

# Singapore

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Little India** – a jumble of gold, textiles and cheap eats minutes from Orchard Rd, this could be another country entirely (p660)
- **Singapore Zoo** – tucked into the forest, this outstanding open concept zoo is notable for its primates, particularly its free-ranging orang-utans (p660)
- **Clarke Quay** – despite its garish riverfront design, resurgent Clarke Quay is the place to go for nightlife, boasting some of the city's best bars and clubs (p667)
- **Asian Civilisations Museum** – a sumptuous tour of the region's cultures housed in a 150-year-old building, this is one of Singapore's gems (p659)
- **Sentosa** – yes, we know it's a little tacky, but after flying down the luge track a few times, you'll no longer care (p663)
- **Off the beaten track** – take a hike through one of the world's only patches of primary urban rainforest at Bukit Timah (p663)

## FAST FACTS

- **Budget** US\$40 a day
- **Costs** hostel dorm bed S\$18 to S\$20, four-hour bus ride S\$2 to S\$3, beer S\$5 to S\$15
- **Country code** ☎ 65
- **Languages** English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil
- **Money** US\$1 = S\$1.51 (Singaporean dollar)
- **Phrases** *ni hao ma?* (how are you?), *zai jian* (goodbye), *xie xie* (thanks), *dui bu qi* (sorry)
- **Population** 4.6 million
- **Time** GMT + seven hours
- **Visas** most travellers get a 30-day tourist visa on arrival



## TRAVEL HINT

Museums are free after 6pm (Singapore Art Museum and National Museum of Singapore) or discounted after 7pm (Asian Civilisations Museum).

## OVERLAND ROUTES

Take the Causeway across to Johor Bahru in Malaysia, or cross the bridge at Tuas to Tanjung Kupang in Malaysia, but avoid crossing into Singapore on Sunday evenings.

One of Southeast Asia's most remarkable success stories, immaculate Singapore confirms and undermines popular stereotypes in equal measure. Yes, it's modern, clean and organised. No, it's not stifling, strait-laced and dull. What you have here is a dynamic 21st-century metropolis with a culture, history and cuisine that's remarkably rich for a place so small.

Board the ultra-efficient Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) train system and, within a few short stops, you can surface among the glitter of the Orchard Rd retail mecca, the Palladian columns of the Colonial District, the pungent ramshackle lanes of Little India, or the besuited bustle of the central business district (CBD). It's affluent, hi-tech and occasionally a little snobbish, but the great leveller is the hawk centre, the ubiquitous and raucous food markets where everyone mucks in together to indulge the local mania for cheap eating.

Singapore might only warrant a few days on most itineraries, but there's an awful lot to pack in.

## CURRENT EVENTS

The People's Action Party, which has held power since independence, surprised no-one by retaining power in the 2006 general election, winning 66.6% of the vote but still taking all but two of the seats up for grabs. The untold story of this election, one that never appeared in the local press, was the huge crowds that turned up for opposition rallies. Whether this was a sign of an upsurge in discontent with a government that has presided over an ever widening income gap, or merely due to the novelty of seeing an opposition denied anything except negative coverage remains to be seen.

Singapore is undergoing a fresh development boom, gearing up to boost its population to 6.5 million and reposition itself as a centre for everything from biomedical research to tourism. Two huge casino resorts are being built on Sentosa Island and at Marina South, while the entire Marina Bay area around the futuristic Esplanade theatre is being turned into an upmarket commercial-residential-leisure centre.

## HISTORY

### Lion City

According to Malay legend, a Sumatran prince spotted a lion while visiting the island of Temasek, and based on this good omen he founded a city there called Singapura (Lion City). Records of Singapore's early history are patchy; originally it was a tiny sea town squeezed between powerful neighbours Sumatra and Melaka.

### Raffles

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles arrived in 1819 on a mission to secure a strategic base for the British Empire in the Malacca Strait

(Strait of Melaka). He decided to transform the sparsely populated, swampy island into a free-trade port. The layout of central Singapore is still as Raffles drew it.

## World War II

The glory days of the Empire came to an abrupt end on 15 February 1942, when the Japanese invaded Singapore. For the rest of WWII the Japanese ruled the island harshly, jailing Allied prisoners of war (POWs) at Changi Prison and killing thousands of locals. Although the British were welcomed back after the war, the Empire's days in the region were numbered.

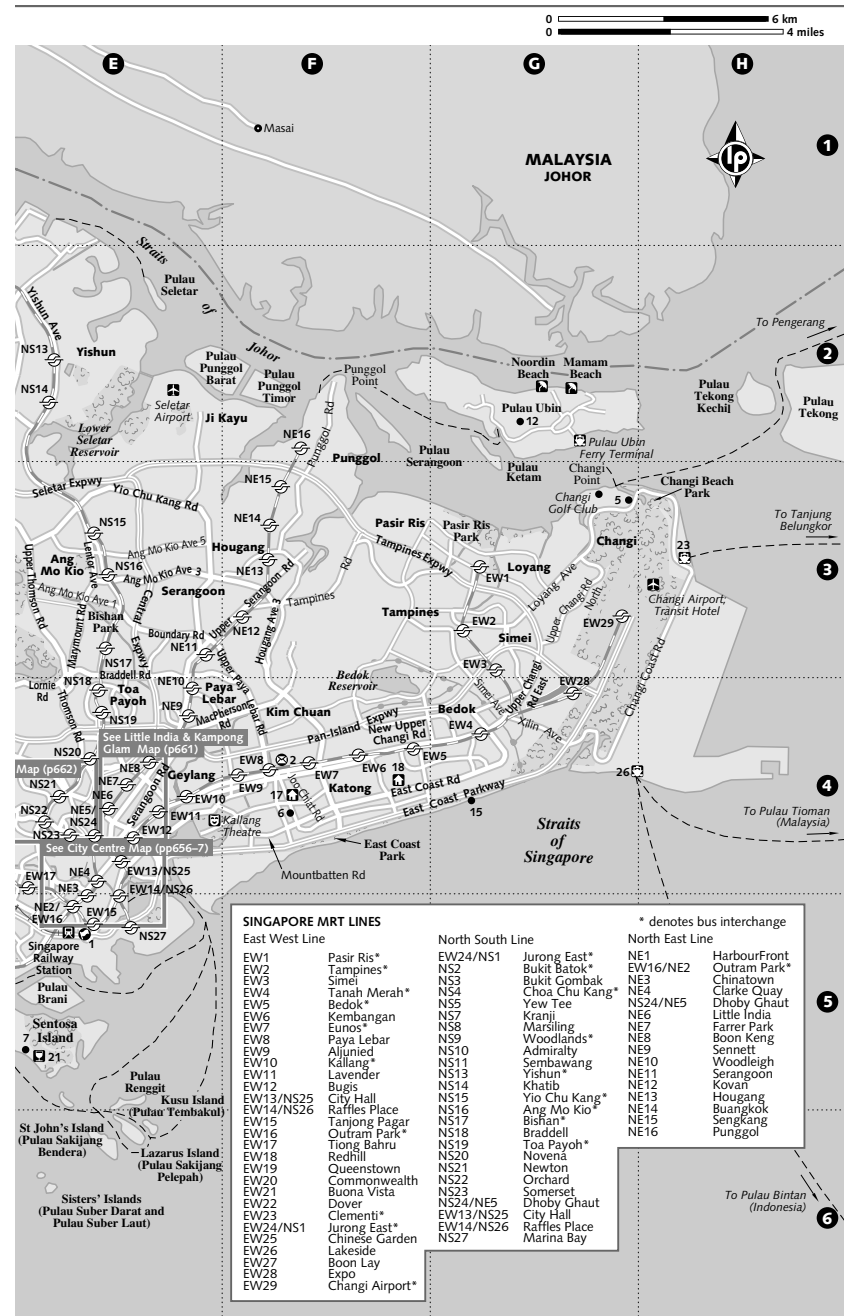
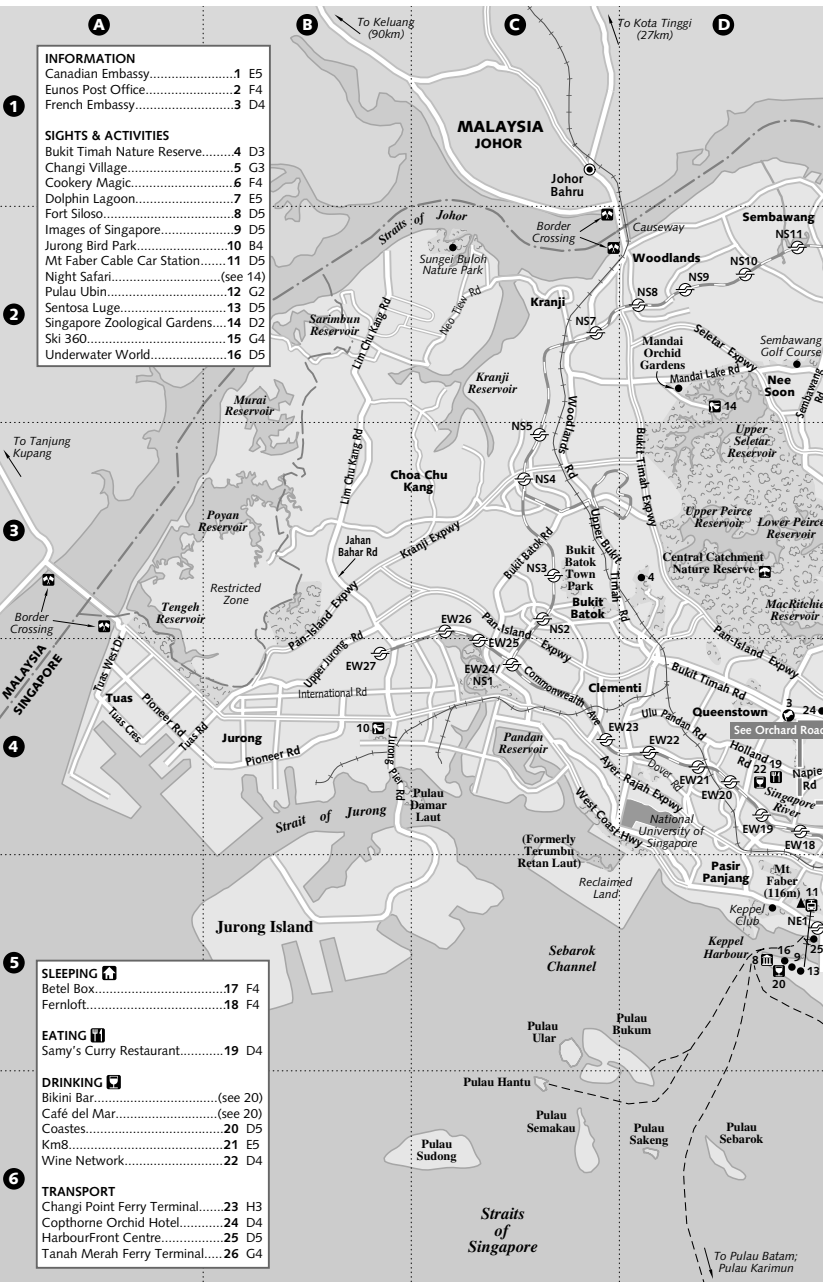
## Foundation for the Future

The socialist People's Action Party (PAP) was founded in 1954, with Lee Kuan Yew as its secretary general. Lee led the PAP to victory in elections held in 1959, and hung onto power for over 30 years. Singapore was kicked out of the Malay Federation in 1965, but Lee made the most of one-party rule and pushed through an ambitious industrialisation programme and a strict regulation of social behaviour.

His successor in 1990 was Goh Chok Tong, who loosened things up a little, but maintained Singapore on the path Lee had forged. In 2004 Goh stepped down to make way for Lee's son, Lee Hsien Loong.

Lee the Younger faces the huge challenge of positioning Singapore to succeed in the modern, globalised economy. As manufacturing bleeds away to cheaper competitors, the government knows it must boost its population, attract more so-called 'foreign talent' and develop industries like tourism, financial services, digital media and biomedical research if its success story is to continue into the future.

# SINGAPORE



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**MUST READ**

*Tales from a Broad* by Fran Leibowitz is a woman's tale of charming her way around Singapore's expat community with more than a dash of sass.

## THE CULTURE

### The National Psyche

Affluent Singaporeans live in an apparently constant state of transition, constantly urged by their ever-present government to upgrade, improve and reinvent.

On the surface, these are a thoroughly modernised people – you only have to see the number of people attached to electronic devices on the train. But many people's lives are still ruled by old beliefs. There is also a sharp divide between the older generation, who experienced the huge upheavals and relentless graft that built modern Singapore, and the pampered younger generation enjoying the fruits of that labour.

### Lifestyle

While family and tradition are important, many young people live their lives outside of home, either working long hours or visiting bars and hawker stalls. Intergenerational families (with three generations living together) are not uncommon, and some Singaporeans live at home well into their 30s.

Although the three main cultures in Singapore are still very boy-child focused, women have more-or-less equal access to education, employment and opportunity. Likewise, despite the oft-touted antihomosexual stance of the government, gay men and lesbians are a highly visible part of everyday life in Singapore.

### Population

The Chinese majority (76.7% of the population) are Buddhists or Taoists, and Chinese customs, superstitions and festivals dominate social life.

For Malay Singaporeans (who represent 14% of the population), Islam is the guiding light, but *adat* (customary law) guides important ceremonies and events, including birth, circumcision and marriage. Most Singaporean Indians (7.9% of the population) come from south India and speak Tamil. Western expats are a very visible group. Not so visible

is the large population of domestic maids and foreign labourers.

With all these disparate peoples crammed into one place, the government is at pains to promote a Singaporean identity, while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of separate cultures. As a result, it must be said that many Singaporeans are somewhat obsessed with cultural labels.

### ARTS

Singapore's arts scene, never particularly vibrant, has blossomed in recent years. The number of art galleries has grown and there is a small but significant theatre scene with groups such as **Wild Rice** ([www.wildrice.com.sg](http://www.wildrice.com.sg)) and the **Necessary Stage** ([www.necessary.org](http://www.necessary.org)), though it struggles to survive. The Ministry of Information building (Map pp656–7) contains some worthy art galleries, but also check out the **Red Sea Gallery** (off Map pp656–7; ☎ 6732 6711; [www.redseagallery.com](http://www.redseagallery.com); 232 River Valley Rd) for contemporary art.

The construction of the Esplanade theatre has helped place Singapore on the world arts map and draw more international performers – from Western classical to Chinese opera, Asian dance troupes to American jazz quartets. The best time to catch the cream of Singapore's performing arts is during the annual **Arts Festival** ([www.singaporeartsfest.com](http://www.singaporeartsfest.com)) held in June.

### ENVIRONMENT

As a densely populated island of 604 sq km, Singapore is confronted with several environmental problems, chief among them being rubbish. Some of it is incinerated and some buried on Pulau Semakau, but the government has recognised the need to encourage recycling, both industrial and domestic.

#### WHY YOU SO LIE DAT ONE AH?

Singlish, the island's unique dialect, can be virtually unintelligible to the outsider. Essentially it's English blended with Hokkien, Tamil and Malay phrases and peppered with expressive but meaningless exclamations such as 'lah', 'lor', 'hor' and 'meh'. Fortunately for the visitor, many Singaporeans carry a more understandable spare accent that they use when speaking to foreigners. Can ah? Can lah.

Air quality is generally much better than most large Southeast Asian metropolises, but the annual haze that descends on the island around September and October, generated by slash-and-burn fires in Indonesia, is a serious concern.

Keeping 4.6 million people supplied with fresh water is another headache. Much of it is imported from Malaysia, but with large reservoirs, desalination plants and a huge waste-water recycling project called Newater, Singapore hopes to become self-sufficient within the next few decades. Tap water is safe.

Singapore has a proud and well-deserved reputation as a garden city. Parks, often beautifully landscaped, are abundant and the entire centre of the island is a green oasis. Outside of the zoo and bird park, wildlife sightings are largely limited to long-tailed macaques, squirrels and the prehistoric monitor lizard, but it's still possible to spot flying lemurs and pythons in more remote spots. There are even crocodiles in the mangroves of the island's northwest.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

Singapore is an ideal point to begin any Southeast Asian journey. The city's budget air travel boom is good news for shoestring travellers, connecting Changi Airport cheaply with dozens of regional destinations.

Budget airlines operating out of Changi include the following:

**Air Sahara** (code S2; ☎ 6557 4550; [www.airsahara.net](http://www.airsahara.net))

Flies to 15 cities in India, as well as Kathmandu.

**Cebu Pacific Air** (code 5J; ☎ 6735 7155; [www.cebupacificair.com](http://www.cebupacificair.com))

Flies to Cebu, Manila and Davao in the Philippines.

**Jetstar Asia** (code 3K; ☎ 6822 2288; [www.jetstarasia.com](http://www.jetstarasia.com))

Flies to Australia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

**Tiger Airways** (code TR; ☎ 1800-388 8888; [www.tigerairways.com](http://www.tigerairways.com))

Flies to Australia, China, Indonesia, Macau, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

#### DEPARTURE TAX

A departure tax of S\$21 is automatically added to air tickets.

The bigger airlines:

**Lufthansa** (code LH; ☎ 6835 5933; [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com))

**Malaysia Airlines** (code MH; ☎ 6336 6777; [www.sg.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.sg.malaysiaairlines.com))

**Qantas** (code QF; ☎ 6589 7000; [www.qantas.com.sg](http://www.qantas.com.sg))

**Singapore Airlines** (code SQ; ☎ 6223 8888; [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com))

If you plan to fly to Malaysia, including Borneo, head to Johor Bahru. Flights on **Air Asia** (code AK; ☎ 6733 9933; [www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com)) and Malaysia Airlines are considerably cheaper from there. Malaysia Airlines passengers can take a connecting bus service (S\$12) from Singapore's **Copthorne Orchid Hotel** (Map pp650–1; ☎ 6250 3333; 214 Dunearn Rd), leaving at 9am, 12.20pm and 3.50pm every day. Advance bookings are necessary.

### Land BUS

For Johor Bahru, the quickest method is to go to Kranji MRT station and take bus 160 from there. Share taxis to many places in Malaysia leave from the Queen St bus terminal (Map p661).

Coming from Johor Bahru, take a bus from Larkin station, or a shared taxi (RM8, four people) from the taxi terminal opposite the Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel.

The buses stop at the Singapore checkpoint; keep your ticket and hop on the next bus that comes along after you've cleared immigration. You'll go through the same process at Malaysian immigration and customs across the Causeway. The bus continues to the Larkin bus terminal on the edge of town.

If you are travelling beyond Johor Bahru, it is easier to catch a long-distance bus from Singapore. Cheap luxury coaches, with huge seats, lots of legroom and TVs, make the journey pretty pleasant.

Agents at the **Golden Mile Complex** (off Map p661; Beach Rd) and **Golden Mile Tower** (off Map p661; Beach Rd) sell tickets for Melaka, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Cameron Highlands and many other destinations. **Grassland Express** (☎ 6293 1166; [www.grassland.com.sg](http://www.grassland.com.sg); 01-26 Golden Mile Complex) and **Konsortium** (☎ 6392 3911; [www.konsortium.com.sg](http://www.konsortium.com.sg); 01-52 Golden Mile Tower) both run excellent coaches.

Arriving from Malaysia by coach, you'll be dropped either at the **Lavender St bus terminal** (Map p661; cnr Lavender St & Kallang Bahru), a 500m walk north from Lavender MRT station, or outside the Golden Mile Complex.

## TRAIN

Malaysian company **Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad** (☎ 6222 5165; www.ktmb.com.my) operates three air-con express trains daily for the six-hour run from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur at 8.10am, 3.05pm and 10.10pm (3rd/2nd class S\$19/34), with connections on to Thailand.

## Sea

Ferries connect Singapore to Indonesia's Riau archipelago. There are two departure points: the HarbourFront Centre (Map pp650–1), next to HarbourFront MRT station, and **Tanah Merah ferry terminal** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6542 7102).

From HarbourFront, boats leave for Pulau Batam, Tanjung Balai and Tanjung Batu. The Tanah Merah terminal handles boats to Pulau Bintan and Nongsapara on Batam, as well as Desaru in Malaysia. To get here, take the MRT to Bedok and then bus 35. A taxi from the city is around S\$15.

Ferry operators are **Penguin** (☎ 6271 4866; www.penguin.com.sg) for Batam, Bintan and Tanjung Balai; **Batam Fast** (☎ 6270 0311; www.batamfast.com), **Berlian** (☎ 6546 8830) and **Dino Shipping** (☎ 6276 9722) for Batam only; **Indo Falcon** (☎ 6275 7393; www.indofalcon.com.sg) for all four Riau destinations, plus Malaysia; and **Bintan Resort Ferries** (6542 4369; www.brf.com.sg). Expect to pay around S\$16 for a one-way ticket to Batam, S\$24 to S\$36 to Bintan, Balai or Batu.

## GETTING AROUND Bicycle

Singapore has few hills, but the city's aggressive drivers make life on two wheels unpleasant. Happily, there is an ever expand-

ing network of bike paths connecting Singapore's many parks that will eventually stretch 300km around the island. The 12km bike path along East Coast Park makes a decent ride, but avoid weekends when it's extremely crowded. See the website of the **National Parks Board** (www.nparks.gov.sg/imgs/parkconnectors/sporemap.pdf) for a map of the bike paths.

Hire a decent mountain bike for S\$6 to S\$8 at one of the numerous hiring booths at East Coast Park. You can also get Rollerblade here too.

## Boat

A tour of the Singapore River in a bumboat (small motorised boat) strung with Chinese lanterns is a popular way to spend an hour and is especially romantic at night. **Singapore River Cruises** (☎ 6336 6111; www.rivercruise.com.sg) and **Singapore Explorer** (☎ 6339 6833; www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg) both charge S\$12/6 per adult/child for a half-hour tour, or S\$15/8 for a 45-minute tour, complete with a syrupy commentary pointing out the many historical landmarks. **Watertours** (☎ 6533 9811; www.watertours.com.sg) runs 2½-hour cruises around the coastline on a replica Chinese junk. Departing from HarbourFront Centre (Map pp650–1), there are day cruises at 10.30am and 3pm (adult/child S\$25/12) and a dinner cruise at 6.30pm (S\$53/27).

Bumboats also leave the Changi Point ferry terminal (Map pp650–1) for Pulau Ubin.

## Bus

Public buses run between 6am and midnight. Each bus stop has information on bus

numbers and routes, or check the bus company journey planners (www.sbstransit.com.sg; www.smrt.com.sg). Fares start from 80c and rise to a maximum of S\$1.70. When you board the bus, tell the driver where you're going, drop the exact money into the fare box (no change is given) and collect your ticket from the machine.

Ez-link cards (see Mass Rapid Transit, below) can be used on all buses and trains. You'll need to flash the card in front of the card reader when boarding the bus and again when leaving.

The **SIA Hop-On** (☎ 9457 2896; http://siahopon.asiaone.com.sg; 1-day ticket for Singapore Airlines passengers S\$3, nonpassengers adult/child S\$12/6) tourist bus does 19 loops of the city between 9am and 7.30pm, stopping at 21 points of interest.

## Car

Hiring a car in Singapore is easy, but with efficient public transport and parking a nightmare, it's completely pointless unless you plan to explore the outer reaches of the island. Expensive surcharges make it pricey to take a hire car into Malaysia, where rental cars are much cheaper anyway.

## Mass Rapid Transit

The ultramodern MRT subway system is the easiest, quickest and most comfortable way to get around. The system operates from 6am to midnight, with trains at peak times running every three minutes, and off-peak every six minutes.

Single-trip tickets cost from 90c to S\$1.90, but you have to pay a S\$1 deposit for every ticket, then redeem it at the end of the trip by feeding it back into the machine. If you're going to be using the MRT a lot, it's cheaper and more convenient to buy a S\$15 ez-link card from any MRT station (which includes a S\$5 deposit and S\$10 credit). This electronic card can be used on all public buses and trains. Fares using an ez-link card range from 66c to S\$1.75.

## Taxi

The major cab companies are **City Cab** (☎ 6552 2222), **Comfort** (☎ 6552 1111), **SMRT** (☎ 6555 8888) and **TransCab** (☎ 6553 3333).

Fares for most companies start from S\$2.40 for the first kilometre, then 10c for each additional 220m. There are various surcharges, eg for late-night services, air-

## STRANDED IN SINGAPORE

Despite the large number of cabs in Singapore, finding one in the city centre at peak hour, or when it's raining, or late at night, can be maddening. If you need an early-morning cab, book it the night before. In the city at night, the most reliable spots are:

- Circular Rd
- next to the Elgin Bridge at Boat Quay (before 1am)
- the bottom of Emerald Hill on Orchard Rd
- Clarke Quay
- outside major hotels (as a last resort)

If you're around the Bugis area, Chinatown, Little India or Suntec City at night, start praying.

port pick-ups and bookings, but they are still pretty cheap. You can flag down a taxi any time or use a taxi rank (there are signs in English) outside hotels and malls.

## TRISHAW

Bicycle trishaws congregate at popular tourist places, such as Raffles Hotel, the pedestrian mall at Waterloo and Albert Sts, Clarke Quay and the end of Sago Lane. Always agree on the fare beforehand, and expect to pay around S\$50 for half an hour.

# SINGAPORE

Grab a plastic chair, throw some supersweet coffee and *kaya* (coconut jam) toast down your gullet, and set out to explore the social phenomenon that is modern Singapore. Beneath the veneer of sameness and respectability are some surprising discoveries waiting to be made.

## ORIENTATION

The Singapore River cuts the city in two: south is the CBD and Chinatown, and to the north of the river is the Colonial District. The trendy Clarke and Robertson Quays, and the popular Boat Quay dining areas hug the riverbanks.

## GETTING TO INDONESIA & MALAYSIA

### To Indonesia

Ferries and speedboats run between Singapore and the Riau Archipelago in Indonesia; see above for details. Immigration is straightforward, though expect to pay for an Indonesian visa (US\$20 for three days) at the other end.

For travel in the reverse direction, see p267.

### To Malaysia

A 1km-long Causeway in the north, at Woodlands, connects Singapore with Johor Bahru in Malaysia. To the west a bridge connects the suburb of Tuas with Tanjung Kupang in Malaysia. Immigration procedures on both sides of the bridges are straightforward. See p653 for details of buses and trains heading across the border.

When travelling into Malaysia by train, passports are checked by Malaysian immigration at the Singapore train station (officially part of Malaysia) but *not* stamped. This should not be a problem when you leave Malaysia if you keep your train ticket and immigration card.

For travel in the reverse direction, see p456

**CITY CENTRE**

**INFORMATION**

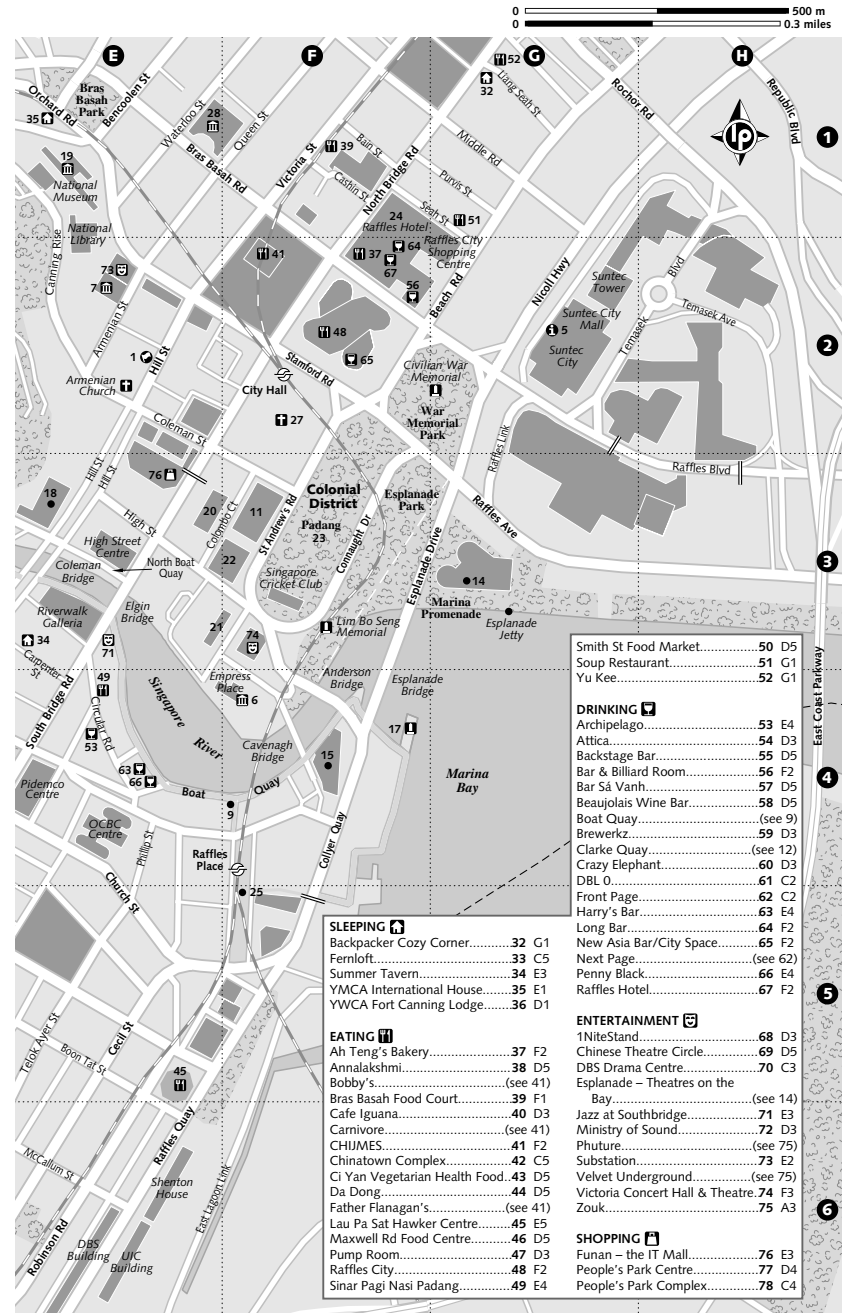
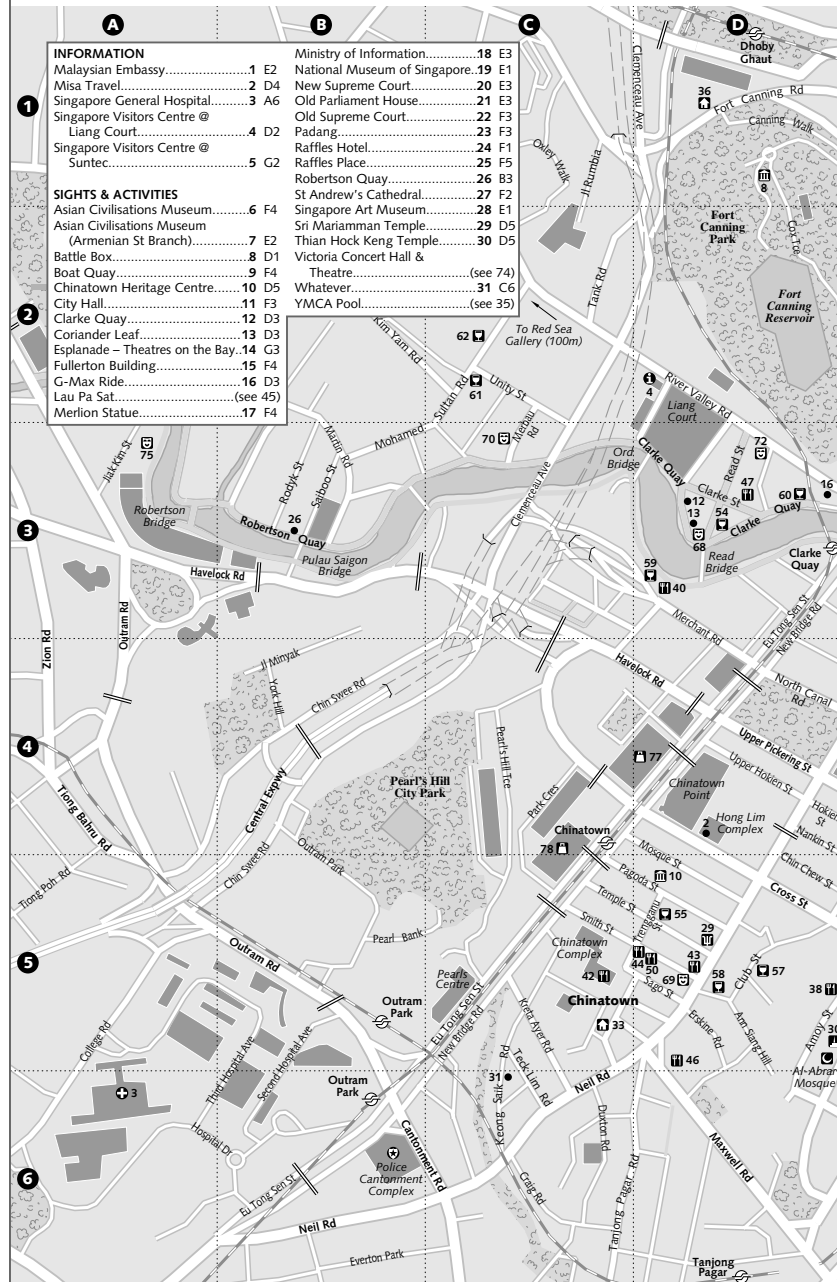
- 1 Malaysian Embassy.....1 E2
- 2 Misa Travel.....2 D4
- 3 Singapore General Hospital.....3 A6
- 4 Singapore Visitors Centre @ Suntec.....4 D2
- 5 Singapore Visitors Centre @ Suntec.....5 G2

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

- 6 Asian Civilisations Museum.....6 F4
- 7 Asian Civilisations Museum (Armenian St Branch).....7 E2
- 8 Battle Box.....8 D1
- 9 Boat Quay.....9 F4
- 10 Chinatown Heritage Centre.....10 D5
- 11 City Hall.....11 F3
- 12 Clarke Quay.....12 D3
- 13 Coriander Leaf.....13 D3
- 14 Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.....14 G3
- 15 Fullerton Building.....15 F4
- 16 G-Max Ride.....16 D3
- 17 Lau Pa Sat.....17 D5
- 18 Merlion Statue.....17 F4

**Ministry of Information.....18 E3**

- 19 National Museum of Singapore.....19 E1
- 20 New Supreme Court.....20 E3
- 21 Old Parliament House.....21 E3
- 22 Old Supreme Court.....22 F3
- 23 Padang.....23 F3
- 24 Raffles Hotel.....24 F1
- 25 Raffles Place.....25 F5
- 26 Robertson Quay.....26 B3
- 27 St Andrew's Cathedral.....27 F2
- 28 Singapore Art Museum.....28 E1
- 29 Sri Mariamman Temple.....29 D5
- 30 Thian Hock Keng Temple.....30 D5
- 31 Victoria Concert Hall & Theatre.....(see 74)
- 32 Whatever.....31 C6
- 33 YMCA Pool.....(see 35)



- 50 Smith St Food Market.....50 D5
- 51 Soup Restaurant.....51 G1
- 52 Yu Kee.....52 G1

- DRINKING**
- 53 Archipelago.....53 E4
  - 54 Attica.....54 D3
  - 55 Backstage Bar.....55 D5
  - 56 Bar & Billiard Room.....56 F2
  - 57 Bar Sà Vanh.....57 D5
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  - 59 Boat Quay.....(see 9)
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  - 61 Clarke Quay.....(see 12)
  - 62 Crazy Elephant.....60 D3
  - 63 DBL O.....61 C2
  - 64 Front Page.....62 C2
  - 65 Harry's Bar.....63 E4
  - 66 Long Bar.....64 F2
  - 67 New Asia Bar/City Space.....65 F2
  - 68 Next Page.....(see 62)
  - 69 Penny Black.....66 E4
  - 70 Raffles Hotel.....67 F2

- ENTERTAINMENT**
- 71 1NiteStand.....68 D3
  - 72 Chinese Theatre Circle.....69 D5
  - 73 DBS Drama Centre.....70 C3
  - 74 Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.....(see 14)
  - 75 Jazz at Southbridge.....71 E3
  - 76 Ministry of Sound.....72 D3
  - 77 Phuture.....(see 75)
  - 78 Chinatown Complex.....42 C5
  - 79 Ci Yan Vegetarian Health Food.....43 D5
  - 80 Da Dong.....44 D5
  - 81 Father Flanagan's.....(see 41)
  - 82 Lau Pa Sat Hawker Centre.....45 E5
  - 83 Maxwell Rd Food Centre.....46 D5
  - 84 Pump Room.....47 D3
  - 85 Raffles City.....48 F2
  - 86 Sinar Pagi Nasi Padang.....49 E4
  - 87 Suntec City Mall.....15 F5
  - 88 Suntec City.....15 F5
  - 89 Suntec Tower.....15 F5
  - 90 Suntec City Shopping Centre.....15 F5
  - 91 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 92 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 93 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 94 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 95 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 96 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 97 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 98 War Memorial Park.....14 G3
  - 99 War Memorial Park.....14 G3

- SHOPPING**
- 76 Funan – the IT Mall.....76 E3
  - 77 People's Park Centre.....77 D4
  - 78 People's Park Complex.....78 C4

## GETTING INTO TOWN

Changi Airport, about 20km from the city centre, is served by the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT). From Changi to City Hall is only S\$1.50 (28 minutes, every seven minutes, change train at Tanah Merah).

Public bus 36 leaves for the city approximately every 10 minutes between 6am and midnight, and takes about 45 minutes. Make sure you have the right change (S\$1.70) when you board.

Taxis from the airport pay a supplementary charge (S\$3 to S\$5) on top of the metered fare, which is around S\$18 to most places in the city centre.

Further north from the Colonial District is Little India and Kampong Glam, the Muslim quarter. Northwest of the Colonial District is Orchard Rd, Singapore's premier shopping centre.

To the west of the island, the predominantly industrial area of Jurong contains a number of tourist attractions. Heading south you'll find the recreational island of Sentosa.

Eastern Singapore has some interesting historical (and sleazy) suburbs such as Geylang and Katong, the large East Coast Park and Changi Airport. The central north of the island has much of Singapore's remaining forest and the zoo.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Borders** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 7146; 01-00 Wheelock Pl)  
**Kinokuniya** (Map p662; ☎ 6737 5021; www.kinokuniya.com.sg; 03-10/15 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd) Singapore's largest.

**Select Books** (Map p662; ☎ 6732 1515; www.selectbooks.com.sg; 03-15 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd) Specialises in Southeast Asian titles.

### Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 995)

**Fire** (☎ 995)

**Police** (☎ 999)

### Internet Access

Every backpacker hostel now offers internet access – the majority of them for free, some for a nominal charge. Travellers with laptops might consider signing up for Singapore's free wireless internet project, called Wireless@SG,

which will run until the end of 2008 (follow 'Internet' link at www.singtel.com).

## Medical Services

**KK Women's & Children's Hospital** (Map p661; ☎ 6293 4044; www.kkh.com.sg; 100 Bukit Timah Rd)

**Raffles SurgiCentre** (Map p661; ☎ 6334 3337; www.raffleshospital.com; 585 North Bridge Rd; ☎ 24hr)

**Singapore General Hospital** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6321 4311; Block 1, Outram Rd; ☎ 24hr)

## Money

Moneychangers can be found in every shopping centre and most do not charge fees on foreign money or travellers cheques. Many shops accept foreign cash and travellers cheques at lower rates than you'd get from a moneychanger.

## Post

Most tourist information centres sell stamps and post letters. Large post offices can be found at the following places:

**Concentre** (Map p662; 31 Exeter Rd)

**Lucky Plaza** (Map p662; 02-09 Lucky Plaza, Orchard Rd)

**Ngee Ann City** (Map p662; 04-15 Takashimaya, 391 Orchard Rd)

There's also a post office in Terminal 2 at Changi Airport.

## Tourist Information

**Singapore Tourism Board** (STB; www.visitsingapore.com; Singapore Tourism Board Head Office (Map p662; ☎ 1800-736 2000; 1 Orchard Spring Lane; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat); Singapore Visitors Centre @ Liang Court (Map pp656-7; 1st fl, Liang Court Shopping Centre, 177 River Valley Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm); Singapore Visitors Centre @ Little India (Map p661; ☎ 6296 9169; Inn Crowd, 73 Dunlop St; ☎ 10am-10pm); Singapore Visitors Centre @ Orchard (Map p662; ☎ 6336 7184; cnr Orchard & Cairnhill Rds; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm); Singapore Visitors Centre @ Suntec (Map pp656-7; Suntec City Mall; ☎ 10am-6pm) Most STB offices provide a wide range of services, including tour bookings and event ticketing.

## Travel Agencies

Here's a selection from Singapore's many travel agencies:

**Jetabout Holidays** (Map p662; ☎ 6822 2288, 6734 1818; 06-05 Cairnhill Pl; 15 Cairnhill Rd)

**Misa Travel** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6538 0318; 03-106 Hong Lim Complex, 531A Upper Cross St)

**STA Travel** (Map p662; ☎ 6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg; 07-02 Orchard Towers, 400 Orchard Rd)

## SIGHTS

### Colonial District

To the north of Singapore River is the Colonial District (Map pp656-7), where you'll find many imposing remnants of British rule, including **Victoria Concert Hall & Theatre**, **Old Parliament House** (now an arts centre), **St Andrew's Cathedral**, **City Hall**, and the **old Supreme Court**, which are arranged around the **Padang**, an old cricket pitch. Rising above them is the spaceship of the new Norman Foster-designed **Supreme Court** building.

Nearby, the state-of-the-art **Asian Civilisations Museum** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6332 7789; www.acm.org.sg; 1 Empress Pl; adult/child & concession S\$5/2.50; ☎ 1-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-9pm Fri) has 10 thematic galleries that explore different aspects of Asian culture, from the Islamic world to Japanese *anime*. At the **Armenian St branch** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6332 3015; 39 Armenian St; adult/child & concession S\$3/1.50; ☎ 1-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-9pm Fri) permanent displays include Peranakan culture, Chinese ceramics and Buddhist artefacts. A combined ticket for both branches costs S\$6/\$3 per adult/child and concession, while there is discounted admission between 7pm and 9pm on Fridays.

The sparkling white Victorian splendour of the **National Museum of Singapore** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6332 3659; www.nationalmuseum.sg; 93 Stamford Rd; adult/child S\$10/5; ☎ 10am-9pm), with its architecturally brilliant modern annex, is well worth a look, too. The Singapore History Gallery could easily consume a day, while the four Living Galleries are equally fascinating – particularly the Food room. Between 6pm and 9pm you can visit the Living Galleries for free. Entry to the building itself is also free.

The spiky metallic roof of **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6828 8222; www.esplanade.com; 1 Esplanade Dr) has earned it the nickname of the 'big durians'. It attracts Singaporeans for its performing-arts spaces, arts library and shops, but mostly for its restaurants.

**Raffles Hotel** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 1886; www.raffles.com; 1 Beach Rd) is a Singaporean icon that should not be missed. Most tourists head to the famous Long Bar (p667) to sit under the ceiling fans and chuck peanut shells on the floor, but if you want a quieter, more authentic atmosphere, go the **Bar & Billiard Room**. The hotel is open to nonguests, though tie-dye shirts and flip-flops will make you unwelcome.

Three blocks west of Raffles Hotel, the **Singapore Art Museum** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6332 3222; www.museum.org.sg/sam; 71 Bras Basah Rd; adult/child S\$3/1.50; ☎ noon-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-9pm Fri) is in St Joseph's Institution, a former Catholic boys' school, and hosts world-class exhibitions.

**Fort Canning Park** (Map pp656-7) offers a wonderfully peaceful, leafy retreat from the broiling masses below. The **Battle Box** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6333 0510; 51 Canning Rise; adult/child S\$8/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is a warren of 26 underground rooms and tunnels that once served as a British base during WWII. A lengthy audiovisual exhibition tells the story of the fall of Singapore in 1942.

## CBD & the Quays

South of the river is the CBD, the financial pulse of Singapore. Once the city's vibrant heart, **Raffles Place** (Map pp656-7) is now a rare patch of grass surrounded by the gleaming towers of commerce. At the river mouth is the freakish **Merlion statue** (Map pp656-7), a bizarre hybrid lion/fish creature cooked up in the 1960s as a tourism icon for the Singapore Tourism Board. And you thought they'd banned drugs.

Along the quays are several kiosks offering river and harbour cruises taking you past Empress Place and the **Fullerton Building** (Map pp656-7), the former general post office now reborn as one of the city's top hotels. Further south along the waterfront is **Lau Pa Sat** (Map pp656-7; 18 Raffles Quay) hawker centre, an impressive rotunda of Victorian ironwork.

The latest darling among Singapore's fickle night-trippers is **Clarke Quay** (Map pp656-7), a strip of former warehouses dating back to the river's days as a trading hub and now home to popular bars, restaurants and clubs. Once out of favour, it's been startlingly redeveloped, with horrible Dr Seuss-like lily pad riverside decks and imposing futuristic canopies designed to keep the area cool. **Boat Quay** (Map pp656-7) and **Robertson Quay** (Map pp656-7) are known for their nightspots and eateries.

## Chinatown

Bustling Chinatown is crammed with small shops, eateries and tradition, though the tradition is gradually disappearing under a wave of renovation and regeneration. Some of it is good (the restored shophouses), some

### TOP FIVE WAYS TO VISIT SINGAPORE CHEAPLY

- Always eat at hawker centres or food courts.
- Visit the museums after 6pm, and catch free concerts at the Esplanade.
- Pack a picnic and spend a day at the beach in East Coast Park or Sentosa.
- Only drink at hawker centres, or during bar happy hours.
- Take a hike on Bukit Timah.

**Istana Kampong Glam** is the former palace of the last Sultan of Singapore, recently restored and turned into the **Malay Heritage Centre** (Map p661; ☎ 6391 0450; www.malayheritage.org.sg; 85 Sultan Gate; admission adult/child S\$3/2, cultural show S\$10/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, 1-6pm Mon). The museum contains a moderately interesting exhibition on Malay culture.

### Orchard Road Area

No-one visits Orchard Rd for the sights, though the Christmas light displays are breathtaking. The only major historical site is the **Istana** (President's Palace; Map p662; ☎ 6737 5522; Orchard Rd) but it's only open on selected public holidays.

When you're about to lose your mind from retail overload, the expansive, serene **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (Map p662; ☎ 6471 7361; www.sbg.org.sg; 1 Cluny Rd; admission free; ☎ 5am-midnight) is a beautiful spot to rest and revive.

### East Coast & Changi

**Changi Village** (Map pp650-1) is the jumping-off point for the rural retreat of **Pulau Ubin** (Map pp650-1). Boats (one way S\$2, 15 minutes) run 24/7 and depart for the island whenever there are 12 people to fill one. Once at the island's sleepy village you can hire a bicycle (S\$5 to S\$10, depending on condition) to explore this last undeveloped pocket of Singapore. Take the MRT to Tanah Merah and get bus 2 or 29 to Changi Village.

### Northern & Central Singapore

Nestled among the forests of central Singapore, the superb **Singapore Zoological Gardens** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6269 3411; www.zoo.com.sg; 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$15/7.50; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) has an open concept. The baboon enclosure and free-ranging orangutans are a highlight, as is the Fragile Forest, a large netted section of forest where you can have close encounters with free-ranging lemurs. Next door is the **Night Safari** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6269 3411; www.nightsafari.com.sg; adult/child S\$15.45/10.30; ☎ 7.30pm-midnight), a 40-hectare forested park where you view nocturnal animals, including tigers, lions and leopards.

### Southern & Western Singapore

For a beautiful view, walk up 116m **Mt Faber** (Map pp650-1), then catch the **cable car** (☎ 6270 8855; www.cablecar.com.sg; adult/child S\$8.50/3.90; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) to the HarbourFront Centre or across to Sentosa Island.

of it is not (the overkill of the Pagoda St tourist market). One highlight is the **Thian Hock Keng Temple** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6423 4626; 158 Telok Ayer St; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm), Singapore's oldest Hokkien building. Chinatown's most recognised and photographed icon, oddly, is the colourful **Sri Mariamman Temple** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6223 4064; 244 South Bridge Rd; ☎ 7.30-11.30am & 5.30-8.30pm), Singapore's oldest Hindu house of worship.

For a peek into the past, the excellent **Chinatown Heritage Centre** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6325 2878; www.chinatownheritage.com.sg; 48 Pagoda St; adult/child S\$8/4.80; ☎ 10am-7pm) is crammed with interactive, imaginative displays.

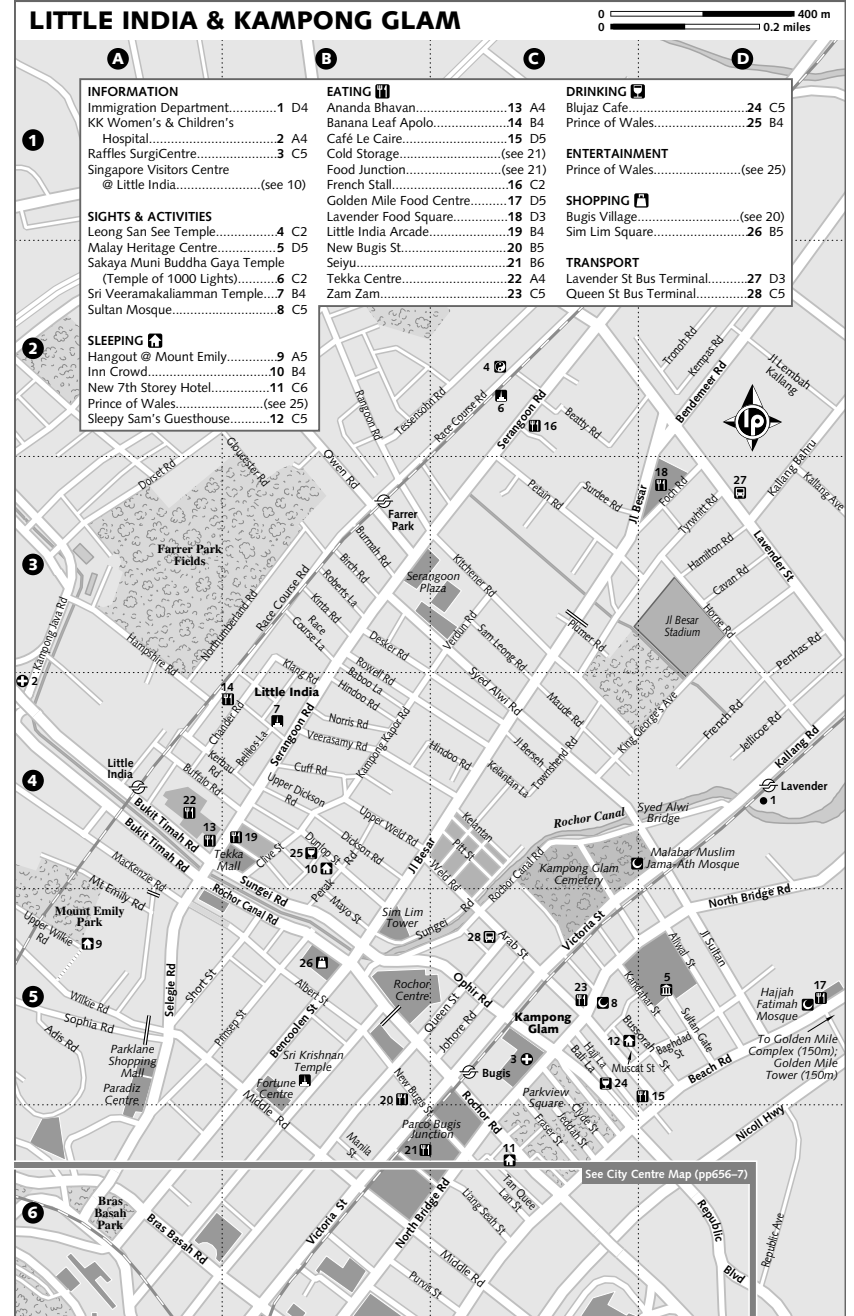
### Little India & Kampong Glam

Disorderly and pungent, Little India is a world away from the rest of Singapore. The area is wandering the little side streets and soaking it all in. For temple hounds there is the **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (Map p661; ☎ 6293 4634; 141 Serangoon Rd; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4-8.30pm), dedicated to the goddess Kali.

Further out is the Thai Buddhist **Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** (Map p661; ☎ 6294 0714; 366 Race Course Rd; ☎ 8am-4.45pm), popularly known as the Temple of 1000 Lights. It houses a 15m-high seated Buddha. Across the road is the **Taoist Leong San See temple** (Map p661; ☎ 6298 9371; 371 Race Course Rd; ☎ 6am-6pm), built in 1917 and beautifully decorated with carved timber beams.

Southeast of Little India is Kampong Glam, Singapore's Muslim quarter. Here you'll find Malaysian and Indonesian shops and the golden-domed **Sultan Mosque** (Map p661; ☎ 6293 4405; 3 Muscat St; ☎ 5am-8.30pm), the biggest mosque in Singapore.

## LITTLE INDIA & KAMPONG GLAM



**ORCHARD ROAD**

**INFORMATION**

1	A3	American Embassy	14	C3	Food Republic	23	D3
	2	Singapore Tourism Board Head Office	15	B3	Newtown Food Centre	24	E2
	3	British High Commission	16	E4	Picnic at Scott's	25	D3
	4	Singapore Visitor's Centre @ Orchard	17	C3	Takashimaya Food Village	26	B3
	5	German Embassy	18	C3	Tanglin Market Place	27	E4
	6	Indonesian Embassy	19	F3	<b>DRINKING</b>	28	E4
	7	Irish Embassy	20	A2	Alley Bar	29	E4
	8	Japanese Embassy	21	C3	Dubliners	30	E4
	9	Jetabout Holidays	22	F4	Ice Cold Beer	31	C3
	10	Knokunmya (see 36)	23	D3	No 5	32	D3
	11	Laotan Embassy	24	E2	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>		
	12	New Zealand Embassy	25	D3	CalendarOne		
	13	Post Office (Comcentre)	26	B3	Bombay Woodlands		
	14	Post Office (Lucky Plaza)	27	E4	Carrefour		
	15	Post Office (Ngee Ann City) (see 36)	28	E4	TicketCharge		
	16		29	E4	Sis.ic		
	17		30	E4			
	18		31	C3			
	19		32	D3			
	20		33	D3			
	21		34	E4			
	22		35	D3			
	23		36	D3			
	24		37	D3			
	25		38	C3			
	26		39	D3			

**SHOPPING**

(see 3)	Apple Store
33	Far East Plaza
34	Heeren
35	Lucky Plaza
36	Ngee Ann City
37	Paragon
38	Wheelock Place
39	Wisma Atria

**Jurong Bird Park** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6265 0022; www.birdpark.com.sg; 2 Jurong Hill; adult/child S\$14/7; ⌚ 8am-6pm) offers impressive enclosures and beautifully landscaped gardens for over 8000 birds. Get here on bus 194 or 251 from Boon Lay MRT station.

## Sentosa Island

Once a dismal flop, the island of **Sentosa** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 1800-736 8672; www.sentosa.com.sg; admission S\$3; ⌚ 7am-midnight) was resurrected under the guidance of an American and is now a roaring success. By 2010 it will host one of Singapore's two casino resorts and a Universal Studios theme park.

Lazing on the imported-sand beaches is the cheapest option, but if you want to experience the attractions, our favourite is racing on the **Sentosa Luge** (Map pp650-1; luge & chairlift \$9, or 3 rides for \$16; ⌚ 10am-9.30pm), which allows you to hurtle recklessly down a winding track from the cable-car station to the beach, and go back up again on a chairlift affording fantastic views. Other worthwhile attractions include the **Underwater World** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6275 0030; www.underwaterworld.com.sg; adult/child S\$19.50/12.50; ⌚ 9am-9pm) aquarium, though it is often unbearably crowded. The ticket also includes a pass to see the performing pink dolphins at **Dolphin Lagoon** (Map pp650-1; ⌚ shows 11.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm & 5.30pm). The former military base **Fort Siloso** (Map pp650-1; adult/child S\$8/5; ⌚ 10am-6pm) re-creates the Japanese invasion and occupation. History buffs might also enjoy the visual displays of Singapore's past at the **Images of Singapore** (Map pp650-1; adult/child S\$10/7; ⌚ 9am-7pm), while kids will prefer the visuals at **Sentosa 4D Magix** (adult/child \$16/9.50; ⌚ 10am-9pm).

A free shuttle coach leaves for Sentosa regularly from behind HarbourFront MRT station (follow the signs), but the best bet is the new Sentosa Express light rail, which runs between 7am and 11.45pm and takes you from the VivoCity shopping centre next to the MRT station to the beach. For a more spectacular ride, take the cable car (adult/child S\$10.90/5.50 return) from the World Trade Centre, also signposted from the MRT station.

## ACTIVITIES

Though the national pastimes are probably shopping and eating, there are opportunities for athletic, outdoorsy types. To find out more about sports and activities in Singapore check out www.ssc.gov.sg.

## Trekking & Cycling

There are good trails in **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 1800-468 5736; www.nparks.gov.sg; ⌚ 8.30am-6pm), the only large area of primary rainforest left in Singapore. Pulau Ubin also has a few good trails. Or try MacRitchie Nature Reserve. The best spot for cycling is definitely East Coast Park, though it's packed at weekends. For off-road action, **Detour Outdoors** (☎ 6243 1174; www.detouroutdoors.com; 1/2-day tours S\$75/130) runs bike tours to Pulau Bintan, in Indonesia.

## Water Sports

Sea-sports-lovers can head to one of the **PA Sea Sports Clubs** (www.water-venture.org.sg) to rent sailing boats, windsurfers and kayaks – though you'll need to show some certification. Wakeboarders and water-skiers should check out the **Ski360** (Map pp650-1; www.ski360degree.com; per hr S\$30) circuit at East Coast Park Lagoon.

For **swimming** there are reasonable beaches on Sentosa and East Coast Park. The latter holds regular **triathlons** (www.triathlonsingapore.org). Or you can do a few laps at the **YMCA pool** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6336 6000; www.ymca.org.sg; 1 Orchard Rd).

## Other Activities

The eatery **Whatever** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6221 0300; www.whatever.com.sg; 31 Keong Saik Rd; 2hr class S\$25) offers drop-in Ashtanga and Hatha yoga classes.

For a real adrenaline rush, strap yourself into the reverse bungee **G-Max Ride** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 9385 0697; River Valley Rd; adult/student S\$30/25; ⌚ 5-9pm).

## COURSES

There are a few short-term options for the casual cooking enthusiast.

**Cookery Magic** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6348 9667; www.cookerymagic.com; JI Tembusu, Katong; classes from S\$60) Try this excellent place, which offers a large range of Asian cooking classes.

**Coriander Leaf** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6732 3354; www.corianderleaf.com; 02-03 3A River Valley Rd; 1-day courses from S\$110) Another cookery course is run by this Asian fusion restaurant, which teaches various cuisines in batches of eight recipes per class.

## TOURS

If you only have a few days, some worthwhile tours offer a peek underneath the city's modern veneer. Best of all are the **Original Singapore Walks** (☎ 6325 1631; www.singaporewalks.com; half-day



**SCARE YOUR PANTS OFF**

For the last few years, **Singapore Paranormal Investigators** ([www.spi.com.sg/news/tours/index.htm](http://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 [gghoulis@spi.org.sg](mailto:gghoulis@spi.org.sg) for upcoming trips.

adult/child from S\$25/15), which offer insightful tours of Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam, the Colonial District and even Singapore's battlefields.

**FESTIVALS & EVENTS**

Singapore's multicultural population celebrates an amazing number of festivals and events. For details on public holidays in Singapore, see p672.

**Chinese New Year** The major festival, held in January/February. Look out for parades throughout Chinatown and festive foods in shops.

**Singapore Food Festival** ([www.singaporefoodfestival.com](http://www.singaporefoodfestival.com)) This month-long festival in March and April celebrates eating, and is held at hawker centres and gourmet restaurants.

**Great Singapore Sale** During this sale, held around July, merchants drop prices to boost Singapore's image as a shopping destination.

**SLEEPING**

Once, budget room hunters in Singapore were limited to flea-bitten flophouses, but thankfully these days there are excellent hostels and guesthouses even in the more expensive parts of the city. Unless otherwise stated, prices are for shared bathrooms.

**Colonial District**

**Backpacker Cozy Corner** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6338 8826, 6224 6859; [www.cozycornerguest.com](http://www.cozycornerguest.com); 490 North Bridge Rd; dm/s S\$8/28; ☎ ☑) It's not exactly homy, but the owners are generally friendly and at these prices you can hardly be fussy. Add S\$4/17 if you want an air-con dorm/private room and watch out for hidden surcharges on the 'facilities'.

**YMCA International House** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6336 6000; [www.ymca.org.sg](http://www.ymca.org.sg); 1 Orchard Rd; dm incl breakfast S\$30; ☎ ☑) Even after you add on the S\$3.15 temporary membership, the Y's spacious

dorms are a steal, coming with a pool and a perfect central location. There are also hotel-quality rooms, at hotel-quality prices.

**YWCA Fort Canning Lodge** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6338 4222; [reservations@ywcacfododge.org.sg](http://reservations@ywcacfododge.org.sg); 6 Fort Canning Rd; dm S\$57.75; ☎ ☑) With facilities similar to YMCA International House, and an equally fine location, this is a decent option. The five-bed dorms are girls-only and come with air-con, TV and attached bathrooms.

**CBD & the Quays**

**Summer Tavern** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6535 6601; [www.summertavern.com](http://www.summertavern.com); 31 Carpenter St; dm/d incl breakfast S\$30/60; ☎ ☑) The dorms are a little too cramped, but the location, close to the river, Chinatown and the Colonial District, is tough to beat. The price, with free internet and local calls, is decent too. The downstairs bar, done out like an olde taverne, is cheap and popular.

**Chinatown**

**Fernloft** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6323 3221; [www.fernloft.com](http://www.fernloft.com); 02-92, Block 5, Banda St; dm/d S\$18/45) A pleasant hostel smack in the middle of 'old' Chinatown (the part not yet hit by the redevelopment craze). Dorms are standard and functional, but the double rooms are particularly good value.

**Little India & Kampong Glam**

**New 7th Storey Hotel** (Map p661; ☎ 6337 0251; [www.nsshotel.com](http://www.nsshotel.com); 229 Rochor Rd; dm S\$17, d S\$53-80; ☎ ☑) This well-run hotel has four-bed dorms, some with access out onto scenic balconies. Doubles (shared or private bathroom) are spacious and clean and have individual TVs. A panoramic rooftop garden and bike rental (from S\$2.50 per hour) are bonuses.

**Prince of Wales** (Map p661; ☎ 6299 0130; [www.pow.com.sg](http://www.pow.com.sg); cnr Dunlop & Madras Sts; dm/d S\$18/42) Functional, good-value rooms above a friendly Australian pub, with a free beer thrown in. Stay here only if you're willing to listen to live bands every night.

**Inn Crowd** (Map p661; ☎ 6296 9169; [www.the-inn-crowd.com](http://www.the-inn-crowd.com); 73 Dunlop St; dm/d incl breakfast S\$18/48; ☎ ☑) Extremely popular for its Little India location, friendly atmosphere and very cheap dorm, The Inn Crowd bills itself as the backpacker party spot – and does pretty well at it. Rates include use of a locker and free internet access, and it has a wealth of travel information on hand.

**Sleepy Sam's Guesthouse** (Map p661; ☎ 9277 4988; [www.sleepysams.com](http://www.sleepysams.com); 55 Bussorah Rd; dm/s/d incl breakfast

S\$25/45/69; ☎) By far the most peaceful of the area's hostels, Sam's dorms and rooms are a bit cramped, but the location on this pedestrianised strip of restored heritage shophouses in the Muslim quarter more than makes up for it. It's blissfully quiet at night. Includes free internet.

**Our pick Hangout@Mount Emily** (Map p661; ☎ 6438 5588; [www.hangouthotels.com](http://www.hangouthotels.com); 10A Upper Wilkie Rd; dm S\$35, d with private bathroom S\$88, all incl breakfast; ☎ ☑) For state-of-the-art hostelling you can't beat the Hangout. Clean, ultramodern rooms with dorm beds (not bunks) are a treat, plus there's free internet and gym. The only downside is the hike up the steps – not too easy with a hefty bag, or after a long, hot day in the city. Book online and the dorm/double rate is S\$25/76.

**East Coast**

**Fernloft** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6449 9066; [www.fernloft.com](http://www.fernloft.com); 693A East Coast Rd; dm/d S\$18/45) Bright orange, very friendly and a short walk from the beach at East Coast, this is an excellent alternative to staying in the city, with the added appeal of a cheap pub on the ground floor.

**Betel Box** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6247 7340; [www.betelbox.com](http://www.betelbox.com); 200 Joo Chiat Rd; dm/d S\$18/50) Not far from the city, this top-notch hostel occupies an old shophouse in the historic Katong district. The dorms are a little stark, but the communal area is warm and welcoming, and its food and drinking tours of the area are recommended.

**EATING**

Eating probably ranks above shopping as Singapore's national obsession – and nowhere is that obsession more apparent than in the city's ubiquitous hawker centres and food courts. For budget travellers, these places are a blessing. Dishes rarely cost more than S\$5 (unless you're eating seafood) and each centre has a huge variety of cuisines, including Malay, South Indian, Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew and Indonesian. The choice is endless. There are also countless excellent restaurants, though your costs are going to spiral up to at least S\$12 per plate.

**Colonial District**

**Ah Teng's Bakery** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 1886; Raffles Complex, 1 Beach Rd; tea & pastries S\$12; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm) One of the Raffles Hotel eateries, this splendid genteel café, serving up scones, pastries and even dim sum, looks like the sort of place

your grandmother used to frequent before the war. For shoestringers, it's about the only opportunity to experience Raffles without busting your wallet.

**Soup Restaurant** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6333 9388; 39 Seah St; meals S\$15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Specialises in MSG-free, double-boiled herbal soups (all under S\$12) and luscious Samsui ginger chicken (entrée/main S\$13/24).

**CHIJMES** (Map pp656-7; 30 Victoria St) is, bizarrely, a former convent beautifully converted into a den of worldly pleasure housing more than 20 bars, restaurants and clubs set around a Gothic chapel. Try well-known rib joint **Bobby's** (☎ 6337 5477; mains S\$20-30; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 5.30-11pm), popular Irish pub-cum-eatery **Father Flanagan's** (☎ 6333 1418; mains S\$15-25; ☎ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) and Brazilian meat-fest **Carnivore** (☎ 6334 9332; mains S\$14-30; ☎ noon-10.30pm).

Also try the following food centres: **Bras Basah Food Court** (Map pp656-7; 232 Victoria St; ☎ 7am-9pm)

**Food Junction** (Map p661; 200 Victoria St) In the basement of Seiyu.

**New Bugis St** (Map p661; New Bugis St)

**Raffles City** (Map pp656-7; 3rd fl, 252 North Bridge Rd)

The supermarket **Cold Storage** (Map p661; [www.coldstorage.com.sg](http://www.coldstorage.com.sg); Seiyu Department Store, 200 Victoria St) has several branches across the city.

**CBD & the Quays**

**Yu Kee** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 7525; cnr Liang Seah St & North Bridge Rd; mains S\$3-7; ☎ 7am-11pm Sun-Thu, to 2pm Fri & Sat) Hugely popular and usually packed, Yu Kee does great duck rice (S\$3). Friday and Saturday nights see a devoted crowd of cab drivers and clubbers slurping down the Katong *laksa* (noodles served in a rich, spicy coconut broth with prawns, cockles, fried bean curd and bean sprouts; S\$3).

**Sinar Pagi Nasi Padang** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6536 5302; 13 Circular Rd; meals S\$4-6; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Fri, noon-4am Sat) For spicy, simple Indonesian with red-hot *sambal* (relish) and plenty of fish, you can't go past this down-to-earth place. Perfect for a cheap late-night feed.

**Pump Room** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6334 2628; 01-09 Clarke Quay; mains from S\$12; ☎ 11.30am-3am) This micro-brewery has an excellent Australian-style menu to accompany its very drinkable beers and live music. A good night out.

**Cafe Iguana** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6236 1275; 01-03 Riverside Point; mains S\$13-27; ☎ 6pm-1am Mon-Thu,

6pm-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat, noon-1am Sun) Unpromisingly large, Iguana manages to dish up the best Mexican food in Singapore, made all the better for the riverside location and the 100-plus varieties of tequila, which are half price before 9pm.

Famous for its renovated Victorian market building, **Lau Pa Sat** (Map pp656-7; 18 Raffles Quay; ☎ 24hr) hawker centre can be so bewildering it even has street numbers.

## Chinatown

**Da Dong** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6221 3822; 39 Smith St; yum cha S\$2.80-4.80, mains S\$12-20; ☎ 7am-11pm) Grab a serve of the celebrated dim sum from the steamer trolleys that are wheeled to your table in old-school Chinese style. Quick service and excellent food have made this a local legend.

**Ci Yan Vegetarian Health Food** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6225 9026; 2 Smith St; mains S\$4-6; ☎ noon-10.30pm) Delicious concoctions of tofu and steamed veggies pour out of this place, all served on hearty brown rice for the fibre-conscious.

**Annalakshmi** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6223 0809; 104 Amoy St; ☎ 11am-7pm) A real gem, serving up Indian vegetarian buffets on an 'eat as you like, pay as you feel' basis (S\$5 per head is acceptable). It's run by volunteers and profits help support various charities.

Explore the overwhelming options at the following food centres:

**Chinatown Complex** (Map pp656-7; cnr Sago & Trengganu Sts; ☎ 24hr)

**Maxwell Rd Food Centre** (Map pp656-7; cnr South Bridge & Maxwell Rds; ☎ 24hr) Famous for the Tian Tian chicken rice at stall 10.

**Smith St Food Market** (Map pp656-7; Smith St; 6pm-midnight) The seafood stall near the South Bridge Rd end is excellent.

## Little India & Kampong Glam

**Ananda Bhavan** (Map pp661; ☎ 6297 9522; 58 Serangoon Rd; mains from S\$3; ☎ 7.30am-10pm) There are several branches of this superlative South Indian vegetarian eatery, which serves up excellent *idli* (rice dumplings), *thali* (traditional 'all-you-can-eat' meals) and *dosa* (paper-thin lentil-flour pancakes) and lots of Indian sweets. Order at the counter, present your ticket to the chefs, then wait for your number to come up.

**Zam Zam** (Map pp661; ☎ 6298 7011; 699 North Bridge Rd; murtabak S\$4; ☎ 7am-11pm) Around a century old, Zam Zam has been churning out *murtabak*

(flaky flat bread stuffed with mutton, chicken or vegetables, with spicy sauce) forever – and it's pretty good at it.

**Banana Leaf Apollo** (Map pp661; ☎ 6293 8682; 54-58 Race Course Rd; meals from S\$6; ☎ 10am-10pm) The runaway winner among Singapore's many fish-head curry joints. If the dish sounds terrible, this place will make you change your mind. You can either order à la carte (fish-head curry costs from S\$18) or wait for the waiters to bring around buckets of various curries, all served onto banana leaves.

**Cafe Le Caire** (Map pp661; ☎ 6292 0979; 39 Arab St; mains S\$6-12, shisha S\$12; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A small shop, set up by a two-star Michelin chef who decided to bring superb French food to Singapore at the kind of prices that might buy you a starter in the city's other French restaurants.

**French Stall** (Map pp661; ☎ 6299 3544; 544 Serangoon Rd; mains from S\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A small shop, set up by a two-star Michelin chef who decided to bring superb French food to Singapore at the kind of prices that might buy you a starter in the city's other French restaurants.

**Golden Mile Complex** (off Map pp661; ☎ 10am-10pm) Has many Thai food stalls.

**Golden Mile Food Centre** (Map pp661; 505 Beach Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) Offers a wide range of local specialities.

**Lavender Food Square** (Map pp661; Jl Besar; ☎ 24hr)

**Little India Arcade** (Map pp661; Serangoon Rd; ☎ 7am-late)

**Tekka Centre** (Map pp661; cnr Serangoon & Buffalo Rds; ☎ 10am-10pm)

## Orchard Road Area

**ourpick** **Samy's Curry Restaurant** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6472 2080; Civil Service Clubhouse, Dempsey Rd; dishes from S\$3; ☎ noon-10pm) A Singaporean institution and well worth the effort to get here. Housed in an old wooden army mess hall, this banana-leaf curry joint is magnificent. Grab a table and the waiters will come round with silver buckets of curry (they always bring the most expensive stuff first). A veggie meal will cost around S\$3 to S\$4, meat a fair bit more.

**Bombay Woodlands** (Map pp662; ☎ 6235 2712; B01/02, Tanglin Shopping Centre, Tanglin Rd; mains from S\$6; ☎ 9.30am-10m) Boasting a charm not often found in shopping centres, this gem serves up S\$14 thalis big enough to feed a family.

**Din Tai Fung** (Map pp662; ☎ 6836 8336; B1-03/06 Paragon Bldg, 290 Orchard Rd; mains S\$8-17; ☎ 10am-10pm) Originally from Taiwan, Din Tai Fung is famous for its dumplings, but its *wonton* noodle soups are also excellent.

Most malls have food courts, usually in the basement. Try the following:

**Picnic at Scott's** (Map pp662; Scott's Shopping Centre, 6 Scott's Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) The city's first air-con hawker centre and still among the best.

**Food Republic** (Map pp662; Wisma Atria; 435 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) Slightly upmarket food court, with views along Orchard Rd.

**Newton Food Centre** (Map pp662; Scott's Rd; ☎ 24hr) Outdoor dining and excellent chilli stingray.

**Takashimaya Food Village** (Map pp662; Takashimaya, Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Self-catering? **Tanglin Market Place** (Map pp662; Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) is popular with expats. **Carrefour** (Map pp662; Plaza Singapura, 68 Orchard Rd) is an outlet of the French hypermarket chain.

## DRINKING

Drinking is an expensive pastime. The cheapest way to drink is to park yourself in a hawker centre, where beers cost S\$5 to S\$6 for a large bottle. If you're hitting the bars and clubs, start early: happy hours generally finish at 9pm, with some bars adding a late-night happy hour after midnight or 1am. Many bars offer additional cheap deals, including 'house pours' (their choice of wines/spirits) and Ladies' Nights (cheap drinks for women, which attracts lots of men). The main party places include Mohamed Sultan Rd, Clarke and Boat Quays, and Emerald Hill Rd off Orchard Rd. Most bars open from 5pm daily until at least midnight Sunday to Thursday, and 2am on Friday and Saturday.

## Colonial District

**Raffles Hotel** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 1886; raffles@raffles.com; 1 Beach Rd) It's a compulsory cliché to sink a Singapore sling (S\$16, or S\$25 with a souvenir glass) in the Long Bar (open 11am to 12.30am), but for a less touristy experience head for the century-old snooker tables at the Bar & Billiard Room (open 11.30am to 12.30am), where you can almost hear Somerset Maugham clacking away on his typewriter in the courtyard.

**New Asia Bar/City Space** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6431 5672; Swissôtel the Stamford, 2 Stamford Rd) The breathtaking views from this noisy, fashionable bar on the

70th floor of the Swissôtel make the drink prices worthwhile, but be warned there are strict dress codes and a S\$25 cover charge on Fridays and Saturdays. Alternatively, go to City Space next door for armchairs, Cuban cigars, port and piano music. Very civilised.

## CBD & the Quays

Falling into disrepair a few years ago, Clarke Quay has been breathtakingly revamped, and is now far and away the most popular nightspot in Singapore, along with Riverside Point across the river. As much as we loathe the gaudy lily pads along the riverfront – and the dubious space-age canopy designed to give the area 'outdoor air conditioning' – we have to admit it's done a good job in luring the punters back.

**Brewerkz** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6438 7438; www.brewerkz.com; 01-05 Riverside Point Centre, 30 Merchant Rd) Don't be put off by the size of this sprawling riverside microbrewery; it's the perfect spot to settle in for a night's drinking and some very good food. Unusually for a place this big in Singapore, the service is excellent too. Check out the lunchtime happy hours, when pints go for S\$3.

**Archipelago** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6327 8408; www.archipelagobrewery.com; 79 Circular Rd) Another fine microbrewery, serving up refreshing beers with an Asian accent that incorporate ingredients like lemongrass and *gulu melaka* (palm sugar).

**Crazy Elephant** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 1990; 01-07 Clarke Quay) One of Clarke Quay's oldest and best bars, the grungy Elephant has been bashing out live blues and rock forever.

Boat Quay is a popular haunt for expat city workers. The British-style **Penny Black** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6538 2300; 26/27 Boat Quay) gets very busy, as does **Harry's Bar** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6538 3029; 28 Boat Quay) next door, a relaxed jazz pub that has been a longtime favourite and now has branches all over the city.

The Mohamed Sultan Rd area is a popular spot for a bar crawl, though bars have a cover charge (around S\$10) after 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays. Longtime haunts include **Front Page** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6238 7826; 17/18 Mohamed Sultan Rd), and the adjoining **Next Page** (Map pp656-7; Mohamed Sultan Rd), which is good for serious drinking in big comfy chairs. **DBLO** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6735 2008; 01-24, 11 Unity St) is a raucous club well known for its cheap drinks.

## Chinatown

Tanjong Pagar Rd has an active gay and lesbian bar scene and welcomes drinkers regardless of their sexuality.

The sophisticated bars of Club St are housed in attractive, restored shophouses (many are closed Sunday).

**Backstage Bar** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6227 1712; 13A Trengganu St; ☎ 7pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) This gay and lesbian hang-out has a breezy balcony with great views of the street below.

**Bar Sá Vanh** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6323 0503; 49A Club St) Ultratrendy, dim-lit bar with a water wall, koi pond and lots of Buddhas.

**Beaujolais Wine Bar** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6224 2227; 1 Ann Siang Hill) A tiny, friendly little shophouse bar that feels like it was plucked out of a small French town.

## Little India & Kampong Glam

**Prince of Wales** (Map p661; ☎ 6299 0130; www.pow.com.sg; cnr Dunlop & Madras Sts) The drinking scene in Little India is quiet, but the Australian-style Prince of Wales has drink specials and regular live bands.

**Blujaz Cafe** (Map p661; ☎ 6292 3800; 1 Bali Lane) One of the few places to get alcohol in Kampong Glam – a relaxed, friendly bar next door to an artists' commune, with occasional live jazz.

## Orchard Road Area

**Dubliners** (Map p662; ☎ 6735 2220; 165 Penang Rd) Housed in a colonial plantation mansion, this spit and sawdust pub is a warm and welcoming retreat from the Orchard bustle.

Emerald Hill has a collection of bars in the renovated shophouses just off Orchard Rd, including the cool **Alley Bar** (Map p662; ☎ 6738 8818; 2 Emerald Hill Rd) and even cooler **No 5** (Map p662; ☎ 6732 0818; 5 Emerald Hill Rd). At the end of the strip, **Ice Cold Beer** (Map p662; ☎ 6735 9929; 9 Emerald Hill Rd) is a noisy spot with indie/rock music at high decibels and a range of chilled brews.

For a night out with a difference, combine a meal at Samy's Curry Restaurant (p666) with a few bottles of wine at the rustic **Wine Network** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6479 5739; Block 13 Dempsey Rd), nestled among the trees and old army barracks of Dempsey Rd.

## 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. **Km8** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6274 2288; Tanjong Beach), **Coastes** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6274 9668; Siloso Beach) and **Bikini Bar** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6274 9668; Siloso Beach), and **Café del Mar** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6235 1296; Siloso Beach) are all Ibiza-inspired restaurant-bars. The latter is open 24 hours a day between Friday and Sunday.

## CLUBBING

Singapore's club scene, like its bar scene, is extremely fickle, with clubs opening and closing regularly. Cover charges range from S\$15 to S\$25, and this includes at least one drink.

**Zouk** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6738 2988; www.zouklub.com.sg; 17 Jiak Kim St) This styler of the Singaporean club scene still nabs top-name DJs. It's actually three clubs in one, plus a wine bar, so go the whole hog and pay the full entrance (men/women including two drinks S\$45/38; before 10pm S\$25). Zouk (admission S\$25; open 7pm to 3am Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) is a multilevel party throbbing to techno and House beats. Spacey Phuture (admission S\$25; open 7pm to 3am Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) has hip-hop, grooves and big beats. Plushly decorated Velvet Underground (admission S\$35; open 9pm to 3am Tuesday to Saturday) draws a more artsy crowd.

**Ministry of Sound** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6235 2292; www.ministryofsound.com.sg; 01-02 Clarke Quay; cover charge from S\$15-25) Its international credentials made it an instant success, attracting big-name DJs and huge weekend crowds. Expect state-of-the-art audiovisuals, beamed onto a large water wall, and plenty of drunk youngsters.

**Attica** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6333 9973; 3A River Valley Rd) Modelled after the hip New York clubs, Attica quickly established itself as one of the more popular venues, with an energetic dance floor and an outdoor area for the more noise-sensitive.

## ENTERTAINMENT

The *Straits Times*, *I-S Magazine* and *Time Out* have listings for movies, theatre and music. Tickets for most events can be bought either through **Sistic** (Map p662; ☎ 6348 5555; www.sistic.com.sg; Wisma Atria, 435 Orchard Rd) or **CalendarOne TicketCharge** (Map p662; ☎ 6296 2929; www.ticketcharge.com.sg; Orchard Rd). Sistic also has agencies at Parco Bugis Junction, Raffles City, the Singapore Visitors Centre located on Orchard Rd,

Suntec City, and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay; TicketCharge has other agencies at the Substation and Funan Centre.

## Chinese Opera, Comedy & Theatre

**Chinese Theatre Circle** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6323 4862; www.ctopera.com.sg; 5 Smith St; tickets through Sistic; 1-2-hr show S\$20/35) Get into Chinese opera at a tea-house session organised by this nonprofit company. Friday and Saturday shows start at 7pm and 8pm with a brief talk (in English) on Chinese opera, followed by an excerpt from a Cantonese opera.

**National Arts Council** (☎ 6746 4622; www.nac.gov.sg) This council organises the occasional free concert in the Botanical Gardens – the stage, at the centre of a lake, is magical.

**1NiteStand** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6334 1954; www.the1nitestand.com; 01-04 3A River Valley Rd; gigs from S\$40) A little pricey, but the acts that perform here are usually worth the money. Also has live music and a restaurant.

Other big venues that feature various comedy, theatre and musical acts:

**DBS Drama Centre** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6733 8166; 20 Merbau Rd)

**Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6828 8222; www.esplanade.com; 1 Esplanade Dr)

**Victoria Concert Hall & Theatre** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6345 8488; Empress Pl)

## Live Music

**Jazz at Southbridge** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6327 4671; www.southbridgejazz.com.sg; 82B Boat Quay) A classy two-level bar, this is the best place in town for live jazz.

**Substation** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 7800; www.substation.org; 45 Armenian St; ☎ box office 4-8.30pm Mon-Fri) Walk around the back of this alternative arts venue and there's a large, alfresco pub with a big stage, where you can see local bands at weekends.

Local bands play every night at the knockabout **Prince of Wales** (Map p661; ☎ 6299 0130; www.pow.com.sg; cnr Dunlop & Madras Sts). The **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6828 8222; www.esplanade.com; 1 Esplanade Dr) has free outdoor gigs on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays that kick off around 7pm; check the website for details.

## SHOPPING

Once renowned as a bargain paradise, Singapore has been overtaken by other cities in the region, but there are still bargains to be

had on items such as clothing, electronics, IT gear and books.

Orchard Rd (Map p662) is so overwhelming it would take a week to explore thoroughly. Starting at the Scott's Rd end, there is **Wheellock Place** (Map p662; ☎ 6738 8660; 501 Orchard Rd) for the Apple store and a huge Borders bookshop. Up Scott's Rd is **Far East Plaza** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 2411; 14 Scott's Rd), the best spot for cheap clothes and shoes, including some funky Japanese street fashions. Next to Orchard MRT is **Wisma Atria** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 8177; 435 Orchard Rd), for more expensive mainstream clothes. Next door is the huge chocolate-coloured **Ngee Ann City** (Map p662; ☎ 6733 0337; 391 Orchard Rd), packed with high-end brands and Kinokuniya, the best bookshop in the city. Next is **Lucky Plaza** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 3294; Orchard Rd), which is good for cheap electronics (but you must shop around and bargain). **Paragon** (Map p662; ☎ 6738 5535; 290 Orchard Rd) is only for those who enjoy receiving red-coloured credit card bills. Then comes **Heeren** (Map p662; ☎ 6733 4725; www.heeren.com.sg; 260 Orchard Rd), which specialises in hip clothing and accessories for the young, and also has a large HMV outlet. There's a lot more, so explore away.

In Chinatown, **People's Park Complex** (Map pp656-7; 1 Park Cres) and **People's Park Centre** (Map pp656-7; 110 Upper Cross St) sell almost everything (watch out for tourist prices), and house lots of travel agents. Bugis Village (Map p661), not far from Raffles Hotel, is a good hunting ground for cheap clothes and is one of the few places you'll encounter knock-offs of famous brands.

**Sim Lim Square** (Map p661; ☎ 6332 5839; 1 Rochor Canal Rd) is geek paradise, overflowing with cheap IT gear and electronics. It's a cut-throat world in there and we'd only advise going if you know your stuff, because novices will be creamed. IT greenhorns should instead try **Funan – the IT Mall** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6337 4235; 109 North Bridge Rd), where computers, software, camera gear and MP3 players are more expensive, but at least they're priced and labelled.

For handicrafts, wandering Bussorah St in Kampong Glam and Chinatown's Pagoda, Smith and Temple Sts is worthwhile, though Chinatown has several touts keen to tailor you a suit (see boxed text, p670). Little India bursts with handicrafts, gold, saris, incense and Bollywood music and DVDs.

# SINGAPORE DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Hostels are booming in Singapore, so expect competitive prices (\$\$18 to \$\$20 for a dorm bed) and facilities like free internet, breakfast and laundry use. Cheaper hotel rooms (\$\$50 to \$\$70) are cramped, often windowless, with shared facilities. Most places offer air-con rooms, with cheaper fan rooms. Most establishments will quote net prices, which include all taxes. If you see +++ after a price it means you'll need to add on 10% service charge, 7% GST and 1% government tax. All room prices quoted in this chapter include all taxes.

## BOOKS

For almost every visitor, Lonely Planet publishes a guidebook: for foodies there's *World Food: Malaysia & Singapore*; for quick visits there's *Best of Singapore*; for longer visits it may be worth investing in *Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei* or the *Singapore* city guide; and for budget trips, the book in your hands is the last word.

For a deeper insight into the two men who 'made' Singapore, look for *Raffles* by Maurice Collis and the ubiquitous *The Singapore Story* and *From Third World To First* by Lee Kuan Yew.

For contemporary fiction by Singaporeans, try *Foreign Bodies* and *Mammon Inc.* by Hwe Hwe Tan and *Tigers in Paradise* by Philip Jeyaretnam.

### TOP FIVE TOUTS' CALLS

Sure they may be annoying, but touts can also be very witty in their attempts to lure you. The five best we've heard:

- 'I'll make you long pants for short price.'
- 'Here's my business card so you can send me Christmas cards.'
- 'You have beautiful English skin, like fish and chips.'
- 'Why pay so much, lah? My brand also the same for less!'
- 'Would you like a ride in my air-conditioned helicopter?' (from a rickshaw driver).

## BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices are usually open from Monday to Friday and on Saturday morning. Hours vary, starting at around 7.30am to 9.30am and closing between 4pm and 6pm. On Saturday, closing time is between 11.30am and 1pm.

Shopping malls are open from 10am to 10pm daily; and though many small shops in Chinatown close Sundays, it is the busiest shopping day in Little India. Banks are open from 9.30am to 3pm weekdays (and until 11.30am on Saturday).

Singapore's food centres and hawker stalls open various hours (some 24 hours), but regular restaurants open for lunch from noon to 2.30pm and then for dinner from 6pm to 10.45pm.

Most bars are open from 5pm until at least midnight Sunday to Thursday, and from 5pm to 2am on Friday and Saturday.

## CLIMATE

There are virtually no seasons in Singapore – the weather is uniformly hot, humid and wet all year round. November to January are considered slightly wetter months, though you should always be prepared for a soaking, no matter how clear the skies appear when you go out. See p915 for climate charts.

## CUSTOMS

You can bring in 1L of wine, beer or spirits duty-free, but no unopened packets of cigarettes. Electronic goods, cosmetics, watches, cameras, jewellery (but not imitation jewellery), footwear, toys, arts and crafts are not dutiable; the usual duty-free concession for personal effects, such as clothes, applies. Duty-free concessions are not available if you are arriving from Malaysia or if you leave Singapore for less than 48 hours.

Toy currency and coins, obscene or sedition material, gun-shaped cigarette lighters, pirated recordings and publications, and retail quantities of chewing gum are prohibited. If you bring in prescription drugs you should have a doctor's letter or a prescription.

Restrictions on liquids and gels apply to air passengers' carry-on baggage.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Short-term visitors are unlikely to be troubled by Singapore's notoriously tough laws, which have turned the city into one of the safest in

Asia. Street crime is minimal, though pick-pockets have been known to operate in Chinatown, Little India and other tourist areas. Taxi drivers routinely try to cheat new arrivals from Malaysia at the Tanjong Pagar railway station, so have a rough route worked out and insist the driver uses the meter. See also Legal Matters, p672.

## DRIVING LICENCE

To drive in Singapore you'll need your home driver's licence and an international permit from a motoring association in your country.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Embassies & Consulates in Singapore

The following embassies, consulates and high commissions are in Singapore:

**Australia** (Map p662; ☎ 836 4100; www.australia.org.sg; 25 Napier Rd)

**Canada** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6325 3200; www.cic.gc.ca; IBM Towers, 80 Anson Rd)

**France** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6880 7800; www.france.org.sg; 101-103 Cluny Park Rd)

**Germany** (Map p662; ☎ 6737 1355; 14-01 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd)

**Indonesia** (Map p662; ☎ 6737 7422; 7 Chatsworth Rd)

**Ireland** (Map p662; ☎ 6238 7616; www.ireland.org.sg; 08-00 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd)

**Japan** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 8855; www.sg.emb-japan.go.jp; 16 Nassim Rd)

**Laos** (Map p662; ☎ 6250 6044; 10-01 United Sq, 101 Thomson Rd)

**Malaysia** (Map pp656-7; ☎ 6235 0111; 30 Hill St 02-01)

**New Zealand** (Map p662; ☎ 6235 9966; www.nzembassy.com/home.cfm?c=28; 15-06/10 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd)

**Thailand** (Map p662; ☎ 6737 2644; www.thaiemb singapore.org; 370 Orchard Rd)

**UK** (Map p662; ☎ 6424 4200; www.britain.org.sg; 100 Tanglin Rd)

**USA** (Map p662; ☎ 6476 9100; http://singapore.usembassy.gov/index.shtml; 27 Napier Rd)

### Singaporean Embassies & Consulates Abroad

For a list of Singaporean missions abroad see www.visitsingapore.com, and click on the Travellers Essentials link (listed under About Singapore). It also has a full list of foreign embassies and consulates in Singapore.

**Australia** (☎ 02-6273 3944; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

**France** (☎ 01 45 00 33 61; 12 Square de l'Ave Foch, Paris 75116)

**Germany** (☎ 030-226 34 30; Friedrichstrasse 200, 10117 Berlin)

**Indonesia** (☎ 021-520 1489; Blik X/4 Kav 2, Jl Rasuna Said, Kuningan, Jakarta 12950)

**Malaysia** (☎ 03-2161 6277; 209 Jl Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur 50400)

**New Zealand** (☎ 04-470 0850; 17 Kabul St, Khandallah, PO Box 13-140, Wellington)

**Thailand** (☎ 02-286 2111; 9th & 18th fls, Rajanakam Bldg, 183 South Sathorn Rd, Bangkok)

**UK** (☎ 020-7235 8315; 9 Wilton Cres, Belgravia, London)

**US** (☎ 202-537 3100; 3501 International Pl, NW, Washington DC 20008)

For information on visas, see p673.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

See p664 for information on festivals and events in Singapore.

## FOOD & DRINK

Singapore's rich cultural brew has spawned one of Asia's great eating cities. Food is often cheap and since English is nearly universal you'll rarely have trouble ordering. There is not really such a thing as Singaporean cuisine, though. Most of the island's specialities are imported: Hainanese chicken rice, Chinese *char kway teow* (stir-fried flat noodles with soy sauce, prawns, cockles, egg and Chinese sausage), the Indo-Malay breakfast favourite *roti pratha* (flaky, flat bread served with curry sauce) and the famous *laksa* (noodles served in a rich, spicy coconut broth with prawns, cockles, fried bean curd and bean sprouts). Unmissable local innovations include chilli crab and fish-head curry, which is far, far tastier than it sounds.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Male homosexuality is still technically illegal, but the city is slowly opening up and the laws have not prevented the emergence of a thriving gay scene. In 2007, Lee Kuan Yew made a public statement opposing the repression of homosexuals – and when Mr Lee speaks, government policy is never far behind.

Ministers are still reluctant to endorse what they see as a promiscuous, antifamily lifestyle. There's also no official recognition of gay and lesbian groups, such as **People Like Us** (www.plu.sg). A good web resource is the Asia-wide **Fridae** (www.fridae.com), which has a guide to Singapore's hot spots. Also see p668 for some gay-friendly drinking spots.

## HOLIDAYS

The following days are public holidays. Many are based on the lunar calendar, and their dates are variable.

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Chinese New Year** January/February (two days)

**Thaipusam** January/February

**Good Friday** March/April

**Vesak Day** May

**Labour Day** 1 May

**National Day** 9 August

**Hari Raya Puasa** September

**Deepavali** October/November

**Hari Raya Haji** December

**Christmas Day** 25 December

## INTERNET ACCESS

You'll have no problem finding places to get online, and many hostels offer free internet – some even have zippy broadband connections – and much of the city is covered by a wireless access zone. Expect to pay S\$5 per hour in internet cafés.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**SINGOV Government Information** ([www.gov.sg](http://www.gov.sg))

With seemingly endless information and services.

**TalkingCock.com** ([www.talkingcock.com](http://www.talkingcock.com)) Singapore's favourite satirical website, offering a biting but affectionate look at the city's life, politics and people.

**Uniquely Singapore** ([www.visitsingapore.com](http://www.visitsingapore.com))

Singapore Tourism's site, with plenty of links to things to see and do.

## LEGAL MATTERS

The law is extremely tough in Singapore, but also relatively free from corruption. Possession of drugs means a long jail term and a beating, with trafficking punishable by death. Smoking in all public places, including bars and restaurants and hawker centres, is banned.

## MAPS

The *Official Map of Singapore*, available free from the STB and hotels, is excellent. Periplus and Lonely Planet also produce maps.

## MEDIA Magazines

Free publications with events information, such as *Where Singapore*, *I-S Magazine*, *Banter and Juice*, are available at tourist offices, most major hotels and several restaurants, cafés and bars. The international listings magazine *Time Out* now has a Singapore edition, too.

## Newspapers

English dailies include the parochial progovernment spin sheet *Straits Times* (which includes the *Sunday Times*), the *Business Times* and the tabloid-style *New Paper*. *Straits Times* has decent coverage of Asia, if you want to get the latest on your future destinations. *New Paper* is best for a flavour of 'real life' Singapore. Many Singaporeans and foreigners prefer the more free-speaking *Today* newspaper, a freebie tabloid (50c at weekends) you can pick up at MRT stations in the mornings.

## MONEY

The unit of currency is the Singaporean dollar, which is made up of 100 cents. Singapore uses 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c and S\$1 coins, while notes come in denominations of S\$2, S\$5, S\$10, S\$50, S\$100, S\$500 and S\$1000.

Banks and ATMs are everywhere. Exchange rates vary from bank to bank and some charge a service fee on each exchange transaction – usually S\$2 to S\$3, but it can be more, so ask first.

Exchange rates at time of press:

Country	Unit	Singaporean dollars (S\$)
Australia	A\$1	1.28
Canada	C\$1	1.47
Euro zone	€1	2.10
Indonesia	10,000Rp	1.62
Japan	¥100	1.32
Malaysia	RM10	4.35
New Zealand	NZ\$1	1.08
Philippines	100P	3.27
Thailand	100B	4.73
UK	UK£1	3.04
USA	US\$1	1.51

Contact details for credit-card companies in Singapore:

**American Express** (☎ 6299 8133)

**Diners Card** (☎ 6294 4222)

**JCB** (☎ 6734 0096)

**MasterCard & Visa** (☎ 1800-345 1345)

## POST

Singapore is among the most reliable in Southeast Asia. Postcards cost 50c to anywhere in the world, but letters start at 70c to Australia, New Zealand and Japan, or S\$1 to Europe or the USA. Post offices are open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 2pm Saturday. Call ☎ 1605 to find the nearest post office branch, or check

[www.singpost.com.sg](http://www.singpost.com.sg). Letters addressed to 'Poste Restante' are held at the **Eunos Post Office** (Map pp650-1; ☎ 6741 8857; 10 Eunos Rd), next to the Paya Lebar MRT.

## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Modern and cosmopolitan though it appears, Singapore is a little sensitive when it comes to the behaviour of foreigners. In common with much of the region, Singaporeans do not like to stand out in public and look askance at people who do – quiet, polite behaviour will win you more respect.

The government is alive to environmental issues, so it's usually no problem to find a recycling bin, use public transport, or even order a hybrid fuel taxi.

## STUDYING

See p663 for details of short cooking courses.

## TELEPHONE

### Mobile Phones

Mobile phone numbers in Singapore start with 9. If you have 'global roaming', your GSM digital phone will tune into one of Singapore's two networks, MI-GSM or ST-GSM. There is complete coverage over the whole island and rates are reasonable.

You can buy a SIM card (usually S\$20) or a 'disposable' mobile from most post offices and 7-Eleven stores, though due to 'security concerns' you can't get one without showing your passport.

### Phonecards

Local phonecards are widely available from 7-Eleven stores, post offices, Telecom centres, stationers and bookshops, and come in denominations of S\$5, S\$10, S\$20 and S\$50. Most phone booths take phonecards, and some take credit cards, with only a few booths around that still take coins. For more details see [www.singtel.com](http://www.singtel.com).

From public phones, local calls cost S\$0.10 for three minutes.

### Phone Codes

To call Singapore from overseas, dial your country's international access number and then dial ☎ 65 (Singapore's country code), before entering the eight-digit telephone number.

Calls to Malaysia are considered to be STD (trunk or long-distance) calls. Dial the access code 020, followed by the area code of the town in Malaysia that you wish to call (minus the leading zero) and then your party's number.

There are no area codes in Singapore; telephone numbers are eight digits unless you are calling toll-free (☎ 1800).

## TOILETS

Generally toilets in Singapore are clean and well maintained, though they might vary between the sit-down and squatting types. In some hawker centres you may have to pay a small fee (between S\$0.10 and S\$0.50).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

See p658 for branches of the Singapore Tourist Board (STB).

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Wheelchair travellers can find Singapore difficult, though a massive accessibility project to improve life for the elderly and disabled has seen things improve. Check out *Access Singapore*, a useful guidebook for the disabled, which is available from STB offices, or contact the **National Council of Social Services** (☎ 6336 1544; [www.ncss.org.sg](http://www.ncss.org.sg)).

The **Disabled People's Association** (☎ 6899 1220; [www.dpa.org.sg/access/contents.htm](http://www.dpa.org.sg/access/contents.htm)) has an online accessibility guide to the country.

## VISAS

Citizens of British Commonwealth countries (except India) and citizens of the Republic of Ireland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Netherlands, San Marino, Switzerland and the USA do not require visas to visit Singapore. Citizens of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and Sweden do not require visas for stays up to 90 days for social purposes.

You will be given a 30-day visitor's visa if you arrive by air, and a 14-day visa if you are arriving by land or sea. Extensions can be applied for at the **Immigration Department** (Map p661; ☎ 6391 6100; 10 Kallang Rd), one block southwest of Lavender MRT station.

For details of embassies and consulates, see p671.

## VOLUNTEERING

Singapore serves as a base for many NGOs, but most recruit skilled volunteers from their home countries. In Singapore itself the **National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre** ([www.nvpc.org.sg](http://www.nvpc.org.sg)) coordinates a number of community groups, including grassroots projects such as education, environment and multiculturalism.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

There are few problems for women travelling in Singapore. In Kampong Glam and Little India skimpy clothing may attract unwanted stares, so consider wearing long pants or skirts and loose tops. Tampons and pads are widely available across the island, as are over-the-counter medications.