 0979; 39 Arab St; meals S\$8-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) This casual Egyptian hole-in-the-wall comes to life at night and attracts a multinational crowd hellbent on devouring the best kebabs and dips in town. Puff on *sheesha* pipes (S\$15) and dissect the day.

Al-Tazzag (Map p522; ☎ 6295 5024; 24 Haji Ln; mains from S\$8; ☎ 11.30am-4am Mon-Sat, 4pm-4am Sun) Tiny, colourfully painted Egyptian cafe full of atmosphere, *sheeshas*, dips and kebabs. The tables spill out under the five-foot ways at

night and the merriment goes on into the wee hours.

Quick Eats

Golden Mile Food Centre (Map p522; 505 Beach Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) Promotes the government's 'Ask for Healthier Changes' policy (less oil, syrup, fat etc), but the famous *tulang* soup (S\$5) from basement stalls 4, 15 and 28 doesn't really comply – meaty bones stewed in a rich, spicy, blood-red tomato gravy. Gnaw off the flesh, suck out the marrow, and sop up the sauce with bread. Seedy karaoke bars and Thai food stalls proliferate in the Golden Mile Complex across the road.

Blujaz Cafe (Map p522; ☎ 6292 3800; 11 Bali Ln; meals S\$8-18; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri, 4pm-2am Sat) Live jaz (sic) is only played here on Saturday nights and on the first Monday each month. This bohemian-decorated eatery is popular for its wide range of Asian and Western dishes and the belly dancer on the first and third Friday of each month.

LITTLE INDIA

French

French Stall (Map p522; ☎ 6299 3544; 544 Serangoon Rd; mains S\$10-22; ☎ drinks & dessert 3-6pm Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun) A cross-cultural gem! French chef Xavier Le Henaff married a Singaporean and set up this place for regular folks – the best of France (good wine, great food, better desserts and lilting accordion music) merged with Singaporean affordability and no-frills outdoor dining. No reservations; cash only.

Indian

Madras New Woodlands (Map p522; ☎ 6297 1594; 12-14 Upper Dickson Rd; mains S\$5-10; ☎ 7.30am-11.30pm) This enduring vegetarian family favourite is nothing flash to look at, but sometimes you need a break from all that Bolly schmaltz. The banana-leaf *thalis* (veggie curries, dhal and condiment) are more than generous; the service is gracious, unintrusive and helpful to confused foreigners.

Komala Vilas (Map p522; ☎ 6293 6980; 76-78 Serangoon Rd; meals S\$6.50-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This McDonald's of Indian fare serves decent, cheap vegetarian meals all day long. Try some spicy samosas (stuffed pastries), or order the *thali*. Its outlet at 82 Serangoon Rd sells sugary Indian sweets.

Andhra Curry (Map p522; ☎ 6293 3935; 41 Kerbau Rd; meals from S\$7; ☎ lunch & dinner) No-frills restaurant

that prides itself on fiery recipes from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Order up some Hyderabadi biryani (oven-baked rice with vegetables and meat). Masala tea helps quell the fire in your belly. On Sunday nights it's mayhem!

ourpick Spice Queen (Map p522; ☎ 6255 2240; 24/26 Race Course Rd; mains S\$8-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Self-taught celebrity chef Devagi Sanmugam serves Indian dishes with a distinctly Singaporean twist in the heart of Little India. The staff are ultrafriendly and happy to make recommendations. Fish-head curry is a must. Take home recipe books or sign up for a cooking class (see p513).

Banana Leaf Apolo (Map p522; ☎ 6293 8682; 54 Race Course Rd; mains S\$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Supremely tourist-friendly restaurant famed for its fish-head curry (dig into the delish meat on those fishy cheeks!). Can't face a fish face? Standards like rogan josh (tomato and red-pepper lamb curry) and lamb vindaloo (spicy Central or South Indian curry) are less confronting.

Quick Eats

Tekka Centre (Map p522; Race Course Rd; ☎ 10am-late) Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the original Tekka Centre was being renovated and tarted up. Sadly, these temporary premises only house 60% of the original stalls and 0% of the original atmosphere.

Lavender Food Centre (Map p522; cnr Jln Besar & Foch Rd; ☎ 11am-3am) Much less touristed than most and stays open until the wee hours. The wonton noodles (the queues start before the stall opens and persist all day) and Hong Kong dim sum are worth queuing for.

Rochor Original Beancurd (Map p522; 2 Short St; ☎ noon-midnight) Grab a plastic stool and order these items: bean curd, soy-bean milk and *yu tiao* (fried dough fritters). If it's too crowded, try the same dishes at the competition next door.

ORCHARD ROAD Cafes

Killiney Kopitiam (Map p524; ☎ 6734 9648; 67 Killiney Rd; meals S\$3-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The original local coffee joint, which spawned a whole host of imitators and an empire of franchisees, is still *the* place for breakfast. The waiter yells your order at ear-splitting volume and the coffee – shaken by the resulting seismic disturbance – inevitably arrives erupted into the saucer.

Freshly Baked (Map p524; ☎ 6735 3298; 57 Killiney Rd; sandwiches S\$7; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) Office workers drop by for the excellent sandwiches but the proverbial icing on the cake is the selection of sweets and pastries. Gorge on cheesecake and éclairs and diet later.

Casa Verde (Map p524; ☎ 6467 7326; Visitors Centre, Singapore Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Rd; meals S\$14-28; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Pet-friendly restaurant seeks pooch-loving diners for culinary fun. Smashing wood-fired pizzas attracts hordes of families and pet lovers (pets in tow). Good luck trying to get a seat. Pets optional.

PS Cafe Palais (☎ 9834 8232; 02-09 Palais Renaissance Shopping Centre, 390 Orchard Rd; mains from S\$18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Beautiful people blend easily into the equally gorgeous 'industrial grit meets colonial charm' surroundings. Slug back a cocktail under swirling ceiling fans and tear into the fish pie (fish, scallops and prawns cooked with chutney and pesto, enveloped in delicate pastry). There are two less-glamorous branches: the ProjectShop Cafe (Map p524; ☎ 6735 6765; 02-20 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd) and PS Cafe Harding (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6479 3343; 28B Harding Rd).

Chinese

Din Tai Fung (Map p524; ☎ 6836 8336; B1-03 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd; dishes from S\$6; ☎ lunch & dinner) The queues at this Taiwanese restaurant are a testament to its excellent food. While waiting, watch chefs at work through 'fishbowl' windows; they painstakingly make 18 folds in the dough used for the *xiao long pao* (steamed pork dumplings). Delicate dumplings are served steaming fresh in bamboo baskets and explode with flavour in your mouth.

Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao (Map p524; ☎ 6238 1661; 04-27 Ngee Ann City, Takashimaya Shopping Centre, 391 Orchard Rd; mains S\$8-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Lanzhou handmade noodles and *xiao long pao* keep bringing people back. It has an extensive numbered 'I want that one' menu (lots of dim sum) and several set menus. There are branches at Suntec City (Map p517) and Holland Village (Map pp514-15).

Chatterbox (Map p524; ☎ 6831 6291; Level 38 Orchard Wing, Mandarin Singapore, 333 Orchard Rd; mains from S\$20; ☎ 5am-1am) Chatterbox has ditched its old dull lobby digs for floor-to-ceiling 38th-floor views of the city. Its chicken rice is still legendary (both for its taste and high cost). Boiled chicken is plunged into ice then served cold

with warm broth, fragrant rice, rich soy, chili and freshly ground ginger. Singaporeans still flock here to pay 10 times what they'd pay at a hawker centre.

French

Au Jardin (Map p524; ☎ 6466 8112; E/JH Corner House, Singapore Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Rd; degustation S\$175, brunch S\$78; ☎ dinner daily, lunch Fri, brunch Sun) The dinner degustation is filled with wagyu, Alaskan crab, foie gras and all the good things in life. The genteel garden-house setting helps calm the nerves when the bill arrives. Come for Sunday brunch. Why? Your mind and stomach will turn to mush with the choice of 14 Provençal-inspired buffet dishes.

Indonesian

Rice Table (Map p524; ☎ 6835 3788; 02-09/10 International Bldg, 360 Orchard Rd; buffet lunch/dinner S\$18/29; ☎ lunch & dinner) An uninspired building in Orchard Rd is saved by a restaurant serving *rijsttafel* (rice table) – a free-flowing buffet of 11 to 20 small Dutch-influenced Indonesian dishes such as *daging rendang* (spicy beef stew) and *gado gado* (tofu and bean sprouts in peanut sauce).

International

our pick Oriole Cafe & Bar (Map p524; ☎ 6238 8348; 01-01 Pan Pacific Serviced Suites, 96 Somerset Rd; mains S\$10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Stuck at the back of a service hotel, Oriole's modern bistro sensibilities are reflected in a wide-ranging menu guaranteed to induce dining indecision. Do you go with the beef-cheek tagliatelle, good old fish and chips or a Philly steak and cheese? Singapore's barista champion, John Ting, pulls perfect espressos behind the impressive La Marzocco machine.

The Canteen (Map p524; ☎ 6738 2276; 01-01B Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Rd; mains S\$13-16.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) The office-white furnishings and flooring don't deter shoppers from stopping by for local delights cooked with a twist: *laksa udon*, crab *mee pok* (flat egg noodles), curry chicken ramen, black-pepper beef spaghetti and handmade noodles with truffle oil.

Iggys (Map p524; ☎ 6732 2234; Level 3, the Regent Singapore, 1 Cuscaden Rd; set menus S\$50-250; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun) Singapore's best restaurant. Period. The suprisingly casual dining room is forgiven when the courses hit the table. Japanese and European sensibilities are meshed together in a tasting menu of epic

CELEBRITY CHEF EXTRAORDINAIRE: DEVAGI SANMUGAM

How did you get involved in the food industry? I'm a self-taught chef and have been in the food business for 27 years. My parents thought it was taboo for a girl to work as a chef. Their image of one was of guys flipping *roti prata* over an oily griddle! But food runs in the family. My brother is a chef in Chennai. My sister ran a food stall in River Valley.

I was a school clerk and would bring food for my colleagues to sample. People started encouraging me to run cooking classes and I finally put an ad in the papers...three people turned up for my first class. I got five family members to make up the numbers.

When did a breakthrough in your career eventuate? My break came when a *Her World* (a women's magazine) food writer gave my class a glowing review. Classes ballooned from five to 25. I had to move out of my housing development board flat to a larger landed property. I also ended up providing recipes to *Her World* for 12 years. I wrote my first cookbook in 1995. All the publishers I wrote to rejected it but my husband self-published it in Tamil and English. The 3000 copies sold out in three years. Since then I have published 16 books across many cuisines.

In 2002, I was invited by Mediaworks (now defunct) to do a TV show, *Chef on Call*. The show was about being called up by various celebrities to prepare dinner parties for their friends. Then I did a second series where I was working on a different cuisine every episode. My next TV show was *Cooking for Love*, where I taught people how to cook meals to surprise loved ones.

So you went from being teacher to restaurateur? I opened a fine-dining Indian restaurant for four years in Upper Thompson. I decided to move to casual dining and opened up a 150-seat restaurant in Little India (Spice Queen; see p544). Frankly it's frightening opening an Indian restaurant in Little India. I get criticised for not being 'authentic'. But my food is prepared to my own recipes. They are authentically mine and cater to local palates.

I'm popular but I'm not rich. It's hard work, as I run classes in the day and have to do promotion for the restaurant at night. My dream would be to open a fine-dining restaurant serving South Indian cuisine and to do a cooking show in India.

Tell us what your favourite spices are? My top three spices would be: cardamom – it's a fragrant spice and used for both savoury and sweet dishes. A little bit goes a long way! Cinnamon – this international spice is used in many cuisines. It lasts forever and can even be used as a preservative. Use it whole or ground up. Black mustard seeds – used widely in Indian cooking in meat and veg dishes.

proportions (eight courses for dinner). The wine list is as impressive as it is extensive.

Japanese

Wasabi Tei (Map p524; 05-70 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; dishes S\$5-15; ☎ noon-3pm & 5.30-9.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-4.30pm & 5.30-9.30pm Sat) Join the queue snaking out of this 20-seat mom-and-pop sushi bar. The chef is Chinese but he sure can slice raw fish. You'd better make your choices before you sit because seconds and postorder amendments are not allowed. Nazi-like, you say? Nineteen other people will gladly take your place.

Sun with Moon (Map p524; ☎ 6733 6636; 03-15 Wheelock Place, 501 Orchard Rd; mains from S\$15; ☎ 11.30am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11.30am-midnight Fri & Sat) If Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami opened a restaurant, it would look exactly like Sun with Moon. The cavernous interior has light-filled seats (sun?) and dark little nooks (moon?),

hanging Japanese lanterns and shag carpets. *Kamameshi* (rice dish cooked in an iron pot) is delicate and the desserts taste as good as they look (the tofu cheesecake is playfully served in a bird cage).

Nagomi (Map p524; ☎ 6732 4300; 02-22 Cuppage Plaza, 5 Keok Rd; meals S\$40-80; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) The stunning but dark atmosphere at this eatery is so moody you just want to nurse sake all night. Thankfully, the food will lift your spirits. Ingredients are flown from Japan four times a week, and meals are prepared *omakase* (there's no menu and the chef prepares seasonal specialities) and served in beautiful Japanese earthenware.

Russian

Shashlik (Map p524; ☎ 6732 6401; 06-19 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd; mains S\$10-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) Ookay, a Russian coffee house in Singapore? Thumbs up for uniqueness. Additional points

for doing a brave borscht and tender beef/chicken/pork shashliks. The interior is as dated as the waiters who shuffle around behind food trolleys, expertly igniting bombe Alaskas. Fun!

Quick Eats

Burrow into the basements of most Orchard Rd malls and you'll find great-value food courts.

Lucky Prata (Map p524; 01-42 Lucky Plaza, 304 Orchard Rd; ☎ 11am-9pm) You'd have to be extremely lucky to get a table at this joint during lunchtime. If you do, thank your lucky stars, roll up your sleeves and tuck into *roti prata* and *teh tarik* ('pulled' tea).

Takashimaya Food Village (Map p524; B2 Takashimaya, Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) A crazy (but oh so good) mishmash of stalls selling everything from Japanese pancakes to *bibimbap* (mixed rice and meat over rice), ice cream and sweet cream puffs.

Food Republic (Map p524; Level 4 Wisma Atria Shopping Centre, 435 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10am-10.30pm) A cornucopia of local food. Muck in with the rest of the crowd for seats before joining the longest queues. Roving 'aunties' push around trolleys filled with drinks and dim sum.

Newton Food Centre (Map p524; 500 Clemenceau Ave Nth; ☎ 5pm-late) Near Newton MRT, this food centre gets a bum rap thanks to aggressive touts and overcharging. Still, the atmosphere is lively. Make sure to check prices before you confirm your order. Try the oyster omelette at Hup Kee (stall 73).

SENTOSA & AROUND

Imperial Herbal Restaurant (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6337 0491; 03-08, Lobby G, VivoCity; mains from S\$22; ☎ lunch & dinner) Located in new premises, it still retains the scorpions on the menu and the in-house Chinese physician who checks your pulse, examines your tongue and then prescribes something on the menu to rebalance your yin and yang. Boost your libido, lose the zits, or stop the grey-hair onslaught – something tasty will save the day!

Il Lido (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6866 1977; Sentosa Golf Club, 27 Bukit Manis Rd; mains S\$28-68 ☎ lunch & dinner) Starry-eyed lovers and suits on corporate accounts share the simple al fresco dining space for stunning views of the South China Sea while twirling squid-ink fettuccine on

their forks. Alcoholics rejoice for there's a S\$98 champagne brunch on Sundays.

DRINKING

Despite ludicrously high alcohol prices, high disposable incomes and relaxed licensing laws fuel a lively bar scene in Singapore – you'll always find somewhere to suit your mood. Hit the bars early to cash in on happy hours, typically stretching from 5pm to 9pm, when you'll often get two-for-one drinks. On Wednesday nights some bars have cheap or free drinks for women. Watch out for higher age limits at some bars (usually 18 for most, though some require men to be 21 or 23).

The main party places are Circular Rd, Boat Quay, Mohamed Sultan Rd, Chijmes in the Colonial District, Club St in Chinatown, Emerald Hill off Orchard Rd, and Holland Village. Unless otherwise stated, bars have free entry, most opening around 5pm until at least midnight Sunday to Thursday, and through to 2am or 3am on Friday and Saturday.

If you don't want to go home broke and don't mind plastic tables and fluoro lights, bottles of Tiger, Heineken and Tsingtao cost S\$6 to S\$8 at hawker centres and coffee shops.

COLONIAL DISTRICT

Chijmes (Map p517; 30 Victoria St) Perennially popular Chijmes is a high-density collection of bars and chilled-out patio areas.

New Asia Bar (Map p517; ☎ 6831 5681; Swissôtel The Stamford, Lvl 71, Equinox Complex, 2 Stamford Rd; cover Fri & Sat incl 1 drink S\$25; ☎ 3pm-late) Save the S\$30 you would have spent on the Singapore Flyer and spend it on drinks here instead! The 70th floor and panoramic views help your drinks go down a little easier. Come early for sundowners, and once you tire of the views, shake it on the dance floor.

Loof (Map p517; ☎ 6338 8035; www.loof.com.sg; 03-07 Odeon Towers Bldg, 331 North Bridge Rd; ☎ 5pm-1.30am Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) This rooftop bar gets its name from the Singlish (local slang) mangling of the word 'roof'. Ambient beats soothe away the city noise and comfy leather-clad seats are scattered around the deck...perhaps these are to blame for the mellow crowd. For privacy (and air-con), ask for one of the seven semi-enclosed seating areas.

Orgo (Map p517; nick@orgo.sg; 4th fl Esplanade Roof Tce, 1 Esplanade Dr; ☎ 5pm-2am) Yawn. Yet another

GAY & LESBIAN SINGAPORE

Although male homosexuality remains illegal (and lesbianism doesn't officially exist!), when some 2500 Singaporeans of all sexual persuasions dressed in pink and met in Hong Lim Park in May 2009 to form a pink dot (www.pinkdot.sg), it was hailed a defining moment in the island's long march to freedom of sexual expression. Every August for the past few years, the island's gays have also rallied round for the pride celebration **Indignation** (www.plu.sg/indignation).

Chinatown's Tanjong Pagar Rd area has an active gay and lesbian bar scene and welcomes drinkers regardless of their sexuality. Apart from the following also check out the listings at www.utopia-asia.com and www.fridae.com, and see p560.

DYMK (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 3565; www.dymk.sg; 9 Kreta Ayer Rd; ☎ 7pm-midnight Tue-Thu, to 1am Fri, 8pm-2am Sat) Standing for Does Your Mother Know, this cute yellow-and-red-painted shophouse is a chilled and friendly place to start or wind down your night.

Backstage Bar (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6227 1712; www.backstagebar.moonfruit.com; 13A Trengganu St; ☎ 7pm-2am Sun-Thu, 7pm-3am Fri & Sat) The entrance to this long-running bar with a breezy balcony is on Temple St; it attracts an older set and their acolytes.

Tantric Bar (Map pp526-7; 78 Neil Rd; ☎ 8pm-3am Sun-Fri, Sat 8pm-4am) With a spacious multilevel courtyard, this bar is the place to see and be seen, catch up on the latest gossip and scope out potential playmates.

Taboo (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6225 6256; www.taboo97.com; 65-67 Neil Rd; ☎ 8pm-2am Wed & Thu, 10pm-3am Fri, 10pm-4am Sat) It may keep moving location but Taboo remains a tried and trusted venue for late-night dancing and frolicking – release your inner Madonna on that podium.

Play & Replay (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6227 7400; <http://playclub.com.sg>; 21 Tanjong Pagar Rd; admission incl 1 drink S\$15; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed-Fri, 9pm-4am Sat) Spacious and popular club with all sexes; the attached bar Replay is a sophisticated space catering to the stylish gay set and playing a more progressive, 'electric' range of sounds.

rooftop bar with stunning views. But this one has the added bonus of Japanese mixologist Tomoyuki Kitazoe crafting crazy drinks such as soursop calamansi martinis in addition to panoramic views of Marina Bay. Air-conditioned glass enclosures available for wilting patrons. Let's orgo to Orgo!

Paulaner Bräuhaus (Map p517; ☎ 6883 2572; 01-01 Times Square@Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd; ☎ noon-1am Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) A brassy, three-storey German microbrewery bar and restaurant serving up brothy tankards of Munich Lager and Munich Dark and platters of sausage and cheese 'knacker'. There's live music in the evenings.

Raffles Hotel (Map p517; ☎ 6337 1886; 1 Beach Rd; ☎ 10am-late) Yeah, we know it's a cliché, but a visit to Singapore is practically incomplete without a drink at Raffles (p496). The Bar & Billiard Room has two billiard tables and a verandah perfect for postcolonial posturing. The courtyard Gazebo Bar is a tasty spot for a tippie below rattling palms. Sipping a Singapore Sling in the Long Bar and throwing peanut shells on the floor is a quintessential Singapore experience...just go in the day to avoid the horrid evening cover band. A frosty glass of the sweet, cherry-red intoxicator will set you back S\$25. Cheers.

THE QUAYS

Over Easy (Map p517; ☎ 6423 0503; 01-06 One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Rd) The egg dishes on the menu aren't anything to shout about but the drinks are easily done over, given the stunning Marina Bay views and one-for-one happy-hour specials (6pm to 8pm).

Boat Quay & Circular Road

Penny Black (Map p517; ☎ 6538 2300; 26/27 Boat Quay; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) Fitted out like a 'Victorian' London pub (without the tuberculosis and dodgy gin), Penny Black specialises in hard-to-find English ales for the swaths of expat Brits that work in the area (who keep one eye on their pints and another on the Premier League matches screened on TVs).

Archipelago Brewery (Map p517; ☎ 6327 8408; 79 Circular Rd; ☎ 3pm-1am Mon-Thu & Sun, 4pm-3am Fri & Sat) Asia Pacific Breweries (makers of Tiger) decided to jump on the microbrewery bandwagon with their line of yummy Asian-accented beers. This is their flagship pub on a Y-junction on mildly seedy Circular Rd.

Molly Malone's (Map p517; ☎ 6536 2029; 53-56 Circular Rd; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun & Mon, to 1am Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Molly Malone's has moved to

larger premises. Well-travelled drinkers will have seen the Irish interior and the genuine Irish stew and fish-and-chip menu 100 times before, but that doesn't make it any more appealing.

Harry's Bar (Map p517; ☎ 6538 3029; 28 Boat Quay; ☎ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, 11pm-2am Fri & Sat) Harry's has spawned an empire of bars across the island but the original is still the best. This financial-district hang-out gained infamy as the haunt of Barings-buster Nick Leeson. Grab a pint and toast his misdeeds.

Clarke Quay

Brewerkz (Map p517; ☎ 6438 7438; 01-05 Riverside Point Centre, 30 Merchant Rd; ☎ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat) Across the river from Clarke Quay, this large microbrewery (the irony doesn't escape us) brews eight beers on site, including an Indian Pale Ale, Pilsener and Golden Ale. Happy hours run from opening to 9pm, with prices escalating throughout the day (pints S\$4 to S\$15, jugs S\$10 to S\$37).

Cuba Libre (Map p517; ☎ 6338 8982; Block B, 01-03 Clarke Quay, 3B River Valley Rd; ☎ 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, 6pm-3am Fri & Sat) The live Cuban music surges with energy and will compel even the most wooden of legs to start moving. If you can resist the siren of salsa, nurse drinks and watch students go through the motions.

Robertson Quay & Mohamed Sultan Road

Next Page (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6235 6967; 17 Mohamed Sultan Rd; ☎ 3pm-3am) This is where Hunter S Thompson would have hung out if he'd been a journo in Singapore. Dark timber bar, red lanterns, exposed brickwork, booths, pool table, Carlsberg on tap and quirky bartenders – sit down and write the next page of your novel.

Brussels Sprouts Belgian Beer & Mussels (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6887 4344; 01-12 Robertson Quay, 80 Mohamed Sultan Rd; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Cute restaurant bar that lays it heavy on the Belgian theme with mussels, trappist ales galore and Tintin murals on the wall (the whole gang's there down to Thompson & Thompson).

CHINATOWN & THE CBD

The following Chinatown bars are closed on Sundays unless otherwise specified.

Bar Sá Vánh (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6323 0145; 49 Club St; ☎ 5pm-2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) Gorgeous svelte things flit through Sá Vánh's dusky candlelight

as expats sink into sunken lounges and Asian tapas while ambient tunes snake into the night – all under the gaze of Buddha himself.

Beaujolais Wine Bar (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 2227; 1 Ann Siang Hill; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-2am Fri, 6pm-midnight Sat & Sun) A *très* cute shophouse bar with chequered Montmartre tablecloths, bentwood chairs, slate floors and low-key jazz. It's a welcome relief from the raft of *très* chic industrial-looking bars now dotting the city.

Oosters Brasserie (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6438 3210; 01-04 Capital Sq Three, 25 Church St; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 5.30pm-midnight Sat) Grab a seat at one of the booths or on a bar stool and order from an extensive list of Belgian beers (Lefse on tap!) and trappist ales (expect Orval and Chimay). Get some mussels cooked any way you like. There's a branch at Suntec City (p517; ☎ 6334 2889; 01-39 Suntec City Galleria; open noon to midnight Monday to Saturday).

Helipad (Map p517; ☎ 6327 8118; 05-22 the Central, 6 Eu Tong Sen St; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) Yes, this bar's claim to fame is its position on top of a helicopter pad. Well, a faux one at least. The vibe is decidedly partylike and there are one-for-one housepours from 6pm to 9pm.

LITTLE INDIA

Zsofi Tapas Bar (Map p522; ☎ 6297 5875; 68 Dunlop St; ☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Thu, 4pm-2am Fri & Sat) Inspired by their travels through Spain, two mates decided to open a tapas bar named after a travelling companion. Chill out at the eclectic bar downstairs; sit down on the floor on the 2nd level or at a table on the rooftop. All drinks come with a tapas dish of your choice. Now that's choice!

ORCHARD ROAD

Alley Bar (Map p524; ☎ 6738 8818; 2 Emerald Hill Rd; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) Sky-high ceilings, dark timbers, candlelight and slick stylings paint this alleyway bar with restrained melodrama. Yuppies and expats converse in shadowy, cushioned nooks, quaffing wine and on-tap Belgian beers.

No 5 (Map p524; ☎ 6732 0818; 5 Emerald Hill Rd; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) Not much imagination went into naming this long-running boozier in a 1910 Peranakan shophouse. Expect retro-Asiatic touches, vats of chilli vodka and smoky snooker vibes. It's damned touristy around here, but the cool evening ambience is sweet relief from Orchard Rd.

Que Pasa (Map p524; ☎ 6235 6626; 7 Emerald Hill Rd; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) Next door to No 5, this is a classy wine and tapas bar.

Ice Cold Beer (Map p524; ☎ 6735 9929; 9 Emerald Hill Rd; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) It's back to raucous international beer-swilling (to rock tunes) at this spot.

Dubliners (Map p524; ☎ 6735 2220; 165 Penang Rd; ☎ 11.30am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Dubliners gains kudos for its whitewashed plantation architecture and quality pub food. No sign of James Joyce, but you can toast his efforts with a pint of the black stuff on the verandah.

HOLLAND VILLAGE

Wala Wala (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6462 4288; 31 Lg Mambong; ☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Thu, 3pm-2am Fri & Sat, 3pm-1am Sun) This extremely popular bar is loud, raucous and friendly. Seating downstairs is open and breezy while the live-music bar upstairs focuses on danceable, singable, air-punchable tunes.

2AM Dessert Bar (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6291 9727; 21A Lg Liput; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Sat) Chef-owner Janice Wong opened this brave venture in her mid-20s in 2007. Here, the chic bar concept is taken to a whole new level with the focus being 13 drool-worthy desserts, each paired with a wine recommendation. Where else can you satisfy your chocolate cravings at two in the morning?

SENTOSA ISLAND

Sentosa has recently shaken off its tacky image and become something of a fashionable hang-out, especially at weekends, when its beach bars are busy day and night with the tanned and scantily clad. Beach parties are held fairly regularly. **Coastes** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6274 9668; Siloso Beach), **Bikini Bar** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6274 9668; Siloso Beach) and **Cafe del Mar** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6235 1296; Siloso Beach) are all Ibiza-inspired restaurant-bars.

ENTERTAINMENT

Singapore's nightlife gets a bum rap (mainly from Singapore Sling-swilling package tourists) but there's really no excuse for an early night in Singapore.

Clubs generally close at 3am and are strictly drug-free; get your kicks instead from local acts and touring DJs who regu-

larly stop off in Singapore. Dress is smart casual – no shorts or sandals.

In contrast, the live music scene is pretty dismal; cover bands, tinkling Richard Clayderman piano classics and karaoke bars rule the roost. Thankfully, there are several bars that actually hire decent local artists.

Singaporeans adore the cinema – mainstream US blockbusters are standard fodder. The city's theatre scene is surprisingly vibrant, staging everything from experimental originals to repertory standards. You'll also find some quality classical and tourist-friendly opera performances.

Tickets for most events are available through **Sistic** (☎ 6348 5555; www.sistic.com.sg) or **Tickets.com** (☎ 6296 2929; www.tdc.com.sg). Check websites for the nearest outlets. The *Straits Times*, *I-S Magazine* and *Time Out* have listings for movies, theatre and music. For nightlife, pick up the free street mags *I-S Magazine* and *Juice* at cafes, hotels and music stores.

COMEDY & MAGIC

Howl at the Moon (Map p524; ☎ 6838 0281; www.1n1tstand.com; Level 2 Peranakan Place, 180 Orchard Rd; admission free; ☎ 6pm-2am Tue-Sun) This rock bar also hosts monthly comedy nights with mostly UK, US and Australian stand-ups hammering it up. Check the website for schedules.

Arena (Map p517; ☎ 6338 3158; 01-08 Clarke Quay, 38 River Valley Rd; adult/child \$55/\$27.50) Watch local magician JC Sum and his 'babe' (their words) assistant Ning channel David Copperfield nightly. The venue also hosts music acts and DJs, so call before you head down.

CHINESE OPERA

Chinese Theatre Circle (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6323 4862; www.ctopera.com.sg; 5 Smith St; ☎ box office noon-5pm Tue-Thu, noon-5pm & 7-9pm Fri & Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Every Friday and Saturday night at 8pm there's a brief talk (in English) about Chinese opera, followed by a short excerpt performed by professional actors in full costume. Lychee tea and cakes are included in the S\$20 price. For S\$35, turn up at 7pm and enjoy a full Chinese meal beforehand. Bookings recommended.

CINEMA

Movie-going is huge in Singapore, and at around S\$9 per ticket it's good value. Films are mainly Hollywood blockbusters and Chinese, Korean and Japanese crowd-pleasers, plus a few art-house hits from around the

PARTY AT THE ST JAMES POWER STATION

The latest and greatest posterboy of Singapore's night scene, **St James Power Station** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6270 7676; www.stjamespowerstation.com; 3 Sentosa Gateway) is a 1920s coal-fired power station ingeniously converted into an entertainment complex. All the bars and clubs are interconnected, so one cover charge (men/women S\$12/10, Wednesday men S\$30) gets access to all of them. Some bars – Gallery Bar, Lobby Bar and Peppermint Park – have no cover charge at all. Minimum age is 18 for women and 23 for men at all except Powerhouse, where the age is 18 for both.

The bars include **Dragonfly** (☎ 6pm-6am), a Mandopop and Cantopop club; **Movida** (☎ 6pm-3am), a Latin live-band dance club; **Powerhouse** (☎ 8pm-4am Wed, Fri & Sat), a large dance club aimed at the younger crowd; and the **Boiler Room** (☎ 8.45pm-3am Mon-Sat), a mainstream rock club featuring live bands. There's also French bordello-inspired **Mono** (☎ 6pm-6am), a karaoke bar for those inclined towards belting out their own tunes.

world. Non-English films are subtitled; admission prices vary according to session times. Weekend screenings sell out (even midnight sessions) so book ahead. Check the *Straits Times* for session details. Dress warmly – Singaporean cinemas are notoriously chilly.

The **Singapore International Film Festival** (www.filmfest.org.sg), held each April, brings an enormous collection of independent films to the country.

There are multiplex cinemas around the Colonial District at Bugis Junction (Map p522) and Iluma (Map p522), Suntec City and Marina Sq (all on Map p517). Around Orchard Rd you'll find cinemas at Cathay Cineleisure Orchard and Plaza Singapura, Lido cinema at Shaw House and the Picturehouse at the Cathay (all on Map p524).

GV Gold Class (www.gv.com.sg; ☎ 1900 912 1234); Great World City (Map pp520-1; 1 Kim Seng Pde); VivoCity (Map pp514-15; 1 HarbourFront Walk) These swanky cinemas feature plush carpeting and single and double reclining seats complete with footrests, table service and a reasonable menu. Tickets cost S\$28.

Sinema (Map p522; ☎ 6337 9707; www.sinema.com.sg; B1-12 Old School, 11B Mt Sophia Rd; tickets S\$8-10; ☎ 11am-11pm Tue-Fri, 2-11pm Sat) Started off as a local-movie theatre and soon ran out of steam (erm, someone doing the business plan should have realised there are like, what, five local films?). Has since expanded its repertoire to 'Asian' cinema.

Screening Room (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6221 1694; www.screeningroom.com.sg; 12 Ann Siang Rd; food & movie from S\$55; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6pm-late) Get your ticket, order some food and drinks and settle down on a comfy sofa for a movie. After the film, wander out onto the rooftop bar for views of Chinatown.

CLUBS

Most clubs have cover charges of around S\$15 to S\$35, often including at least one drink; women usually pay less (or even nothing!). Clubs are forever folding and revamping; check *I-S Magazine* and *Juice* for reviews.

Zouk (Map p517; ☎ 6738 2988; www.zoukclub.com; 17 Jiak Kim St; admission incl 2 drinks S\$35; ☎ Zouk & Phuture 7pm-4am Wed, Fri & Sat, Velvet Underground 9pm-3am Tue-Sat, Wine Bar 6pm-3.30am daily) Nineteen going on one, Ibiza-inspired Zouk is still Singapore's hottest club. It features five bars, with the capacity to hold 2000, and a roomy dance floor with plenty of space to cut the rug – it's a world-class contender and a regular destination for globe-trotting DJs. You'll also find the alfresco Zouk Wine Bar, avant-garde Phuture and the Moroccan-inspired Velvet Underground hung with Keith Haring and Andy Warhol originals. Be prepared to queue.

Butter Factory (Map p517; ☎ 6333 8243; www.thebutterfactory.com; 02-02 One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Rd; admission incl 2 drinks from S\$21; ☎ 7pm-1am Tue, 7pm-3am Thu, 8pm-3am Wed & Fri, Sat 8pm-4am) At over 700 sq metres, Butter Factory's new digs is double the size of its old premises and slick as hell. Street art on the walls of Bump, the hip-hop and R&B room, betrays its young crowd. *Fash* is its chilled-out 'art' bar, and walls are plastered with colourful pop-art reminiscent of underground comics (yes, the ones you hid from mum).

Zirca Mega Club (Map p517; ☎ 6235 2292; www.zirca.sg; 01-02 Block 3C River Valley Rd, the Cannery, Clarke Quay; admission incl 2 drinks men S\$25-28, women S\$20-25; ☎ 9.30pm to late Wed-Sat) After the Ministry of Sound Singapore was shut down owing to contractual issues, licensee Lifebrandz quickly rebranded the club into Zirca. Mash with the mainly 20-somethings in Zirca (dance

club), Rebel (hip-hop arena) or Yellow Jello (retro disco).

dblO (Map p517; ☎ 6735 2008; www.dbl-o.com; 01-24, 11 Unity St, Robertson Walk; admission S\$15; 🕒 8pm-3am Tue-Fri, 8pm-4am Sat) An outrageous three-bar dance club, popular with young clubbers wearing very little and older people who like to look at them. Music ranges from Top 40 on Thursdays, house on Fridays and retro on Saturdays. The reason for its popularity? S\$3 house pours.

LIVE MUSIC

Classical

Singapore Symphony Orchestra (☎ 6348 5555; www.sso.org.sg) The 1800-seater state-of-the-art concert hall at the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (p495) is home to this respected orchestra, which also graces the Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall (opposite). It plays at least once weekly; check the website for details and book in advance. Half-price student and senior (60-plus) discounts are available; kids under six years old are unceremoniously banned.

Singapore Chinese Orchestra (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6440 3839; www.sco.com.sg; Singapore Conference Hall, 7 Shenton Way) Performs regular classical Chinese concerts throughout the year, featuring traditional instruments, including the *liuqin*, *ruan* and *sanxian*. There are occasional collaborations with Japanese, jazz and Malay musicians.

Rock

Crazy Elephant (Map p517; ☎ 6337 7859; www.crazyelephant.com; 01-03/04 Clarke Quay; admission free; 🕒 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) Anywhere that bills itself as 'crazy' should set the alarm bells ringing, but you won't hear them once you're inside. This touristy rock bar is beery, blokey, loud, graffiti-covered and testosterone-heavy – rock on!

Prince of Wales (Map p522; ☎ 6299 0130; www.pow.com.sg; 101 Dunlop St; admission free) This Aussie-hewn pub has backpacker accommodation upstairs. Rub shoulders with resident surfy beer-boffins effusing over acoustic rock on week nights and original indie bands on weekends. Harley riders take over the place on Saturday nights. Music is from 9pm most nights.

Timbre@Old School (Map p522; ☎ 6338 0800; 11 Mt Sophia Rd; 🕒 6pm-midnight) At night, groups of art-school types hang out and bob heads to live acoustic sets while downing pints of

Erdinger, their hands oily from one too many buffalo wings. It's quite a hike up a hill, so take a cab.

Howl at the Moon (Map p524; ☎ 6838 0281; Level 2 Peranakan Place, 180 Orchard Rd; admission free; 🕒 6pm-2am Tue-Sun) The superbly talented band can play any song request you fling at them (no matter how obscure) and the duelling pianists bashing away on the ivories are entertaining.

Jazz & Blues

Jazz@Southbridge (Map p517; ☎ 6327 4671; www.southbridgejazz.com.sg; 82B Boat Quay; admission free, touring acts from S\$20; 🕒 5pm-1am Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) This intimate jazz bar sets plush sofas in front of a small stage. In-house crooner Alemany Fernandez ably entertains, and famous internationals often take to the stage (Pat Metheny did an impromptu jam once). Sets kick off around 9.30pm.

Bellini Grande (Map p517; ☎ 6336 7676; 01-01 the Foundry, Clarke Quay, 3B River Valley Rd; 🕒 6pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat) The swing and jazz band at the St James Power Station was such a huge hit they moved their three lead singers, 14-piece band and backup dancers to a swanky larger place. The crowd seems to agree with the move.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

Singapore Indoor Stadium (Map p528; ☎ 6348 5555; www.sis.gov.sg; 2 Stadium Walk; 🕒 box office 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) Most of Singapore's big-ticket sports and entertainment events – from international bands to celebrity wrestling – are played out here; check the website, the *Straits Times* or www.singaporesports.com.sg for details. To get here take bus 11 from Kallang MRT or bus 16 from Orchard Rd.

Singapore Turf Club (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6879 1000; www.turfclub.com.sg; 1 Turf Club Ave) The website claims 'It's more exciting with horses!' We're not sure what 'it' entails, but the races sure are rousing. Seats range from grandstand (S\$3) up to Hibiscus Room (S\$20). Dress code is collared shirt and pants for men; closed shoes for women. Betting is government controlled; check the website for race schedules (usually Friday nights and all day weekends); Kranji MRT station is right outside. Giddy-up.

THEATRE & DANCE

Singapore's more dynamic and contemporary theatre groups produce edgy but accessible home-grown and international work at various venues around town. Look out for

shows by **Theatreworks** (www.theatreworks.org.sg), **Toy Factory Ensemble** (www.toyfactory.org.sg), **Action Theatre** (www.action.org.sg), **Necessary Stage** (www.necessary.org) and Singapore's sexiest theatre company, **Wild Rice** (www.wildrice.com.sg).

Singapore Repertory Theatre (Map p517; ☎ 6733 8166; www.srt.com.sg; DBS Drama Centre, 20 Merbau Rd) The bigwig of Singapore's theatre scene, producing Shakespeare and other mainstream standards. Their Little Company stages plays to entertain the young 'uns.

Nrityalaya Aesthetics Society (Map p522; ☎ 6336 6537; www.nas.org.sg; 155 Waterloo St) For classical Indian dance and vocal and instrumental music check out this company. It even stages Shakespeare in Kathakali (Indian story form)!

Singapore Dance Theatre (Map p517; ☎ 6338 0611; www.singaporedancetheatre.com; 02 Fort Canning Centre, Cox Tce) Produces traditional ballet favourites alongside contemporary works. Don't miss July's 'Ballet Under the Stars' season at Fort Canning Park (S\$25).

Apart from the Esplanade (p495), other venues include the following:

Drama Centre (Map p517; ☎ 6837 8400; Level 3, National Library, 100 Victoria St)

Jubilee Hall (Map p517; ☎ 6331 1732; 3rd fl, Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Rd)

Kallang Theatre (Map p528; ☎ 6345 8488; www.nac.gov.sg; 1 Stadium Walk)

Substation (Map p517; ☎ 6337 7535; www.substation.org; Substation, 45 Armenian St) Space for performance arts and classes.

Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall (Map p517; ☎ 6338 1230; www.vch.org.sg; 11 Empress Pl)

SHOPPING

Shopping is locked in an age-old struggle with eating and movie-going for the title of Singapore's national hobby. Nary a year goes by without a new retail monolith flinging its doors open to slavering hordes nor does a day go by without slick advertising adding fuel to the raging pyre that is hard-core capitalism – failure to participate is not an option!

Compared with Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, Singapore is no bargain-hunter's paradise, and prices are usually fixed except at markets and in tourist areas (don't start bargaining if you don't have any interest in purchasing). Still, electronics, computers, clothes and CDs are cheaper than in most Western countries. Most shops open at 10am or 11am and close around 9pm or 10pm.

The STB-endorsed **Great Singapore Sale** (www.greatsingaporesale.com.sg) storms from late May through to late July every year – discount shopping coinciding with various arts

BUYER BEWARE!

Singapore has stringent consumer laws and actively promotes safe shopping. You'll rarely have any problems, but still be wary when buying, particularly in smaller shops, where a salesperson may accept a low offer but not give you an international guarantee (important for watches, cameras etc) or the usual accessories. Ensure international guarantees are filled out correctly, including the shop's name and the item's serial number.

Make sure you have exactly what you want before leaving the shop. Check the voltage and cycle of electrical goods: Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and the UK use 220V to 240V at 50 cycles; Canada, Japan and the US use 110V to 120V at 60 cycles. Most shops will attach the correct plug for your country if you ask. There are two main types of TV systems: PAL in Australia and Europe, and NTSC in the USA and Japan – video equipment must be compatible with your system. If you're buying a DVD or Blu-ray player or a gaming system, check that it'll play your home country's discs.

When buying antiques, ask for a certificate of antiquity, required by many countries to avoid paying customs duty.

Serious issues with retailers are unlikely (the worst you'll probably get is lethargic service), but if you've been ripped off or taken for a ride, contact the **Singapore Tourism Board** (STB; ☎ 1800-736 2000; www.visitsingapore.com) or the **Small Claims Tribunal** (Map p517; ☎ 6435 5994; www.smallclaims.gov.sg; Subordinate Courts, 1 Havelock Sq; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat). Tourist complaints are usually heard within two or three days.

and food festivals. Best bargains are had during the first week.

GST

Most goods and services incur a 7% goods-and-services tax (GST). See p562 for information on the GST Tourist Refund Scheme.

ART, CRAFTS & ANTIQUES

Too often driven by perceived market opportunity rather than artistic vision, the Singapore gallery scene is nonetheless vibrant. Many galleries are closed on Sundays and/or Mondays. The free fortnightly *Arts Beat* magazine lists all the art shows. Download a PDF version at www.nac.gov.sg/eve/eve07print.asp. Head to Chinatown for Chinese crafts and antiques, Little India for Indian crafts, and Kampong Glam's Arab St for fabrics, cane ware and leather goods.

Colonial District

Chijmes (Map p517; 30 Victoria St) is a serene place to sniff around for crafts. Among the outlets presently operating at Chijmes, **Olathe** (Map p517; ☎ 6339 6880; 01-05) sells a commercial range of batik clothing, bags and ceramics, and **Empress Myanmar** (Map p517; ☎ 6335 5366; 01-25) stocks jewellery and crafts from where else but Myanmar.

Ode to Art (Map p517; ☎ 6250 1901; 01-36 Raffles City Shopping Centre, 252 North Bridge Rd) displays and sells sculptures and paintings from a variety of Asian artists and are happy to ship worldwide.

The Raffles Hotel Arcade is home to **Artfolio** (Map p517; ☎ 6334 4677; 02-25 Raffles Hotel

Arcade, 328 North Bridge Rd), which specialises in Southeast Asian art, and **Tomlinson Antique House** (Map p517; ☎ 6338 1700; 02-35/36 Raffles Hotel Arcade, 328 North Bridge Rd), which sells Indian, Burmese and Chinese artefacts dating back to the Tang dynasty. Prices hit the many thousands.

The rainbow-shuttered colonial **MICA Building** (Map p517; 140 Hill St) houses a clutch of quality galleries, including **Art-2 Gallery** (Map p517; ☎ 6338 8719; www.art2.com.sg), **Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery** (Map p517; ☎ 6733 3822; www.capeofgoodhopegallery.com), **Gajah Gallery** (Map p517; ☎ 6737 4202; www.gajahgallery.com), **Art Mosaic** (Map p517; ☎ 6336 4606; www.artmosaic.com) and **Soobin Art Gallery** (Map p517; ☎ 6837 2777; www.soobinart.com.sg), which showcases the best of China's vibrant avant-garde scene.

Chinatown

The classy **Shing Gallery** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 4332; 26 Pagoda St) stocks beautiful wooden screens, lamps, sculptures and antique furniture. **East Inspirations** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6224 2993; 33/33A Pagoda St) is jam-packed with antique figurines, trinkets and some furniture.

The **Zhen Lacquer Gallery** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6222 2718; 1/1A/1B Trengganu St) is generally kitsch but sometimes stylish, selling shiny lacquered hand-painted jewellery boxes, placemats, utensils, plates and photo albums.

Mr Yong will carve a Chinese stamp with your name on it at **Yong Gallery** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6226 1718; 260 South Bridge Rd). He also stocks masterful calligraphic works and jade carvings.

Utterly Art (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6226 2605; 229A South Bridge Rd) has exhibitions that change monthly

TANJONG PAGAR ARTS ENCLAVE

A clutch of art galleries have sprung up in the most unglamorous of places – Tanjong Pagar Distripark. This warehouse area is more used to hosting pallets of goods than the art elite, but large spaces with high ceilings and reasonable rent have seen three notable art galleries move in.

The **Fortune Cookie Projects** (Map pp526-7; www.fortunecookieprojects.com; 02-04 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, HT Contemporary Space, 39 Keppel Rd) got lucky when it exhibited Julian Schnable's US\$275,000 paintings in March 2009. Check its website for future shows.

Valentine Willie Fine Art (Map pp526-7; ☎ 8133 4760; www.vwfa.net; 02-04 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, HT Contemporary Space, 39 Keppel Rd; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) seeks out and displays the hottest Southeast Asian artists. Ditto at **Galerie Waterton** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 9738 2144; www.galerie.waterton.com; 02-01 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, HT Contemporary Space, 39 Keppel Rd; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) next door.

Take bus 145 from outside St Andrew's Cathedral. A taxi from Orchard Rd will cost S\$8.

and sells reasonably priced Southeast Asia art. It specialises in Filipino artists.

Little India

Pick your way through a staggering display of subcontinental knick-knacks at **Celebration of Arts** (Map p522; ☎ 6296 0769; 2/2A Dalhousie Lane) – everything from statues and carved wooden screens to cashmere scarves, saris, bedspreads and lampshades.

Orchard Road

Level two of the **Tanglin Shopping Centre** (Map p524; 19 Tanglin Rd) is Singapore's one-stop shop for antiques, arts and crafts. Treasure-hunt your way through the centre's **Antiques of the Orient** (Map p524; ☎ 6734 9351; 02-40), **Tomlinson** (Map p524; ☎ 6733 1221; 02-11), **HaKaren** (Map p524; ☎ 6733 3382; 02-43/45) and more.

The offbeat **Pagoda House** (Map p524; ☎ 67332 2177; Tudor Court, 143/145 Tanglin Rd) is packed to the rafters with restored antique furniture.

Polar Arts of Asia (Map p524; ☎ 6734 2311; 02-16 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd) is a bizarre conglomeration of artefacts, skulls and tribal jewellery among golf shops.

Along Dempsey Road (Map pp520–1), an abandoned former British Army barracks, is now a shopping precinct specialising in Kashmiri carpets, teak furniture and antiques.

Holland Village

Holland Village Shopping Centre seems to be happy to buck the facelift trend. This complex is a warren of independent stores with decor stuck in the '80s. Ladies can enjoy a manicure or pedicure while guys zip off to **Lim's Art & Living** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6467 1300; 02-01 Holland Rd Shopping Centre, 211 Holland Ave) to rummage for Asian vases, teak furniture, cushions and glassware of all heights and girths.

CAMERAS & ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

In Singapore you buy electronics on one basis only – price. Hi-tech goods are the same as you'd get back home. Most stores offer competitive duty-free prices, but haggle if there's a discrepancy between the shelf price and what the item is actually worth (do some homework). See also the boxed text, p553. Lucky Plaza (p558), Sim Lim Square (p557), Sim Lim Tower (p557) and the Mustafa Centre (p557) are good places to start.

For cameras, try the extensively stocked **Cathy Photo** (Map p517; ☎ 6337 4274; 01-11 Peninsula Plaza, 111 North Bridge Rd) or the family-run **John 3:16** (Map p517; ☎ 6337 2877; 05-46 Funan DigitalLife Mall, 109 North Bridge Rd).

If bargaining isn't your bag, decent prices can be had at **Best Denki** (Map p524; ☎ 6835 2855; 05-01/05 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd) and **Harvey Norman** (Map p517; ☎ 6311 9988; 2nd Level Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd).

Hardwire yourself into six floors of big-brand computers at **Funan DigitalLife Mall** (Map p517; ☎ 6336 8327; 109 North Bridge Rd) or the legendary **Sim Lim Square** (Map p522; ☎ 6338 3859; 1 Rochor Canal Rd). For Macintosh equipment head to the **Epicentre** (Map p524; ☎ 6238 9378; 02-20/23 Wheelock Place; 501 Orchard Rd). There are also Apple retailers in Funan DigitalLife Mall.

CHINESE MEDICINE

The venerable **Eu Yan Sang** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6223 6333; 269 South Bridge Rd) has been revamped to look like a Western chemist – but check out the traditional remedies on the shelves! Get some deer's tail pills to invigorate the kidneys or instant bird's nest to tone the lungs or consult a herbalist for S\$17; most remedies come with English instructions.

FASHION

Singapore is a hub of international fashion brands to suit all budgets. You'll find European brands such as Zara, Mango, Massimo Dutti and Topshop sitting not far from upmarket Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton and D&G. Sadly, local brands come and go (even the good ones), as they can't compete with the huge budgets of Asian brand powers such as H2000, U2 and Uniqlo.

For up-to-the-nanosecond clubbing gear, head to levels four and five of the **Heeren** (Map p524; ☎ 6733 4725; 260 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10.30am-10pm), or the basement and levels three and four of **Far East Plaza** (Map p524; ☎ 6235 2411; 01 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm). Haji Lane (Map p522) in Kampong Glam has a series of eclectic and arty stores selling cool clothes... assuming they haven't shut down because of soaring rents.

Mjphosis (Map p524; ☎ 6737 2190; B1-10 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd) carries the wispy, slinky designs of Singaporean Colin Koh, while **Project Shop Blood Brothers** (Map p524; ☎ 6735 0071; 03-41/44 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd) stocks lots of funky bags, belts and wallets.

THE IT CRUSH

There is no better place to witness Singaporeans' bottomless patience than at four Information Technology (IT) fairs that dot the yearly calendar – the March **IT Show** (www.itshow.com.sg), the June **PC Show** (www.thepcshow.com.sg), the August **COMEX** (www.comexshow.com.sg) and the November **SITEX** (www.sitex.com.sg). The 2009 IT show was visited by 768,000 Singaporeans, who spent S\$58.5 million.

Queues start waaaayyy before the site opens, and once the doors are flung wide, thousands of Singaporeans flood the aisles, dragging portable shopping trolleys, making a beeline for the deals (earmarked in advance thanks to massive ads in local papers). Lines for the best deals stretch on for ages...all in a bid to save a few bucks on LCD TVs, laptops and every electronic item available to mankind.

There are freebies galore and you'll soon be weighed down with pamphlets and have sales materials shoved in your face. If you have no idea what you're after, you'll be spending your time getting bumped around by irate Singaporeans who are pushing after the next deal on the list.

We say don't bother. Electronics stores are usually willing to match IT show prices – just show the sales advertisements from the local newspapers. If they aren't, walk on to the next store.

For men's designer threads, **Blackjack** (Map p524; ☎ 6735 0975; 01-10 Forum, 583 Orchard Rd) is a fashion ace up your sleeve. Another local label to look out for is **Daniel Yam** (Map p524; ☎ 6733 7220; 01-34/36 Wisma Atria, 435 Orchard Rd).

For saris, sari material and Punjabi suits, head to Serangoon Rd in Little India and Arab St in Kampong Glam. A deluxe gold-threaded silk sari from **Nalli** (Map p522; ☎ 6299 8676; 32 Buffalo Rd) can cost anything from S\$200 to S\$1000. Get traditional Malay dress from the **Geylang Serai Market** (Map p528) or the **Joo Chiat Complex** (Map p528; 1 Joo Chiat Rd).

MUSIC

Mainstream chains dominate Singapore's music shopping scene: **HMV** (Map p524; ☎ 6733 1822; the Heeren, 260 Orchard Rd) and **Borders** (Map p524; ☎ 6235 7146; 01-00 Wheelock Pl, 501 Orchard Rd; ☎ 9am-11pm) are the big players.

Cheaper deals are available at **Sembawang Music Centre** (Map p524; ☎ 6884 9628; 03-05 Plaza Singapura, 68 Orchard Rd), **Gramophone** (Map p524; ☎ 6235 3105; 01-21/23 Cathay Bldg, 1 Handy Rd) and **That CD Shop** (Map p524; ☎ 6238 6720; 01-01/02 Pacific Plaza, 9 Scotts Rd).

As well as Indian music CDs, the **Indian Classical Music Centre** (Map p522; ☎ 6291 0187; 26 Clive St) sells sitars, tabla, bells – everything the aspiring Sergeant Pepper requires. **Jothi Music Centre** (Map p522; ☎ 6299 5528; 01-77 Campbell Block, Little India Arcade) pumps sexy Indian dance music into the street.

SHOPPING MALLS & DEPARTMENT STORES Colonial District

Raffles City (Map p517; 252 North Bridge Rd) has a cavernous atrium and a range of upmarket shops, including Robinsons department store, a food court and a basement loaded with food outlets. It's linked to the enormous **Suntec City** (Map p517; 3 Temasek Blvd) by the underground CityLink Mall (accessed from the City Hall MRT station), which has some good speciality shops.

From Suntec City an underpass leads into **Millenia Walk** (Map p517; 9 Raffles Blvd), which is full of classy jewellers and boutiques under a series of wacky pyramid roofs. There's also an underground link to the **Esplanade Mall** (Map p517; 8 Raffles Ave), mainly a dining destination with a slew of interesting shops like Frank Brothers Violins (for all your cello requirements) and the Cookie Museum (upmarket cookie store).

Audiophiles listen up! The **Adelphi** (Map p517; 1 Coleman St) is the place to visit.

Attached to the Raffles Hotel is the swish **Raffles Hotel Arcade** (Map p517; 328 North Bridge Rd), which, as you'd expect, is firmly highbrow – designer clothes, galleries, gift shops and beauty salons.

Chinatown

Mobile phones, gaming consoles, watches, jewellery and cameras line the shelves at the **People's Park Complex** (Map pp526-7; 1 Park Rd). On the next corner, **People's Park Centre** (Map p517; 110 Upper Cross St) has four levels of luggage

shops, travel agents and budget fashion boutiques selling loud Chinese shirts.

Yue Hwa Chinese Products (Map p517; 70 Eu Tong Sen St) is six storeys of products from the Motherland including medicine, furniture, silks, food, tea, arts and crafts. The chaotic, claustrophobic **Pearl's Centre** (Map pp526-7; 100 Eu Tong Sen St) is brimming with electronics stalls, Chinese medicine shops and a cinema showing saucy flicks.

Little India, Bugis & Kampong Glam

Bugis Junction (Map p522; 200 Victoria St) comprises the large BHG department store, the Hotel InterContinental, a cinema and shophouse recreations covered by an atrium. Expect lots of trendy 'here today gone tomorrow' fashion stores. Diagonally opposite Victoria St, brand-new **Iluma** (Map p522; cnr Victoria St & Middle Rd) has a nine-screen cinema and smaller fashion stores.

Sim Lim Square (Map p522; 1 Rochor Canal Rd) is renowned for computers and electronics. Across the road, **Sim Lim Tower** (Map p522; 10 Jln Besar) has everything from capacitors to car stereos. The bustling **Mustafa Centre** (Map p522; 145 Syed Alwi Rd; ☎ 24hr) is an improbably crammed

place with electrical and everyday goods at honest prices.

Orchard Road Mall Crawl

Orchard Rd has a mind-boggling array of megamalls. Prices here aren't necessarily the best, but the range of high-quality, big-brand items is superb. The following (by no means exhaustive) walking tour separates the best from the rest.

Start at **Plaza Singapura** (1; 68 Orchard Rd), where teens go to the movies and gaming arcades and ride the slowest-moving travelers in the known universe. Parents shop at the Carrefour hypermart.

Head up Orchard Rd past the old-school **Le Meridien Shopping Centre** (2; 100 Orchard Rd) – missable unless you're craving Doc Martens boots. Equally unexceptional are Orchard Plaza and Orchard Point – keep walking. At **Centrepoint** (3; 176 Orchard Rd) you can get measured for a shirt at Robinsons, or pick up sundry home furnishings. Across the road, **Orchard Central** (4; cnr Orchard & Killiney Rds) is one of two malls to be opened in Orchard Rd in the last decade. This one is 12 (yes, count them!) storeys of retail mayhem.

Give Orchard Emerald a miss, but duck into **Midpoint Orchard** (5; 220 Orchard Rd) for some camera haggling and reflexology. The **Heeren** (6; 260 Orchard Rd) is teen heaven, with a massive HMV and two levels of cutting-edge microboutiques.

Paragon (7; 290 Orchard Rd) is sassiness defined, with Salvatore Ferragamo, Jean-Paul Gaultier,

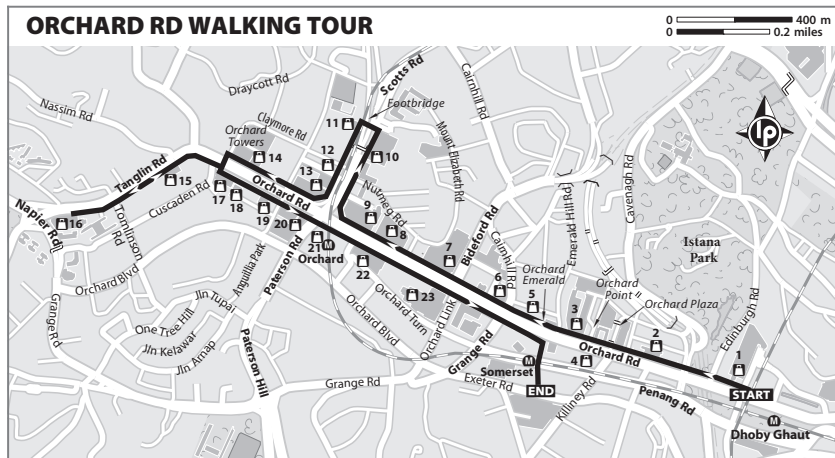
WALK FACTS

Start Dhoby Ghaut MRT

Finish Somerset MRT

Distance 3km

Duration Four hours



PRACTICALITIES

Electricity

You'll need the UK-type three-square-pin plug to connect to the region's reliable electricity supply (220V to 240V, 50 cycles).

Newspapers & Magazines

Singapore's broadsheet is the state-run *Straits Times* (and *Sunday Times*); afternoon tabloid *New Paper* and the free *Today* are popular. International English-language publications like *Time* and *Newsweek* are readily available. For entertainment see *8 Days*, *I-S* and *Juice* magazines. The international listings magazine *Time Out* now has a Singapore edition. Lifestyle magazines include *Her World* and the stylish *Men's Folio*. Gourmands should check out Tatler's *Singapore's Best Restaurants* and *Wine & Dine*, or *Makansutra* for hawker stalls. Oddly, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* was banned after displeasing the government but racy lads' magazines *FHM* and *Maxim* are readily available.

Radio

English-language radio stations include the BBC World Service (88.9FM), Gold (90.5FM), Symphony (92.4FM), NewsRadio (93.8FM), Class (95FM) and Perfect 10 (98.7FM). Passion (99.5FM) features arts and world music; Power (98FM) aims pop at 18s to 35s. International Channel (96.3FM) broadcasts in French, German, Japanese and Korean. Most radio stations have web streaming if you want to get a taste before you come. See www.podcast.net for private broadcaster listings.

Television

Singapore has seven free-to-air channels: Channel 5 (English); Channel 8 (Mandarin); Suria (Malay-language programs); okto (the arts channel in English, plus children's broadcasts); Channel News Asia (news and information channel); Vasantham (Tamil-language programing) and Channel U, a Mandarin-language channel. You can watch TV Mobile in most public buses.

Weights & Measures

Singapore uses the metric system.

Gucci, Versace and YSL, among others. Entirely more downmarket is **Lucky Plaza (8; 304 Orchard Rd)**, teeming with cheap clothing, luggage, perfume and electronics outlets (haggle hard). Next door is department-store stalwart **Tangs (9; 320 Orchard Rd)**.

Around the corner is funky **Far East Plaza (10; 14 Scotts Rd)** – get a suit, a second-hand book or a tattoo. The basement, level three and level four have 80-plus local fashion outlets. Take the overhead bridge to **DFS Galleria (11; 25 Scotts Rd)**, brimming with swanky cosmetics and bag shops: Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Gucci, Salvatore Ferragamo, Burberry, Dior and Prada.

Pacific Plaza (12; 9 Scotts Rd) is the place for street/surf wear and CDs; the **Shaw House (13; 350 Orchard Rd)** enshrouds a huge Isetan department store and the Lido cinema.

Turn right and continue along to **Palais Renaissance (14; 390 Orchard Rd)**, which is cool, serene and unpeopled, and has DKNY and Prada.

Cross Orchard Rd to the **Tanglin Shopping Centre (15; 19 Tanglin Rd)**, which boasts a selection of Asian arts outlets. Continue down Tanglin Rd to **Tanglin Mall (16; 163 Tanglin Rd)** for homewares amid throngs of expat mums, or head back along Orchard Rd to the **Forum (17; 583 Orchard Rd)** for Toys 'R' Us and a snappy range of designer kids' gear.

Gucci, Armani, Paul Smith and Valentino huddle together, like-minded, in the **Hilton Shopping Gallery (18; 581 Orchard Rd)**. Next door is the **Far East Shopping Centre (19; 545 Orchard Rd)**, a poky, outmoded mall with nine (!) golf shops.

Wheelock Place (20; 501 Orchard Rd) is next – a classy, cone-domed number with Borders, Nike, Apple and Birkenstock. New **Ion Orchard (21; 430 Orchard Rd)** has a shimmering 21st-century media wall, an art space and a wide range of stores. Next door, **Wisma Atria (22; 435 Orchard Rd)** has another Isetan department store, a Food Republic food court upstairs and countless boutiques.

Finish up at the megalithic **Ngee Ann City** (23; 391 Orchard Rd) – the grandmamma of all malls, with the glitzy Takashimaya department store, Kinokuniya, scores of fashion shops including Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Cartier, and oodles of places for noodles.

DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation classifications are based on the following: budget is up to S\$99 per night; midrange is from S\$100 to S\$250; while top end is more than S\$250. In major hotels, a 7% goods-and-services tax, 1% government tax and 10% service charge are added to your bill – this is the 18% ‘plus-plus-plus’ that follows the quoted price (eg S\$150+++). Prices quoted are net prices (‘net’ includes taxes and the service charge). Some places are ++, which means 7% GST and the 10% service charge. Hotels stipulate that you shouldn’t tip when a service charge applies. GST and government taxes also apply in cheaper hotels but they’re usually included in the quoted price.

The **National Parks Board** (Map p522; ☎ 6391 4488; www.nparks.gov.sg; 18-01/08 Gateway West, 150 Beach Rd) administers several camp sites around the island (see the boxed text, p532).

BOOKSHOPS

Books Actually (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6221 1170; www.booksactually.com; 5 Ann Siang Rd) A charming little bookstore with an excellent and eclectic selection of literary fiction (think Burroughs and Murakami), toys, cameras, objets d’art and the prerequisite shelf of Moleskines. Its imprint, Math Paper Press, publishes local poets.

Borders (Map p524; ☎ 6235 7146; 01-00 Wheelock Pl, 501 Orchard Rd; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Kinokuniya (Map p524; ☎ 6737 5021; 03-09/15 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm Sun-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat) Singapore’s best bookstore.

MPH Bookstores CityLink Mall (Map p517; ☎ 6835 7637; B1-26A CityLink Mall, 1 Raffles Link; ☎ 10am-10pm);

Raffles City (Map p517; ☎ 6336 4232; B1-24-26 Raffles City Shopping Centre, 252 North Bridge Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Select Books (Map p524; ☎ 6732 1515; www.selectbooks.com.sg; 03-15/17 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd) Specialises in Southeast Asian titles; check its website for local literary happenings.

Sunny Books (Map p524; ☎ 6733 1583; 03-58/59 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-7pm Sun) Also stocks second-hand books and comics.

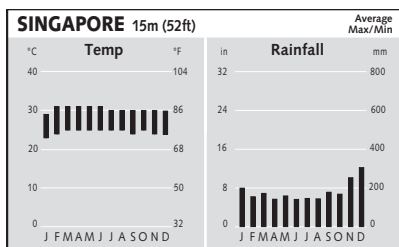
BUSINESS HOURS

Restaurants serve lunch 11.30am to 2.30pm, often closing until dinner, which is 6pm to 10.30pm. Breakfast hours are generally 9am until noon. Shops open at 10am until 9pm, often later, and night time is the right time for eating – hawker centres kick on until the wee hours, some run 24 hours. Many small shops, except those in Little India, close on Sunday. Government office hours are generally 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 1pm Saturday. Reviews in this chapter only list opening hours where they differ from standard.

For post-office opening hours, see p562. For bank opening hours, see p562.

CLIMATE

Hot and humid. Practically on the equator, Singapore’s temperature never drops below 20°C, usually climbing to 30°C during the day. Rainfall and humidity are steady year-round. Rain arrives in torrential downpours, but is soon replaced by sunshine. It may rain every day during the wet season. The wettest months are November to January, the driest May to July.



CUSTOMS

Drugs (trafficking carries the death penalty), guns, firecrackers, toy currency and coins, pornographic or seditious material, gun-shaped cigarette lighters, endangered species and their by-products, pirated recordings and publications, and retail quantities of chewing gum are prohibited; but visitors can bring in as much cash as they like!

Electronic goods, cosmetics, watches, cameras, jewellery, footwear, toys, arts and crafts are not dutiable; the usual duty-free concession for personal effects, such as clothes, applies. Singapore does not allow duty-free concessions for cigarettes or tobacco.

Take a letter from your doctor if you carry prescription medication.

Visitors can bring in 1L each of duty-free wine, beer and spirits to Singapore, providing visitors are over 18 years of age, are not arriving from either Malaysia or Indonesia and have been away from Singapore for at least 48 hours.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Singapore is a very safe country with low crime rates. Pickpockets aren't unknown, but in general, crime isn't a problem – unsurprising, given the harsh penalties handed out to offenders. Drug trafficking carries the death penalty, which is regularly executed (pardon the pun).

DISCOUNT CARDS

Visitors over 55 are eligible for discounts at many attractions and for tours. Present your passport or ID with your date of birth on it. Travellers on Silk Air or Singapore Airlines get discounts at places by presenting their boarding passes. See www.singaporeair.com/boardingpass for more information.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For a list of Singaporean missions abroad check out www.visitsingapore.com, where you'll also find a full list of foreign embassies and consulates in Singapore.

Australia (Map p524; ☎ 6836 4100; www.australia.org.sg; 25 Napier Rd)

Canada (Map p517; ☎ 6854 5900; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/asia/singapore; 11-01 One George St)

France (Map p524; ☎ 6880 7800; www.france.org.sg; 101-103 Cluny Park Rd)

Germany (Map p517; ☎ 6533 6002; www.singapur.diplo.de; 12-00 Singapore Land Tower, 50 Raffles Pl)

Indonesia (Map p524; ☎ 6737 7422; www.kbri.singapura.com; 7 Chatsworth Rd)

Ireland (Map p524; ☎ 6238 7616; www.embassyofireland.sg; 08-00 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd)

Italy (Map p524; ☎ 6250 6022; www.amsingapore.esteri.it; 27-02 United Square, 101 Thomson Rd)

Malaysia (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6235 0111; www.kln.gov.my/perwakilan/singapore; 301 Jerois Rd)

Netherlands (Map p524; ☎ 6737 1155; www.mfa.nl/sin; 13-01 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd)

New Zealand (Map p524; ☎ 6235 9966; www.nzembassy.com/Singapore; 15-06/10 Ngee Ann City, 391A Orchard Rd)

South Africa (Map p517; ☎ 6339 3319; www.dfa.gov.za/webmissions; 15-01/06 Odeon Towers, 331 North Bridge Rd)

Thailand (Map p524; ☎ 6737 2475; www.thaiembassy.sg; 370 Orchard Rd)

UK (Map p524; ☎ 6424 4200; www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk; 100 Tanglin Rd)

USA (Map p524; ☎ 6476 9100; <http://singapore.usembassy.gov>; 27 Napier Rd)

EMERGENCY

Useful emergency numbers:

Fire/Ambulance (☎ 995)

Police (☎ 999)

SOS Helpline (☎ 1800-221 4444)

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality is illegal in Singapore but authorities generally turn a blind eye to the scene. For more detail on local attitudes, read *People Like Us – Sexual Minorities in Singapore*, edited by Joseph Lo and Huang Gouqin, an upfront look at queer issues; and the blog **Yawning Bread** (www.yawningbread.org).

Singaporeans are conservative about displays of public affection; women and newly arrived straight male Indian and Bangladeshi workers can get away with same-sex hand holding, but an overtly gay couple doing the same would attract attention. That said, vocal or aggressive homophobia is unlikely to rear its ugly head.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

New Year's Day 1 January

Chinese New Year January/February (three days)

Good Friday April (variable)

Labour Day 1 May

Wesak Day May (variable)

National Day 9 August

Deepavali October (variable)

Hari Raya Puasa October/November (variable)

Christmas Day 25 December

Hari Raya Haji December/January (variable)

School Holidays

In Singapore there's a week's holiday towards the end of March, four weeks in June, one week in early September, and a long break from the end of November until the beginning of January.

INSURANCE

For general information on insurance, see p474.

INTERNET ACCESS

In this chapter the internet symbol (🌐) is used where hotels have business centres or dedicated computers for guest use. The wi-fi symbol (📶) is used for places where wireless internet is available.

Internet Cafes

Internet cafes are a rare breed in Singapore. High rents and free wi-fi access have caused the demise of many joints. Those that remain make their money from doubling as gaming centres. However, many hotels/hostels provide internet access in lobbies, rooms or business centres; at Changi Airport it's free! The following places charge around S\$5 per hour:

Chills Cafe (Map p517; ☎ 6883 1016; 01-07 Stamford House, 39 Stamford Rd; 🕒 9.30am-midnight)

E-Max (Map p524; ☎ 6235 9249; 9th fl Cathay Cineleisure Orchard, 8 Grange Rd; 🕒 noon-midnight)

i-surf (Map p524; B1-25 Orchard Towers, 400 Orchard Rd; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm)

Wi-Fi Access

There are free wi-fi hotspots in almost every mall. Anyone with a mobile phone (local sim card or global roaming) can register for a three-year account with **Wireless@SG**. Check www.infocomm123.sg/wireless_at_sg for details.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Asia One (www.asiaone.com.sg) The company that owns Singapore's newspapers; has links to the *Straits Times*, the *New Paper* and the *Business Times*.

Mr Brown (www.mrbrown.com) Website of blogger and podcaster Lee Kim Mun, who achieved infamy when his column in the *Today* newspaper was axed after he was too frank about local politics. That very podcast is still on the website.

Singapore Tourism Board (www.visitsingapore.com) The Singapore Tourism Board's site, with plenty of links to things to see and do.

Sistic (www.sistic.com.sg) Handles bookings to almost all concerts, plays and performances, with a useful events calendar.

Stomp (www.stomp.com.sg) Community site run by the official mouthpiece media company SPH, embodying the kind of carefully monitored 'open society' the government is trying to foster. For an insight into issues that preoccupy Singaporeans, check the 'Singapore Seen' section.

Talking Cock (www.talkingcock.com) The original satirical website that was actually debated in parliament. Ironic takes on the news of the day, plus the priceless Coxford Singsh Dictionary.

LAUNDRY

Singapore gets sweaty, but there are plenty of laundries to help travellers cope. Laundries are found listed in the *Yellow Pages*; most mid-range and top-end hotels do laundry. Expect to pay around S\$6 to have a skirt, blouse or a pair of trousers washed, S\$8 for a dress, S\$12 for a suit.

LEGAL MATTERS

The law is extremely tough in Singapore, but also relatively free from corruption. Don't expect special treatment for being a foreigner.

Singapore is notorious for being a 'fine' country. In reality, you'd have to be unlucky to be caught and fined. Smoking in all public places earns a S\$500 fine. You can smoke at food stalls and on the street (as long as you put your butt in the bin). Jaywalking (crossing the road within 50m of a designated crossing) could cost you S\$50. Littering could set you back S\$1000. Possession of drugs means a long jail term and a caning, with trafficking punishable by death. If you are arrested, you will be entitled to legal counsel and contact with your embassy.

MAPS

Various free maps are available around Singapore, including *The Official Map of Singapore*, from the Singapore Tourism Board (p563), as well as from many hotels. Of the commercial maps, Nelles and Periplus maps are good. You'll need the *Mighty Minds Singapore Street Directory* (SG\$12.90) if you're driving.

MEDICAL SERVICES

There are private medical clinics in most neighbourhoods in Singapore. Treatment is of high Western standard.

Gleneagles Hospital (Map p524; ☎ 6473 7222; www.gleneagles.com.sg; 6A Napier Rd; 🕒 24hr)

International Medical Clinic (www.imc-healthcare.com); Jelita Clinic (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6465 4440; 02-08 Jelita Cold Storage, 293 Holland Rd; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; Orchard Clinic (Map p524; ☎ 6733 4440; 14-06 Camden Medical Centre, 1 Orchard Blvd; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Mount Elizabeth Hospital (Map p524; ☎ 6737 2666; www.mountelizabeth.com.sg; 3 Mt Elizabeth Rd; 🕒 24hr)

National Dental Centre (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6324 8910; www.ndc.com.sg; 5 Second Hospital Ave; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Raffles Hospital (Map p522; ☎ 6311 1111; www.raffleshospital.com; 585 North Bridge Rd; 🕒 24hr)

Singapore General Hospital (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6222 3322; www.sgh.com.sg; Level 2, Block 1, Outram Rd; 🕒 24hr)

MONEY

The major banks are found in the CBD, along Orchard Rd and in most malls. Opening hours are 9.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 1pm on Saturday.

ATMs accept MasterCard, Visa and cards with Plus or Cirrus. ATMs are everywhere, including shopping centres and MRT stations. Larger department stores accept foreign cash and travellers cheques at lower rates than you'll get from moneychangers. See the Quick Reference page (inside the front cover) for currency exchange rates.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted. The tourism authorities suggest that if shops insist on adding a credit-card surcharge (which they shouldn't do), contact the relevant credit company in Singapore. For 24-hour card cancellations or assistance:

American Express (☎ 6396 6000)

Diners Club (☎ 6571 0128)

JCB (☎ 6734 0096)

MasterCard (☎ 1800-1100 113)

Visa (☎ 6437 5800; 1800-1100 344)

Currency

The unit of currency is the Singapore dollar (comprising 100¢). There are 5¢, 10¢, 20¢, 50¢ and S\$1 coins, while notes come in S\$2, S\$5, S\$10, S\$50, S\$100, S\$500 and S\$1000 denominations.

Moneychangers

For changing cash or travellers cheques, banks usually charge a commission (around S\$3). You'll generally get a better rate for cash at moneychangers, who don't charge fees and are located in most shopping centres. Rates are openly displayed, though you can sometimes haggle if you're changing a large quantity.

Taxes & Refunds

A 7% goods-and-services tax (GST) is applied to all goods and services. See p559 for the tax and service charges that apply to room rates.

Restaurants charge 17% extra on top of listed prices (7% GST, 10% service charge and a 1% CESS charge).

Visitors purchasing goods worth S\$300 or more through a shop participating in the GST Tourist Refund Scheme (look for the 'Tax-Free Shopping' logo) can apply for a GST refund. When you purchase an item, fill in a claim form and show your passport. You'll receive a global refund cheque – present it with your passport and goods at the Customs GST inspection counter in the departure hall at Changi *before* you check in. Customs stamps your cheque, which you then cash at counters inside the airport, or have credited to your credit card or bank account. Pick up a *How to Shop Tax-free in Singapore* brochure at the airport or visitors centres for more information.

POST

Singapore's postal system is predictably efficient, with plenty of outlets. Call ☎ 1605 for the closest branch or see www.singpost.com.sg. Generally, post-office hours are 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 2pm Saturday. Airmail postcards to anywhere in the world cost S\$0.50; letters cost from S\$1.50 to S\$2.50. Handy outlets include the following:

Changi Airport (Map pp514-15; ☎ public 6542 7899, transit 6543 0048; 🕒 24hr) At Terminal 2.

Killiney Road (Map p524; ☎ 6734 7899; 1 Killiney Rd)

Takashimaya (Map p524; ☎ 6738 6899; 04-15 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd)

Letters addressed to 'Poste Restante' will end up at the **Singapore Post Centre** (Map p528; ☎ 6841 2000; 10 Eunos Rd).

TELEPHONE & FAX

You can make local and international calls from public phone booths (local calls cost 10¢ for three minutes). Most phone booths take phonecards, and some take credit cards, while old-school coin booths are rare. For inquiries, see www.singtel.com.

Fax

Faxes can be sent from all post offices, SingTel centres and hotels.

Mobile Phones

Singaporean mobile phone numbers usually start with a ☎ 9 or 8. If you have global roam-

ing facilities with your home provider, your GSM 900/1800 digital phone will automatically lock onto one of Singapore's three digital networks (M1-GSM, ST-GSM or StarHub). There's complete island coverage, and phones also work underground on the MRT.

You can buy SIM cards, from post offices and 7-Eleven stores, for local mobile-phone services (SingTel, StarHub and M1) for around S\$10.

Phone Codes

To call Singapore from overseas, dial your country's international access number and then ☎ 65 (Singapore's country code) before entering the telephone number. To call overseas from Singapore dial ☎ 001. There are no area codes within Singapore; telephone numbers are eight digits unless you're calling toll-free (1800).

Phonecards

Local phonecards are widely available from 7-Eleven stores, post offices, SingTel centres, stationers and bookshops. The large migrant-worker population has led to the availability of a wide array of international phonecards. Check which countries they service before you buy.

Useful Numbers

Some helpful telephone numbers include the following:

International directory inquiries (☎ 104, 1635)

Local directory inquiries (☎ 6777 7777, 100)

STB 24-hour Touristline (☎ 1800-736 2000)

Weather (☎ 6542 7788)

TIME

Singapore is 16 hours ahead of US Pacific Standard Time (San Francisco and Los Angeles), 13 hours ahead of US Eastern Standard Time (New York), eight hours ahead of GMT/UTC (London) and two hours behind Australian Eastern Standard Time (Sydney and Melbourne).

TIPPING

Tipping is prohibited in the airport and not expected in major hotels and restaurants, where a 10% service charge is included in the bill. Elsewhere a thank-you tip for good service is discretionary.

TOILETS

Toilets in Singapore are Western-style. Public toilets in the main tourist area are nice enough

to make you want to stay a while. They're plentiful in shopping malls (and hotel lobbies if you're desperate).

TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Singapore Tourism Board** (STB; ☎ 1800-736 2000; www.visitsingapore.com) provides the widest range of services, including tour bookings, event ticketing and a list of Singapore Tourism offices around the world. There are visitors centres at the following locations:

Changi Airport (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6am-2am) Terminals 1,2 and 3.

Liang Court (Map p517; Level 1, Liang Court Shopping Centre, 177 River Valley Rd; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm)

Little India (Map p522; 73 Dunlop St, InnCrowd Backpackers Hostel; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Orchard Road (Map p524; cnr Cairnhill & Orchard Rds; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm)

Suntec City (Map p517; Level 1, Suntec City, 3 Temasek Blvd; ☎ 10am-6pm)

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Facilities for wheelchairs used to be nonexistent in Singapore, but in recent years a large government campaign has seen ramps, lifts and other facilities progressively installed around the island. The pavements in the city are nearly all immaculate, MRT stations all have lifts and there are even some buses equipped with wheelchair-friendly equipment. Check out *Access Singapore*, which is a free guidebook by the Disabled Persons Association of Singapore; it has a complete rundown on services and other information, and can be found online at www.dpa.org.sg. The booklet is also available from STB offices (see above) or from the **National Council of Social Services** (☎ 6210 2500; www.ncss.org.sg). The **Disabled People's Association** (☎ 6899 1220; www.dpa.org.sg/access/contents.htm) has an online accessibility guide to the country.

Also see p477 for a few international organisations that have useful information for travellers with disabilities.

VISAS

Citizens of most countries are granted 30-day visas on arrival by air or overland (though the latter may get 14-day visas). The exceptions are the Commonwealth of Independent States, India, Myanmar, China and most Middle Eastern countries. Visitors must have a valid passport or internationally recognised travel document valid for at least six months beyond

the date of entry into Singapore. Extensions can be applied for at the **Immigration & Checkpoints Authority** (Map p522; ☎ 6391 6100; www.ica.org.sg; 10 Kallang Rd). This can also be done online. Applications take at least a day to process.

VOLUNTEERING

Singapore serves as a base for many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working throughout Southeast Asia, but most of these recruit skilled volunteers from their home countries. In Singapore itself the **National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre** (www.nvpc.org.sg) coordinates a number of community groups, including an extensive database of grassroots projects, such as education, environment and multiculturalism.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Singaporean women enjoy a high degree of autonomy and respect, and the city is one of the safest destinations in Southeast Asia – though women might be a little uncomfortable in Little India during the weekends, when tens of thousands of male migrant workers throng the area. Tampons, over-the-counter medications and contraceptive pills are readily available.

WORK

Singapore has a large expatriate European/US community, a reflection of the large representation of overseas companies here. There are also masses of migrants from mainland China, India, and several neighbouring countries who work in a variety of roles, mainly unskilled. The vacancies pages of the *Straits Times* are often crammed with job notices, mostly for domestic servants and unskilled labourers.

Business experience, marketable job skills and impressive qualifications are your best bet – like many places, Singapore often places a higher value on your paperwork than your experience. **Contact Singapore** (www.contactsingapore.org.sg) has job postings, though there are also dozens of headhunting firms on the lookout for skilled foreigners.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For general border crossing details, see p483.

Air

AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

Singapore's slick **Changi International Airport** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6542 1122; www.changiairport.com) is about 20km east of the city centre. It has three terminals. Changi's facilities include a 24-hour medical centre, a post office, a transit hotel, free showers, free internet access, free local phone calls, left luggage (between S\$3.15 and S\$10.50 per day depending on the item's size) and a children's playground for transit passengers. Pick up the free booklets, maps and other guides (including the airport's own magazine) from information stands.

AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM SINGAPORE

The major airline offices in Singapore:

Air New Zealand (Map p524; ☎ 6734 5595; www.airnewzealand.com; 05-05 Wellington Bldg, 20 Bideford Rd)

Berjaya Air (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6481 6302; www.berjaya-air.com; Block 13, 01-13 Old Birdcage Walk, Seletar Airbase)

British Airways (Map p524; ☎ 6622 1747; www.britishairways.com; 06-05 Cairnhill Place, 15 Cairnhill Rd)

Cathay Pacific Airways (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6533 1333; www.cathaypacific.com; 25-07 Ocean Towers, 20 Raffles Place)

Garuda Indonesia (Map p524; ☎ 6250 2888; www.garuda-indonesia.com; 12-03 United Sq, 101 Thomson Rd)

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6823 2220; www.klm.com; 06-01/02/03 79 Anson Rd)

Lufthansa Airlines (Map p524; ☎ 6835 5944; www.lufthansa.com; 05-01 Palais Renaissance, 390 Orchard Rd)

Malaysia Airlines (Map p517; ☎ 6433 0220; www.malaysiaairlines.com; 02-09 Singapore Shopping Centre, 190 Clemenceau Ave)

Qantas (Map p524; ☎ 6415 7373; www.qantas.com; 06-05 Cairnhill Place, 15 Cairnhill Rd)

Silk Air (Map p522; ☎ 6223 8888; www.silkair.com; 17-08 Keypoint, 371 Beach Rd)

Singapore Airlines (Map p524; ☎ 6223 8888; www.singaporeair.com; 02-38/39 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd)

Thai Airways (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6210 5000; www.thaiair.com; 02-00 the Globe, 100 Cecil St)

TICKETS

Compare the costs of flying into Singapore versus Malaysia. You can travel overland to Singapore from almost anywhere in Peninsular Malaysia (and vice versa) in less than a day.

SINGAPORE-TO-MALAYSIA TRAIN ISSUES

Some travellers have had problems leaving Malaysia if they've entered the country by train from Singapore. Malaysian immigration officials at Singapore's railway station sometimes don't stamp your passport – not a problem as long as you keep your immigration card and your train ticket to show how you entered Malaysia. Your details will have been put into the Malaysian immigration computer and should come up when you exit. Stand your ground if you're asked to pay a fine!

The Malaysian railway system also cunningly charges precisely the same figure in Singapore dollars for fares from Singapore to Malaysia as it does in Malaysian ringgit from Malaysia to Singapore. The Singapore dollar is worth more than twice as much as the ringgit – what a rip-off! To beat the system out of Singapore, buy a ticket only as far as the first train station across the border (Kempas Bahru), then another ticket from Kempas Bahru to wherever you're going in Malaysia.

The following budget airlines operate out of Singapore. They are changing their networks all the time, so check websites for details. Bookings are made almost entirely online.

AirAsia (☎ 6307 7688; www.airasia.com)

Cebu Pacific (☎ agents 6735 7155, 6737 9231, 6220 5966; www.cebupacificair.com)

Firefly (☎ 03-7845 4543; www.firefly.com.my)

Jetstar Asia (☎ 1800-6161 977; www.jetstarasia.com)

Tiger Airways (☎ 6538 4437; www.tigerairways.com)

For other internet bookings, see p480.

MALAYSIA

For details of flights between Singapore and Malaysia, see p482.

LAND

The Causeway linking Johor Bahru (JB) with Singapore handles most traffic between the countries. Trains and buses run from all over Malaysia straight through to Singapore, or you can get a taxi or bus to/from JB. There's also a crossing called the Second Link linking Tuas, in western Singapore, with Geylang Patah in Malaysia – some buses to Melaka and Malaysia's west coast head this way. If you have a car, tolls on the Second Link are much higher than the Causeway.

BUSES

Buses run frequently from Singapore into Malaysia, some continuing to Thailand.

From Singapore, both the Causeway Express and Singapore–Johor Express air-con buses (S\$2.40) and the public SBS bus 170 (S\$1.70) depart for JB every 15 minutes between 6.30am and 11pm from the **Queen**

Street Bus Terminal (Map p522; cnr Queen & Arab Sts). Bus 170 can be boarded anywhere along the way, such as on Rochor, Rochor Canal or Bukit Timah Rds. Yet another, quicker, option is to go to Kranji MRT station by train and catch bus 170 (S\$1.20) or to Marsiling MRT and catch bus 950 (\$1.20).

In all cases, when you get to the Singapore checkpoint, take all your belongings and get off. After clearing immigration you have to wait for the next bus (but don't have to pay again, as long you have your ticket). Repeat the process at the Malaysian side or, once you've cleared immigration, simply take a two-minute walk into JB city centre. The public bus stops at Komtar Shopping Centre and then the Larkin terminal 5km north of the Causeway. The coach terminates at the terminal. If at all possible, avoid crossing at weekends, when it gets infernally busy.

If you're travelling beyond JB, it's easier to catch a long-distance bus straight from Singapore, but there's a greater variety of bus services from JB and the fares are cheaper.

Long-distance buses to Melaka (S\$25, 4½ hours) and east-coast Malaysian cities Kuantan (S\$35, seven hours) and Kuala Terengganu (S\$40, 10 hours) leave from and arrive at the **Lavender Street Bus Terminal** (Map p522; cnr Lavender St & Kallang Bahru). The terminal is 500m from Lavender MRT station, or get there on buses 61, 107, 133 or 145.

Buses leave from outside the **Golden Mile Complex** (Map p522; Beach Rd) for Kuala Lumpur (S\$40, five hours) and other northern Malaysian destinations, including Ipoh, Butterworth and Penang. There's a string of bus agents in the Golden Mile Complex – shop around. Lavender MRT station is about

500m away. Get a one-way ticket if you're planning on returning to Singapore – tickets are cheaper in Malaysia.

TAXI

There are shared long-distance taxis to JB from Singapore's **Queen Street Bus Terminal** (Map p522; cnr Queen & Arab Sts). Share taxis to JB are about S\$10 per person, with a maximum of four passengers per taxi, though prices vary depending on the queue at the immigration checkpoint.

TRAIN

From Singapore there are three air-conditioned express trains daily to Malaysia (about seven hours to Kuala Lumpur) with continuing services to Thailand. Contact **Keretapi Tanah Melayu** (KTM; ☎ 6222 5165; www.ktmb.com.my) or its booking office at the **Singapore Railway Station** (Map pp526-7; ☎ 6222 5165; Keppel Rd; ☎ 8.30am-2pm, 3-7pm) for information. Depending on the carriage class and whether you ride in a seat or a sleeper, a Kuala Lumpur fare will be between S\$19 and S\$110. For a tricky immigration issue when travelling by train, see p565.

The luxurious **Eastern & Oriental Express** (☎ 6392 3500; www.orient-express.com) departs Singapore on the 42-hour, 1943km journey to Bangkok before heading onwards to Chiang Mai and Nong Khai (for Laos). Don your linen suit, sip a gin and tonic, and dig deep for the fare: from S\$3000 per person in a double compartment to S\$5500 in the presidential suite. You can go as far as KL or Butterworth for a lower fare.

SEA

MALAYSIA FROM SINGAPORE

Regional cruise trips depart for Malaysia from the **HarbourFront Centre** (Map pp514-15;

☎ 6513 2200; www.singaporecruise.com.sg), next to HarbourFront MRT station; a host of agents here handle bookings.

Ferries depart the **Changi Point Ferry Terminal** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6546 8518) for Tanjung Belungkor, east of JB. This is primarily a service for Singaporeans going to Desaru. The 11km journey takes 45 minutes and costs S\$18/22 one way/return. There are usually three services daily in each direction. From the Tanjung Belungkor jetty, buses operate to Desaru and Kota Tinggi. Ferries also sail for Pengerang (one way S\$6), across the Straits of Johor in Malaysia. This is an interesting back-door route into Malaysia. There's no fixed schedule; ferries leave between 7am and 4pm when full (12 people). The best time to catch one is before 8am. Clear Singapore immigration at the small post in the terminal. To get to Changi Ferry Terminal, take the MRT to Tanah Merah, then bus 2 to Changi Village (or just a taxi).

INDONESIA FROM SINGAPORE

No direct ferries run between Singapore and Indonesia's main ports, but you can travel between the two countries via Pulau Batam, Pulau Bintan, Tanjung Balai and Tanjung Batu in the Riau Archipelago.

Pulau Batam, Tanjung Balai & Tanjung Batu

Ferries depart for Pulau Batam, Tanjung Balai and Batu, all about 20km away, from the **HarbourFront Centre** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6513 2200; www.singaporecruise.com.sg), taking about 30 minutes to get to Sekupang, or 45 minutes to Batu Ampar. The main agents are **Penguin** (☎ 6377 6335), **Dino/Batam Fast** (☎ 6270 0311) and **Berlian** (☎ 6546 8830), all with offices at HarbourFront. Between them they have

THE EZ-LINK AROUND TOWN

If you're staying in Singapore for longer than a week, the easiest way to pay for travel on public transport is via the EZ-Link card. You'll save money and find it more convenient to buy an EZ-Link card from an MRT station. This card allows you to travel by train and bus by swiping it over sensors as you enter and leave a station or bus. Cards cost S\$15: S\$10 worth of travel, and a S\$5 nonrefundable charge. You can top-up cards at ATM-style machines at stations. Fares using an EZ-Link card are 20% less than using cash.

If you don't use the EZ-Link, buses take cash (exact change only) and you have to buy a single-trip ticket for trains (ticket include a S\$1 refundable deposit you redeem by feeding it back into the machine).

dozens of departures every day, at least every half-hour from 7.30am to 8pm. Tickets cost between S\$30 and S\$34 return. Ferries dock at Sekupang, where you can take a boat to Tanjung Buton on the Sumatran mainland. From there it's a three-hour bus ride to Palembang. This is a popular travellers' route to Sumatra.

Pulau Bintan & Batam

The same companies that operate ferries from Batam also have several ferries a day from **Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal** (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6542 4369; 50 Tanah Merah Rd) to Tanjung Pinang, the main city on Bintan, or Teluk Sebong on the island's north coast as well as to Nongsapara on Batam. The 45km journey takes about an hour and costs between S\$38 and S\$48 return, ferries departing from 9am to 8pm.

GETTING AROUND

Singapore has fantastic public transport, with a tangled web of bus and train (Mass Rapid Transit; MRT) routes taking you to the doorsteps of most sights. The MRT is easy to navigate, but stops are sometimes far apart (walking in 30°C humidity is sweaty work!). Pick up a free MRT-system map at any MRT station, and the useful *Transitlink Guide*, which details all bus and MRT routes, from bookshops (S\$2.50). Due to car-ownership limitations, taxis are also considered public transport. For public transport information, see www.sbstransit.com.sg.

To/From the Airport

CHANGI AIRPORT

Taxi or train (MRT) are the best ways to reach the city. Trains depart Changi from below Terminals 2 and 3 for the CBD from 5.30am to 12.06am (adult/child S\$2.70/1.50, 35 minutes, every 12 minutes). Trains to Changi from City Hall station (Map p517) run from 6am to midnight. In both directions you'll have to change trains at Tanah Merah station (just cross the platform).

The most convenient bus is the airport shuttle service (adult/child S\$9/6) that will take you to any hotel, except those on Sentosa and in Changi Village. Shuttles operate daily from the arrivals halls of all terminals roughly every 15 minutes from 6am to midnight and every 30 minutes all other times. Book and pay at arrival-hall counters.

TRISHAWS

Trishaws peaked just after WWII when motorised transport was practically nonexistent and trishaw drivers could make a tidy income. Today there are only around 250 trishaws left in Singapore, mainly plying the tourist routes. Trishaws congregate in the pedestrian mall at the junction of Waterloo and Albert Sts (Map p522), outside Raffles Hotel (Map p517) and outside the Chinatown Complex (Map pp526-7). Always agree on the fare beforehand: we were quoted S\$40 for half an hour, but you can haggle.

Public bus 36 leaves the airport for the city approximately every 10 minutes between 6am and midnight (adult/child S\$2/1). It takes around an hour to reach the city centre, passing through the Colonial District and on to Orchard Rd. Heading to the airport, pick up bus 36 on Orchard or Bras Basah Rds.

Taxis to the city cost around S\$20, plus surcharge. From Friday to Sunday the surcharge is S\$5 from 5pm to midnight and 50% of the fare from midnight to 6am; at all other times the surcharge is S\$3. Alternatively, there's a 24-hour limousine taxi service (S\$45) available to any destination in Singapore.

SELETAR AIRPORT

You might find yourself at the small, modern Seletar Airport (Map pp514-15) catching a **Berjaya Air** (☎ 6481 6302; www.berjaya-air.com) flight to Pulau Tioman in Malaysia. Seletar is in the north of the island; taxi is the easiest way to get there. Otherwise bus 103M from Serangoon MRT will take you to the gates of the Seletar Air Force base, from where you change to a local base bus to the airport terminal.

Bicycle

Singapore's roads are not for the faint-hearted. It's furiously hot, and drivers tend to be fast, aggressive and not particularly sympathetic to the needs of cyclists. Fortunately, there's a large network of parks and park connectors and a few excellent dedicated mountain-biking areas – at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (p505), Tampines and Pulau Ubin (p504). Cycling up to Changi Village and then taking the

bike over to Pulau Ubin is an excellent adventure. Other excellent places for cycling include East Coast Park (p503), Sentosa (p509), Pasir Ris Park (p503) and the route linking Mt Faber Park, Telok Blangah Hill Park and Kent Ridge Park.

If you haven't brought your own, pick up some wheels at **Treknology Bikes 3** (Map p524; ☎ 6466 2673; www.treknology3.com; 01-02, 91 Tanglin Place; 24hr hire S\$35-50; ☎ 11am-7.30pm). Bikes can also be rented cheaply at several places in East Coast Park and on Sentosa Island and Pulau Ubin.

Boat & Ferry

There are regular ferry services from **Marina South Pier** (Map pp520-1; ☎ 6275 03888; 31 Marina Coastal Dr) to other southern islands (p511), and from Changi Village to Pulau Ubin (p504). You can also take river cruises (p530) or harbour cruises (p529).

Bus

Singapore's bus service should be the envy of the world. You rarely have to wait more than a few minutes for buses, and they'll take you almost anywhere. Most are air-conditioned and even have TVs!

Fares range from 90¢ to S\$1.80 (less with an EZ-Link card, see the boxed text p566); there are also a few flat-rate buses. When you board the bus, drop the exact money into the fare box (no change is given) or swipe your EZ-Link card. You need to swipe your card again when you disembark – if you forget, you'll be charged the maximum fare for the bus journey! Contact **SBS Transit** (☎ 1800-287 2727; www.sbsttransit.com.sg) for details.

TOURIST BUSES

Singapore Airlines runs the **SIA Hop-On** (☎ 9457 2896; www.siahopon.com) tourist bus, departing from Raffles Blvd and traversing the main tourist arteries (Orchard Rd, Bugis Junction, Suntec City, the Colonial District, Clarke Quay, Boat Quay, Chinatown and the Botanic Gardens) every 30 minutes daily from 9am to 9pm. A Sentosa shuttle runs from 10am to 9pm. Tickets are available from the driver: S\$12/6 per adult/child for a day pass; S\$6/3 with a Singapore Airlines or SilkAir boarding pass or ticket.

Nutty and garish, the **City Hippo** (☎ 6228 6877; www.ducktours.com.sg) offers a confusing array of tour options round all the major

sites. Two-day tickets including a river cruise cost adult/child S\$33/17. It boasts live commentary and an open-top deck. There are numerous pick-up points around town.

Car & Motorcycle

Singaporeans drive on the left-hand side of the road; it's compulsory to wear seat belts. Unlike in most Asian countries, traffic is orderly. But expect local drivers to display true *kiasu* (Hokkien for 'afraid to lose') spirit in the form of aggressive driving, tailgating, speeding and wild lane-changing sans signalling. The profusion of one-way streets and streets that change names (sometimes several times) can make things tricky. The *Mighty Minds Singapore Street Directory* is essential for negotiating the city. See also opposite for zoning and parking issues. Don't bother riding a motorcycle around Singapore, as drivers have little regard for bike safety.

DRIVING LICENCE

A valid overseas licence is needed to rent a car. An International Driving Permit isn't usually required, but bring one. Most rental companies also require that drivers are at least 23 years old.

HIRE

If you want a car for local driving only, smaller rental operators usually quote rates that are slightly cheaper than the major companies. Rental rates are cheaper in Malaysia – if you want to drive around Malaysia, it's better value to hire the car from Johor Bahru.

Rates start from around S\$100 a day, while a collision-damage waiver will cost about S\$20 per day for a small car. Special deals may be available for longer-term rental.

All major car-hire companies have an office at Changi Airport. There are other offices around Singapore:

Avis (Map p517; ☎ 6737 1668; www.avis.com.sg; 01-07, Waterfront Plaza, 390 Havelock Rd)

Express Car (Map p528; ☎ 6842 4992; www.expresscar.com.sg; 1 Sims Ln)

Hawk (Map pp514-15; ☎ 6469 4468; www.hawkrentacar.com.sg; 32A Hillview Terrace)

Hertz (Map p524; ☎ 6734 4646; www.hertz.com.sg; 01-01 Thong Teck Bldg, 15 Scotts Rd)

Premier (Map p524; www.singapore.com/premier; 03-05 Balmoral Plaza, 271 Bukit Timah Rd)

RESTRICTED ZONES & CAR PARKING

Between 7.30am and 7pm weekdays, and from 10.15am to 2pm Saturdays, the area encompassing the CBD, Chinatown and Orchard Rd becomes a restricted zone. Cars may enter as long as they pay a toll. Vehicles are automatically tracked by sensors on overhanging ERP gantries that prompt drivers to insert a cashcard (available from 7-Elevens and petrol stations) into their in-vehicle unit. The same system is also in operation on certain major highways. Rental cars are subject to the same rules.

Anyone who doesn't pay the entry toll is automatically photographed by cameras on gantries and a fine will soon arrive at the car owner's address.

Parking in many places (especially in residential areas) in Singapore is operated by a coupon system; buy a booklet at parking kiosks, post offices and 7-Elevens. Display coupons in your car window with holes punched out to indicate the time, day and date you parked. Many car parks are now run using the same in-vehicle unit and cashcard and ERP gantries instead of the coupon system.

Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)

The ultraclean, safe and efficient Singapore MRT (☎ 1800-336 8900; www.smt.com.sg) subway and light-rail system is the most comfortable and hassle-free way to get around. Trains run from around 5.30am to midnight, departing every three to four minutes at peak times and every six to eight off-peak. Single-trip tickets cost from 90¢ to \$2.70, less with the EZ-Link card (see the boxed text, p566).

Most of the MRT's tracks run underground in the inner-city area, emerging overground out towards the suburban housing estates. The

system connects with the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) trains at Bukit Panjang, Punggol and Sengkang.

Construction is under way on a central loop line (ETA 2010) that will link the city centre with Holland Village, Suntec City and the Singapore Indoor Stadium area in Kallang.

Taxi

You can usually flag a taxi on the streets or grab one from the many taxi stands. The fare system is also complicated, but thankfully it's all metered, so there's no haggling over fares. The basic flagfall is S\$2.80 to S\$3.20, then 20¢ for every 385m.

These are the taxi companies:

Comfort and CityCab (☎ 6552 1111)

Premier Taxis (☎ 6363 6888)

SMRT Taxis (☎ 6555 8888)

There are a whole raft of various surcharges to note:

- 50% of the metered fare from midnight to 6am.
- 35% peak-hour charges between 7am and 9am, and 5pm and 8pm.
- S\$3.50 for telephone bookings; for advance bookings you'll pay S\$5.20.
- S\$3 on all trips from the CBD between 5pm and midnight, Monday to Saturday. You may also have to pay another surcharge if you take the taxi into the CBD during restricted hours (see Restricted Zones, left).
- S\$5 surcharge from 5pm to midnight Friday to Sunday; S\$3 all other times for journeys from the airport.

Confused? We are too. Just follow the meter and ask for a receipt to check charges.

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