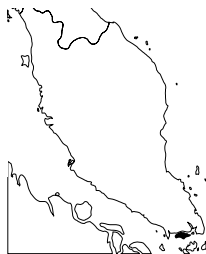


# Singapore



Ditch the image of Singapore as a dull, sterile Utopia – scratch the surface and you'll discover a strange brew of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Western cultures, a rich social stew that's anything but boring. Sure, the graffiti-free trains run on time, traffic jams are nonexistent and everyone looks clean-cut and wholesome, but who needs pollution, poverty and chaos?

Singapore's mouthwatering food is the number one drawcard. Pull up a pew at a hawker centre, crack open a Tiger beer and immerse yourself in a munificent range of Asian delights; heavy on the flavour, light on the wallet. Want to splurge? Singapore delivers Southeast Asia's best shopping and innovative, stylish restaurants, plus a swathe of top-notch hotels. Top of the tree is Raffles, a timeless symbol of colonial opulence.

Of course, it's not all about shopping, eating and G&Ts on the veranda. Work up a sweat with outdoor activities – walking, cycling and water sports – or check out the contemporary arts scene, thriving under the government's promotion of Singapore as an arts hub. If you want a break from the urban confines, the centre of the island has sparkling reservoirs and leafy tracts of forest where all you'll hear is monkeys clattering through the boughs.

The Lion City is more than you bargained for – dust off your credit card, prime your stomach and dive right in.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Losing track of time – cultural immersion at the **Asian Civilisations Museum** (p514)
- Trying not to be overwhelmed in **Little India** (p518) Sunday evening when things get very 'Bolly'
- Chomping into cheap, delicious **hawker-centre meals** (p556)
- Talking to the animals at the **Singapore Zoo** (p522) and **Night Safari** (p522)
- Rampaging through greenery at **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (p523), **MacRitchie Reservoir** (p523) or **Pulau Ubin** (p522)
- Embracing the full **Chinatown** experience – tea (p558), Chinese opera (p567), yum cha (p558)
- Chilling out with orchids and tropical finery at the serene **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (p520)
- Getting your shop-weary limbs massaged after a hard day's credit-card abuse on **Orchard Road** (p574)
- Catching a cultural performance at the architecturally controversial **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (p515)
- Slinging back Singapore Slings at the regal **Raffles Hotel** (p515) or a hole-in-the-wall watering hole (p564)



■ POPULATION: 4.43 MILLION

■ AREA: 683 SQ KM

## HISTORY

Singapore stepped onto the world stage when Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles stepped into the mud in 1819, hell-bent on making the island a bastion of the British Empire. It prospered in its role as a free-trade hub for Southeast Asia, but these early years were marred by bad sanitation, disease, Empire-sponsored opium addiction and piracy. Large-scale immigration of Chinese workers occurred, with some Chinese intermarrying with local Malays to create the Peranakan people and culture (p49).

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 ran the island (re-named Syonan) with brutal will – 140,000 allied troops were killed or imprisoned at the notorious Changi Prison. Thousands of Chinese were executed at Sentosa and Changi Beach; Malays and Indians were subject to systematic abuse. Although the British were welcomed back to the island after the war, it was clear that the Empire's days in the region were numbered.

The socialist People's Action Party (PAP) was founded in 1954 with Lee Kuan Yew, a third-generation Straits-born Chinese and Cambridge-educated lawyer, as its secretary general. The shrewdly political Lee led the PAP to victory in elections held in 1959, becoming the first Singaporean prime minister – a post he held in his iron grip for 31 years. Although Singapore's situation looked grim when it was booted out of the nascent federation of Malaysia in 1965, Lee set to work making the most of one-party rule, and pushing through an ambitious industrialisation programme for the island that had no natural resources beyond its labour force.

Housing and urban renovation, in particular, have been keys to the PAP's success – by the mid-1990s the city-state had the world's highest rate of home ownership. Living out 'social-engineering dreams' (as couched in the anti-Western rhetoric of Confucianism) recalled from British textbooks, Singaporean leaders also sought order and progress in the strict regulation of social behaviour and identity – thus earning its reputation as a fairly upright corner of the world. Singaporean media is subject to strict government censorship – freedom of speech isn't something Singaporeans are altogether familiar with.

In 1990 Lee Kuan Yew resigned as prime minister (though he still holds the conspicuous position of Minister Mentor, issuing advice on everything from protocol to diet), to be replaced by Goh Chok Tong, in turn replaced by Lee's eldest son Lee Hsien Loong in 2004. The government is slowly loosening its paternalistic grip, but it's not entirely ready to set Singaporeans free from the cage just yet.

## ORIENTATION

Singapore is a city, an island and a country, 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 convenes 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 epicentre of Singapore's cultural life, Chinatown. Immediately north of the river is the Colonial District, dappled with elegant colonial architecture, 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. Visionary plans are afoot for redeveloping the Marina Bay area at the river mouth.

Most of Singapore's tourist action revolves around Chinatown and along Orchard Rd, just north of the Colonial District. Here also are the unfettered Little India district, and the gracious Kampong Glam, Singapore's Muslim quarter.

## Singapore Island

To the island's west is the predominantly industrial area of Jurong, peppered with a crop of tourist attractions. Heading south you'll bump into Sentosa Island – Singapore's recreational playground.

East Coast Park stretches east from the city – imported sand on reclaimed land, it's hardly *The Blue Lagoon*, but it's a cool spot to unwind. Inland from here are the unpolished Geylang and Katong areas, the alleys off Geylang Rd harbouring Singapore's surprisingly saucy red-light district.

## SINGAPORE IN...

## Two Days

Balance your yin and yang with some morning ta'ichi in the **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (p520). After a *kopi* (coffee) and *kaya* (coconut jam) toast breakfast, hit the **Orchard Road** shops, or shuffle over to **Chinatown** (p517). Recharge with a laksa lunch at **Lau Pa Sat** (p558) hawker centre then wind down the afternoon at the **Singapore Art Museum** (opposite) or the **Asian Civilisations Museum** (below). Blur the evening's edges with a Singapore Sling at **Raffles** (opposite), followed by dinner with river views on **Boat Quay** (p556).

Launch into day two with a riverside amble, then shop for trinkets in **Little India** (p518). Hold out for a massive banana-leaf curry lunch mooch over to **Kampong Glam** (p519) in the afternoon.

At night check out the restaurants and bars along **Club Street** (p566), or bar-hop along **Mohamed Sultan Road** (p565) or **Circular Road** (p565).

## Four Days

If you're staying a couple more days, kick off day three with a cable-car ride from HarbourFront up to **Mt Faber** (p524), continuing across to **Sentosa Island** (p526) – at least a day's frivolous indulgence. Retreat to the all-night bustle of the **Maxwell Road Food Centre** (p556) in Chinatown for dinner.

Go green on day four – visit the **Padang** (p570), **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (p523) or **Singapore Zoo** (p522), or take a bumboat out to **Pulau Ubin** (p522).

On the way back from Ubin, pay your respects at the **Changi Museum & Chapel** (p521) before a show at the **Esplanade** (opposite) or a slap-up pepper-crab feast at the **East Coast Seafood Centre** (p560) as the ships of the world bump and sway in the Straits of Singapore.

The much-lauded Changi Airport occupies the eastern corner of the island. Changi Village and Pulau Ubin are north of here.

The central north of the island has much of Singapore's undeveloped land, tracts of primary and secondary rainforest, reservoirs and the Singapore Zoo.

## Addresses

Unlike many cities in Asia, Singapore is well laid out, with signposted streets and logically numbered buildings. As many of the shops, businesses and residences are in high-rise buildings, 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

Sir Stamford Raffles' mark remains indelibly stamped on central Singapore. His early town-planning manoeuvres shunted

the CBD south of the river and made the north bank the administrative area – today's Colonial District. This is where most of the remnants of British rule malingers. Thanks to land reclamation there's also a host of megaplex shopping malls here, and the dazzlingly contemporary Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

## Asian Civilisations Museum

Inside a grand old Empress Place building (1865) named in honour of Queen Victoria, the **Asian Civilisations Museum** (Map p540; % 6332 7798; www.nhb.gov.sg/acm; 1 Empress Pl; adult/child S\$8/4, free after 7pm Fri; 11-7pm 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 and civilisation, with exquisite, well-displayed artefacts from Southeast Asia, China, India, Sri Lanka and even Turkey. The emphasis is on regions strongly connected with Singapore's ethnic make-up, which helps you get a handle on how Singapore relates to its region.

## Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Architecturally out of this world, Singapore's S\$600 million **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (Map p540; % 6828 8377; www.esplanade.com; 1 Esplanade Dr; admission free, guided tours adult/child S\$8/5; 11-7am-late, 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. There's a nonstop programme of international and local cultural performances, some great restaurants and free outdoor performances. Book tickets through **SISTIC** (% 6348 5555; www.sistic.com.sg).

## Raffles Hotel

An adored Singaporean institution and architectural landmark, **Raffles Hotel** (Map p540; % 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 become synonymous with Oriental opulence. The Singapore Sling was invented here by bartender Ngiam Tong Boon, and (far less gloriously) the last Singaporean tiger 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 face-lift. 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, 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 p540; 3rd fl, Raffles Hotel Arcade; admission free; 11-10am-10pm) as an exercise in self-aggrandisement, but it's actually really interesting. Old photos and advertisements sit alongside reminiscences from celebrity guests like Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward. Don't miss the 1910 Singapore River photo-panorama.

## Singapore Art Museum

Two blocks west of Raffles, the **Singapore Art Museum** (Map p540; % 6332 3222; www.museum.org.sg/nhb; 71 Bras Basah Rd; adult/child S\$3/1.50; 11-10am-7pm Sat-Thur, 10am-9pm Fri) occupies the former St Joseph's Catholic boys' school. The gallery champions the arts in an economics-obsessed nation, exhibitions ranging from classical Chinese calligraphy to electronic arts. Contemporary works examine Southeast Asian identity and the modern Singaporean experience. Look for temporary overseas exhibitions and works by prominent local artists Liu Kang and Ng Eng Teng. There are tours in English at 11am and 2pm.

## Fort Canning Park

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, in 1860.

A few early-colonial hints remain – old Christian gravestones are embedded in brick walls, and there's a spice garden on the site of Raffles' original botanic garden; guided tours can be arranged through at-sunrice cooking academy (p532) at the Fort Canning Centre (Map p540), a 1926 barracks. Archaeological digs have also uncovered Javanese artefacts from the 14th-century Majapahit Empire.

Burrowing inside Fort Canning Hill is Singapore's largest WWII underground military complex, now the **Battle Box Museum** (Map p540; % 6333 0510; 51 Canning Rise; adult/child S\$8/5; 11-10am-6pm). 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.

The hill hosts several outdoor events each year including WOMAD (September to October) and Ballet under the Stars (July; tickets \$19).

## Colonial Churches

Dedicated to St Gregory the Illuminator, Singapore's oldest church (1836) is the neoclassical **Armenian Church** (Map p540; % 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.

Coleman also designed the original **St Andrew's Cathedral** (Map p540; % 6337 6104; 11 St Andrew's Rd) in 1837, but this was demolished after lightning damage and rebuilt between 1856 and 1862. The oldest Catholic church (1846) is the **Cathedral of the Good Shepherd** (Map p540; % 6337 2036; 4 Queen St). The white and sky-blue vaulted Gothic interior of **St Joseph's Church** (Map p540; % 6338 3167; 143 Victoria St) is also worth a look, built in 1912.

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

## Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

The Bugis area (see boxed text, opposite) may have lost its edgy atmosphere over the decades, but the **Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple** (Map p540; 178 Waterloo St; admission free; h daily) remains lively and colourful. Dedicated to Guan Yin, the much-loved Goddess of Mercy, it's particularly busy on the eve of Chinese New Year when it stays open all night. Flower sellers, fortune tellers and incense-wielding devotees swarm around the entry and the magnificent golden Buddha.

Next door is the polychromatic Hindu **Sri Krishnan Temple** (Map p540; 152 Waterloo St; admission free; h daily) with its magnificent silver-and-gold shrine. Pragmatic worshippers from the Kuan Im Temple also burn joss sticks here for extra insurance.

## CBD & THE QUAYS

Immediately south of the Singapore River is the Central Business District (CBD), Singapore's financial hub. Once the city's pulsating heart, **Raffles Place** (Map pp542–3) is now a rare slice of green above the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) station, surrounded by gleaming towers of commerce. There are some great sculptures around here and along the river nearby (see the boxed text, p518). At the river-mouth is Singapore's water-spouting mascot, the funky 1960s **Merlion** (Map p540) – half-fish, half-lion.

Strewn among the high-rise landscape are a few colonial relics. Hire a bumboat or catch a harbour cruise (p533) from under the loftily vaulted ceiling from **Marina South Pier** (Map pp542–3). Nearby, the **Fullerton Hotel** (p552) occupies the former general post office. Further south is **Lau Pa Sat** (p558), a hawker centre beneath an elaborate wrought-iron structure imported from Glasgow in 1894.

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. A riverside stroll is a brilliant way to get a feel for the city's ability to reinvent itself. **Boat Quay** (Map p540) was where the city's leading *townkay* (Chinese business chiefs) traded, and it remained busy right up until the 1960s. In the mid-1980s the dilapidated area was declared a conservation zone and its revival into an entertainment district began. Parallel with Boat Quay one block to the south is **Circular Road** (Map p540), where dozens of bars have opened in recent years. Thirsty after-work businessmen swarm here from the CBD.

A pastiche of architectural abominations, **Clarke Quay** (Map p540), named after Singapore's second colonial governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, has also been redeveloped into a dining and shopping precinct. There's a flea market here on Sundays.

On the western end of Clarke Quay is the **Royal Selangor Pewter Gallery** (Map p540; % 6268 9600; www.royalselangor.com.sg; 01-01 Clarke Quay; h 9am-9pm). Singapore is devoid of natural resources like gold and silver – pewter is the next best thing. Take a tour (including pewtersmithing demo, S\$2) then gawp at the shiny stuff in the retail cabinets. It also runs pewtersmithing courses (p533).

Officially known as the **Sri Thandayuthapani Temple**, the open-walled, blue-green **Chettiar Hindu Temple** (Map p540; % 6737 9393; 15 Tank Rd; admission free; h 8am-noon, 5.30-8.30pm) was completed in 1984, replacing a temple built by Indian *chettiers* (moneylenders). Dedicated to the six-headed Shaivite Lord Subramaniam, it's at its most active during the **Thaipusam** festival (p528).

**Robertson Quay** (Map pp538–9) was once thronging with boat repairers and timber mills. Near Saigon Bridge are the river's last derelict *godown* (warehouses), held together with tree roots and rust – given

Singapore's appetite for destruction, they won't last much longer! There's a healthy crop of hotels, nightclubs and restaurants clustered around here, too.

The white-walled, polished concrete spaces of the **Singapore Tyler Print Institute** (Map pp538-9; % 6336 3663; www.stpi.com.sg; 02-41 Robertson Quay; admission free; h 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 programme of visual arts courses year-round.

## CHINATOWN

Singapore's cherished 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 sophisticated nightlife, tempered with memories of more desperate times when impoverished immigrants survived on their wits. Singapore sometimes feels like a city that's tried to bury its past, but Chinatown stands testament to what's never far below the surface.

## Thian Hock Keng Temple

Also known as the Temple of Heavenly Happiness, **Thian Hock Keng Temple** (Map pp542-3; % 6423 4616; 158 Telok Ayer St; admission free; h 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. It's hard to imagine now, but Telok Ayer St was once Chinatown's waterfront before land reclamation shunted the shore 500m east.

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.

## Sri Mariamman Temple

Paradoxically cast in the middle of Chinatown, the **Sri Mariamman Temple** (Map pp542-3; % 6223 4064; 244 South Bridge Rd; admission free; h 7.30am-8.30pm) is the oldest Hindu temple in Singapore, originally built in 1823, then rebuilt in 1843. 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.

## Chinatown Heritage Centre

Set on three floors of an old shophouse, the **Chinatown Heritage Centre** (Map pp542-3; % 6325 2878; www.chinatownheritage.com.sg; 48 Pagoda St; adult/child S\$8.50/5.30; h 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, 9am-9pm Fri-Sun) is an engaging museum focusing on the arduous everyday lives of Singapore's Chinese settlers. Reconstructed living environments are festooned with artefacts, the 'four evils' – gambling, prostitution, secret societies and opium addiction – lurking in every corner. The oral and video histories of local people are genuinely moving.

### THE REINVENTION OF BUGIS STREET

Until the 1980s, **Bugis Street** (Map p540), a few blocks northeast of Raffles Hotel, was Singapore's pornographic playground, the haunt of prostitutes, transvestites and transsexuals. Officially it was just another hawker stall-lined street, but in practice it was a hotbed of saucy sexuality, and proof that Singapore still had a libidinal pulse. Eventually, the government decided it had to go, and the bulldozers rolled in to build Bugis MRT station and Parco Bugis Junction shopping mall (p574).

The reinvented **New Bugis Street** (Map p540), partly encased by the mall, features faux Peranakan terrace look-alikes and a glass-covered roof allowing patrons to browse and dine in air-conditioned comfort. Singapore's red-light activity has been bumped out to Desker Rd in Little India and the alleyways off Geylang Rd in the east.



## Singapore City Gallery

The Urban Redevelopment Authority's **Singapore City Gallery** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6321 8321; www.ura.gov.sg/gallery; URA Bldg, 45 Maxwell Rd; admission free; ⌚ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) provides an insight into the government's hell-bent policies of high-rise housing and land reclamation. Highlights include an 11m x 11m scale model of the city, a cheesy 'Know Your Singapore' audiovisual display, and a voyeuristic bird's-eye-view roof camera.

## Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple

On the CBD edge of Chinatown, the Taoist **Wak Hai Cheng Bio Temple** (Map pp542-3; cnr Phillip & Church Sts; admission free; ⌚ 7.30am-5.30pm) is also known as the Yueh Hai Ching Temple, 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.

## LITTLE INDIA

Worlds apart from the rest of Singapore, Little India was originally a European enclave, blooming into an Indian cultural centre after a Jewish-Indian businessman started farming buffalo here. Today Little India (Map p537) teems with men on two-year contracts from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka doing the dirty construction jobs that Singaporeans won't stoop to.

## Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple

Dazzlingly colourful, the bustling Shaivite **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (Map p537; ☎ 6293 4634; 141 Serangoon Rd; admission free; ⌚ 8am-12.30pm & 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 1881. Inside, Kali is pictured draped with skulls, disembowelling victims, and in calm repose with her sons Ganesh and Murugan.

## Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

Dedicated to Vishnu, the **Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** (Map p537; ☎ 6298 5771; 397 Serangoon Rd; admission free; ⌚ 6.30am-noon, 6-9pm) dates from 1855 but the 20m-tall *gopuram* is a 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 (p516) during the Thaipusam festival (p528).

## Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple (Temple of 1000 Lights)

In 1927 a Thai Buddhist monk founded the **Sakaya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** (Map p537; ☎ 6294 0714; 366 Race Course Rd; admission free; ⌚ 8am-4.45pm), usually called the Temple of 1000 Lights. Inside is a 15m-high, 300-tonne Buddha alongside an eclectic collection of deities including Guan Yin (Chinese Goddess of Mercy), and 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 (Dragon Mountain) Temple

Across the road from the Temple of 1000 Lights (above) is the gorgeous Taoist Leong

## STREET SCULPTURE

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

**Abundance** (Map p540; Suntec City) By Sun Yu Li.

**Between Sea & Sky** (Map p540; Marina Mandarin Hotel, 6 Raffles Blvd) By Olivier Strehelle.

**Bird** (Map pp542-3; UOB Plaza, Boat Quay) By Fernando Botero.

**First Generation** (Map pp542-3; Cavenagh Bridge) By Chong Fat Cheong.

**Homage to Newton** (Map pp542-3; UOB Plaza, Boat Quay) By Salvador Dali.

**LOVE** (Map p540; near Dhoby Ghaut station on Penang Rd) By Robert Indiana.

**Millennium** (Map p540; Empress Pl) By Victor Tan.

**Reclining Figures** (Map pp542-3; OCBC Bldg, Chulia St) By Henry Moore.

**Seed** (Map p540; Esplanade waterfront garden) By Han Sai Por.

**Six Brushstrokes** (Map p540; Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd) By Roy Lichtenstein.

## WEIRD SINGAPORE

Maybe it's an excusable side effect of Singaporean multiculturalism, but things can get downright kooky around here. Check out some of these offbeat diversions:

- For guaranteed good luck, walk clockwise three times around the **Fountain of Wealth** (Map p540; Suntec City, 3 Temasek Blvd), the world's largest fountain. Between 8pm and 9pm you can project 18m 'I love you' laser messages onto the water curtain.
- Croon to your favourite opera hits or enjoy the earnest vocal stylings of middle-aged businessmen at the Chinese Theatre Circle's **Opera Karaoke** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6323 4862; www.ctc.opera.com.sg; 5 Smith St; admission incl tea & snacks \$5; ⌚ Tue-Sun 2-5pm).
- Brave some durian-flavoured ice cream layered between pink and green slices of bread from Singapore's last mobile food hawkers, the ice cream-sandwich sellers around Ngee Ann City on Orchard Rd.
- Discover what hellishly gory punishment awaits bad boys and girls at the insanely tacky Haw Par Villa (p524).
- Witness Buddhist cremation rites at the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (p523).
- On Friday and Saturday nights, head underground to the City Hall MRT concourse near the Esplanade where fabulously sincere young troupes of synchronised dancers, impressive breakdancers and in-line skaters strut their stuff.

**San See Temple** (Map p537; ☎ 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, 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. A manifestly Arabic atmosphere and a clutch of curious shops make a low-key detour from Chinatown and Little India.

## Sultan Mosque

Kampong Glam's gold-domed epicentre is **Sultan Mosque** (Map p537; ☎ 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 com-

promises the atmosphere a little, but at least everybody knows when to pray.

## Malay Heritage Centre

This dignified terracotta-tiled **Malay Heritage Centre** (Map p537; ☎ 6391 0450; www.malayheritage.org.sg; 85 Sultan Gate; adult/child \$3/\$2, performances \$10/\$5; ⌚ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, 1-6pm Mon) 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 and cultural performances at 3pm on Wednesday and 11.30am on Sunday.

## Other Mosques

The cream- and brown-painted **Hajjah Fatimah Mosque** (Map p537; ☎ 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 six degrees off-centre. The outbuildings are also well out of kilter.

The sky-blue hexagonal-tiled **Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath Mosque** (Map p537; ☎ 6294 3862; 471 Victoria St; admission free; 7.30am-7pm) is hard to miss, right on a busy street corner. 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

In the 19th century this stretch of road was lined with nutmeg and pepper plantations, traffic was strictly pedestrian and evening strolls were interrupted by the odd flood and tiger mauling. These days Orchard Rd (Map pp544-5) is peppered with megamalls, five-star hotels and soulless transnational franchises, with only a few remnants of former times. When you've had your fill of the shops, the serene Botanic Gardens isn't far from the western end of the road.

## Istana

Constructed between 1867 and 1869 by Indian convicts transported from Bencoolen on Sumatra, the **Istana** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6737 5522; www.istana.gov; Orchard Rd) is where Singapore's President 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

Take some time out to wander through the pedestrianised Peranakan Pl to Emerald Hill Road (Map pp544-5), where some original Peranakan terrace houses stand in various states of glamorous decay. The quiet atmosphere around here feels a million miles from shop-til-you-drop Orchard Rd. Check out No 45, built in 1903 with an unusually wide frontage and grand Chinese-style entrance gate, and the Art Deco-style Nos 121 to 129 dating from 1925. Grab a beer afterwards at No 5 (p566).

## Singapore Botanic Gardens

It sounds like an experiment from *Frankenstein*, but 'Connecting Plants with People'

is the catch-cry at the **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6471 7361; www.sbg.org.sg; 1 Cluny Rd; admission free; 5am-midnight). Wide green spaces like these are rare in Singapore – perfect for jet-lag recovery, picnics, reading a paper or just wandering around aimlessly.

Established around 1860 and covering 52 hectares, the gardens were originally a laboratory for potential cash crops like rubber and coffee. Today they host a herbarium with more than 600,000 specimens, a library of archival materials dating back to the 16th century, a frangipani collection, an Evolution Garden and a 4-hectare 'original Singaporean jungle' – the kind of rainforest that once blanketed the island.

The **National Orchid Garden** (Map pp544-5; ☎ adult/child S\$2/1; 8.30am-7pm) is also here, with over 60,000 plants and a cool house showcasing orchids from cooler climes. Hype aside, orchids are extraordinary beasts, and definitely worth a look. Don't miss the *Vanda Miss Joaquim*, Singapore's national flower, discovered in 1893 by Agnes Joaquim, in her garden.

The gardens host free open-air music concerts on the first Sunday of the month at the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage – call the gardens or check with the Singapore Tourism Board (p581) for details.

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

## EAST COAST & CHANGI

Heading east of the city centre, Geylang and Katong, both largely Malay districts rarely frequented by foreign visitors, run down towards East Coast Park. Further east is the Changi Museum and Chapel; and snoozy Changi Village, the jumping-off point for leafy Pulau Ubin.

## Geylang

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 high-rise country, though there are some old shophouses around, especially in the *lorong* (alleys) off Geylang Rd, home to Singapore's red-light district.

Trundle out of the city to Paya Lebar MRT station, from where it's a short walk down Tanjong Katong Rd to Gey-

lang Rd, the area's main shopping street. The **Malay Cultural Village** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6748 4700; malayvil@singnet.com.sg; 39 Geylang Rd; adult/child S\$5/3; 10am-10pm) is a complex of traditional Malay-style houses built as a cultural showpiece, but it's been a bit of a flop; desultory T-shirt vendors grimace optimistically as you traverse the aisles. The admission fee is for a small *kampung* museum.

For more authentic atmosphere duck into the **Geylang Serai Market** (Map pp534-5; 39 Geylang Serai, 10am-10pm) behind some older-style Geylang Rd housing blocks. The entrance through a small lane leads to a crowded, traditional Asian market with baskets of dried fish, squirming toads, stingrays, slippery eels, etc – much more interesting than the supermarket! Watch your step – you don't want to end up sitting in the slime.

## Katong

Down Joo Chiat Rd from the Geylang Serai Market is the Katong district. Along Koon Seng Rd just east of Joo Chiat Rd are some of the finest Peranakan terrace houses (Map pp534-5) 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 p559). Also in this area is the **Katong Antique House** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 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. Ask if he's got any of his S\$4 Peranakan pineapple tarts!

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 pp534-5), stretching for 10km along East Coast Parkway (ECP), is where Singaporeans come to take a dip in the soupy Straits of Singapore, wind-

surf, eat, rent bikes or in-line skates and chill out on the sand. The beach is built on reclaimed land and made from Indonesian sand – it won't win any tropical-paradise awards, but it's popular with families, and the park has some great seafood restaurants (see p560). At night the dozens of ships moored offshore look like another city.

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

## Changi Museum & Chapel

Adjoining the Changi prison, the **Changi Museum & Chapel** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 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. Tucked into the walls beside the altar, with its cross made of ammunition casings, are little mementos and handwritten notes left by visitors.

Bus 2 from Victoria St or Tanah Merah MRT will take you past the entrance – ask the driver to yell out when you're there. The bus terminates at Changi Village.

## Changi Village

On the far northeast coast of Singapore, **Changi Village** (Map pp534-5) is an escape from the city mayhem. The 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. It's packed on weekends but almost deserted during the week. Bus 2 from Victoria St or Tanah Merah MRT runs here.

## Pulau Ubin

A chugging 10-minute bumboat ride (one way S\$2, trips between 6am and 8pm) from Changi Point Ferry Terminal at Changi Village lands you on the shores of Pulau Ubin (Map pp534-5). There's no timetable; boats depart when 12 people are ready to go, which usually doesn't take too long.

Singaporeans like to wax nostalgic about Ubin's *kampung* atmosphere, but it's only a matter of time before the island strays into developers' sights. For the moment though, it remains a rural, unkempt expanse of jungle full of fast lizards, weird shrines and cacophonous birdlife. Battered taxis wait by the pier, chickens squawk and panting dogs slump in the dust.

The best way to get around is by mountain bike (rental per day S\$5-10), which, coincidentally, is also about the only thing to do – the tidal mud flats are no good for swimming and the quarry lakes are off limits.

Veer right from the jetty to the **Pulau Ubin information kiosk** (% 6542 4108; www.nparks.gov.sg; 11 8.30am-5pm) – pick up a half-decent map, and sniff around the exhibition on Ubin's culture, history and wildlife. You can also take a guided trip to the **Tanjong Chek Jawa mangrove swamps** (Map pp534-5) in the island's east from here (call or consult the website for dates; tours per group around S\$60). Alternatively, just trundle off on your bike and see where the road takes you.

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 walk shamelessly from the stereo.

## NORTHERN & CENTRAL SINGAPORE Singapore Zoo

Set on a peninsula jutting into the Upper Seletar Reservoir, the **Singapore Zoo** (Map pp534-5; % 6269 3411; www.zoo.com.sg; 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$15/7.50; 11 8.30am-6pm) is world class. Its 28 landscaped hectares are a far cry from the sad concrete confines some zoos retain.

There are more than 4000 residents here – 410 mammal, bird and reptile species – and most of them, with the possible exceptions of the polar bears and cheetahs, seem pretty happy. Endangered species include Komodo dragons, malodorous white rhinos, a charismatic orang-utan colony, blue-eyed

white tigers, and the world's largest primate collection.

Newer attractions like the 'Australian Outback' exhibit and the 'Hamadryas Baboons – 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.

You can get around the zoo on foot or by tram (adult/child S\$4/2). To get here see below.

## Night Safari

Next door but completely separate from the zoo is the **Night Safari** (Map pp534-5; % 6269 3411; www.zoo.com.sg; 80 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$20/10; 11 7.30pm-midnight). You can walk around the 40-hectare forested park, or clamber aboard the tram (adult/child S\$6/3) for an atmospheric 45-minute jungle tour past a parade of 120 different spottlit nocturnal species, including tigers, lions and leopards. Things can be a bit hit and miss on board – a lot depends on your tram conductor's sense of humour and whether or not the animals come out to play. Expect queues since it's very popular. Don't use the flash on your camera as it unsettles the animals.

The impressive 'Creatures of the Night' show (8pm, 9pm and 10pm) 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\$28/14). Both parks have plenty of food outlets and award-winning toilets!

To get here, make your way to Ang Mo Kio MRT station, then catch bus 138; or Choa Chu Kang MRT, then bus 927. 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). A taxi to/from the city costs around S\$15; there's a taxi rank at the zoo entrance.

## Mandai Orchard Gardens

Cultivating orchids is big business in Singapore – **Mandai Orchard Gardens** (Map pp534-5; % 6269 1036; www.mandai.com.sg; 200 Mandai Lake Rd; adult/child S\$3/1; 11 8.30am-7pm), four flowery hectares near the zoo, is the place to see them. To get here see the transport details on above.

## Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

Singapore's steamy heart of darkness is **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (Map pp534-5; % 1800-468 5736; www.nparks.gov.sg; 177 Hindhede Dr; admission free; 11 7am-7pm), a 164-hectare tract of undeveloped primary rainforest clinging to Singapore's highest peak, Bukit Timah (163m). Established as a reserve in 1883, Bukit Timah has never been logged – the closest it's come to human domination was as a strategic battle point during the WWII Japanese invasion.

Guffawing British naturalist David Bellamy once noted that a measly hectare of Bukit Timah 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, from 20 minutes to one hour return. The steep paths are sweaty work, so take plenty of water, em-balm 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 (Map pp534-5; 11 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.

## Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Take a few hours to explore the fascinating **Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery** (Map pp534-5; % 6453 5300; www.kmspks.org; 88 Bright Hill Rd; admission free; 11 6am-9pm), Singapore's largest. '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. The Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas' golden stupa is lined with 9999 Buddha images – the 10,000th is the big boy inside.

Bus 410 with the white plate (not the green plate) runs here from Bishan MRT station.

## MacRitchie Reservoir

In the middle of the 2000-hectare Central Catchment Nature Reserve is the **MacRitchie Reservoir** (Map pp534-5; % 6256 4248; www.nparks.gov.sg; Lornie Rd; admission free; 11 24hr). The mirror-surfaced reservoir is surrounded by a 12km, four-hour, circular jungle trail with a tree-top walkway (9am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday). The trail is organised into six colour-coded sectors – pick up a map at the Rangers' Office. You can also hire a kayak (p\$32) or go fishing.

Bus 157 runs here from Toa Payoh MRT station.

## Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Attention bird-nerds! The 87-hectare **Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve** (Map pp534-5; % 6794 1401; www.sbwr.org.sg; 301 Neo Tiew Cres; adult/child S\$1/50c; 11 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 and features mangrove boardwalks, walking trails, observation huts and guided tours on Saturdays (9am, 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).

To get here take the MRT to Kranji then bus 925 to Kranji Reservoir bus stop – it's a hot 20-minute hike from here. If you're feeling lazy, the bus stops at the park entrance on Sundays.

## Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

Nestled in a corner of the Toa Payoh HDB housing estate, the photogenic **Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery** (Map pp534-5; % 6259 6924; 184E Jln Toa Payoh; 11 7am-5pm), aka Siang Lim Temple, is a little out of the way, but it's well worth the journey. The atmospheric interior of the 1912 structure soars up to red- and ochre-hued ceilings, thick beams stained with decades of incense smoke. When the rain drowns out the traffic noise, you could be anywhere in time. Surrounded by neatly tended bonsai, the newer temples next door are also beautifully decorated.

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



## Kranji War Cemetery

Near the Causeway off Woodlands Rd, the austere white structures and rolling lawns of the **Kranji War Cemetery** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6269 6158; www.cwgc.com; 9 Woodlands Rd; admission free; 12hr) contain the WWII graves of thousands of Allied troops. Walls are inscribed with the names of 24,346 men and women who lost their lives in Southeast Asia. Register books are available for inspection. To get here catch the MRT to Kranji then walk, or take bus 170 two stops west.

## Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

An 1880s Victorian villa, the **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6256 7377; www.wanqingyuan.com.sg; 12 Tai Gin Rd; adult/child S\$3/2; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 10am-10pm Sat) was once the residence of Sun Yat Sen, celebrated Chinese revolutionary Republican leader. Biographic displays trace his life in great detail from birth, education and revolution to his famed three tenets of society: nationalism, rights and livelihood. Bus 145 or 139 from Toa Payoh bus interchange stops on Balestier Rd nearby.

## Holland Village

The busy expat enclave of Holland Village (Map pp534-5), full of glamorous mums pushing prams between chain coffee-cafés, is a short bus ride from Orchard Rd. If you can weather the unrelenting affluence, whiling away an afternoon at the hip restaurants and bars along Lorong Mambong and Jln Merah Saga isn't a bad way to go.

Until the new Circle Line opens, the nearest MRT station is Buona Vista, a 15-minute walk along Buona Vista Rd. Alternatively, take bus 7 from Orchard MRT, bus 61 from Clarke Quay MRT, or bus 77 from Dhoby Ghaut MRT.

## SOUTHERN & WESTERN SINGAPORE Mt Faber & the Cable Car

Mt Faber (Map pp538-9) stands proud (if not tall) at 116m on the southern fringe of the city, opposite the HarbourFront Centre and not far from Sentosa Island. From the summit, the strange splendour of Singapore rolls away to the horizon in all directions.

To get to the top, ride the spectacular cable car (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6377 9688; www.mountfaber.com.sg; 109 Mt Faber Rd; adult/child one way S\$9.90/4.50;

12hr 8.30am-11pm) from the HarbourFront Centre, or take the shuttle bus from HarbourFront bus terminal. Walking is difficult but rewarding, a maze of steep trails taking you through twisted copses of dense, buzzing forest, with strategically positioned seats, pavilions and lookouts along the way.

Impress the pants off the object of your desires with **Sky Dining** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6277 9633; per couple S\$88-158; 12hr 6.30-8.30pm) in the cable car – a romantic three-course dinner with plummeting 70m-high views. An interesting spot to get steamy; a bad place to break up. Book two working days in advance.

## Haw Par Villa

'That which is derived from society should be returned to society' said Aw Boon, heir to the Tiger Balm miracle-ointment fortune. A million dollars later, what he returned was the **Haw Par Villa** (Chinese Mythology Theme Park; Map pp534-5; ☎ 6872 2780; www.visitsingapore.com; 262 Pasir Panjang Rd; adult/child S\$1/50c; 12hr 9am-7pm). The family's glamorous villa is long gone, but the park is worth a look if only for the unbelievably kitsch 'Ten Courts of Hell' inside an enormous concrete omelette – grotesque statues depict sinners' fates in gory detail.

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

## NUS Museums

At the Chinese Cultural Centre on the National University of Singapore (NUS) campus, this trio of small art museums (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6516 4617; www.nus.edu.sg/museums; 50 Kent Ridge Cres; admission free; 12hr 10-5pm Mon-Sat) houses an impressive collection.

On the ground floor is the **Lee Kong Chian Art Museum** with visiting exhibitions and works spanning 7000 years of Chinese art. The concourse (entry) level features the **South & Southeast Asian Gallery** with art from across the region, including textiles and sculptures. Upstairs is the **Ng Eng Teng Gallery** displaying paintings, drawings and sculptures by Ng Eng Teng (1934-2001), one of Singapore's foremost artists specialising in imaginative, sometimes surreal, bodily depictions.

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

## Jurong Bird Park

Built to give Singaporeans a dose of nature, the **Jurong Bird Park** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6265 0022; www.birdpark.com.sg; 2 Jurong Hill; adult/child S\$14/7, panorail S\$4/2; 12hr 8am-6pm) is home to 8000 birds – 600 species, 30 of them endangered. Highlights include the Antarctic Penguin Parade, the Waterfall Aviary (with its 30m-high custom-made waterfall), and the nocturnal World of Darkness. There are various flappy-bird shows throughout the day – Birds of Prey at 10am and 4pm, and the All-Star Birdshow at 11am and 3pm are highlights – and a 'panorail' to shunt you around if you're feeling lazy.

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

While you're in this neck of the woods, check out the **Jurong Reptile Park** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6261 8866; www.reptilepark.com.sg; 241 Jln Ahmad Ibrahim; adult/child S\$8/7.50; 12hr 9am-6pm), across the car park from the bird park. It's a little run-down and probably not much fun for the crocodiles (they also appear on the park restaurant's menu), but kids will get a kick out of the croc feeding (10.30am and 5pm), giant tortoises, Komodo dragons and pythons. There's a reptile show at 11.45am and 2pm.

## Singapore Science Centre & Snow City

The endearingly geeky **Singapore Science Centre** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6425 2500; www.science.edu.sg; 15 Science Centre Rd; adult/child S\$6/3; 12hr 10am-6pm Sat-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri) attracts kids like flies (plus a few adults pretending they're not interested). It's chock-full of exhibits, with regular demonstrations and plenty of push/pull/twist-and-see-what-happens action. Outside is the free **Kinetic Garden**, an interactive scientific sculpture garden. Next door, the **Omni-Theatre** (Map pp534-5; adult/child S\$10/5; 12hr 11am-8pm) projects 3-D films (about space, dolphins etc) onto a 23m hemispheric screen and blasts your eardrums with 20,000 watts of sound.

Also nearby is **Snow City** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6560 2306; www.snowcity.com.sg; 21 Jurong Town Hall Rd; admission 1/2hr S\$12/18; 12hr 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun), where you can refrigerate each other with a few well-aimed snowballs. It will seem pretty lame if you're from anywhere cold, but the 60m toboggan slope regularly blows Singaporean minds. Admission includes jackets, boots and snow-tubes – bring socks, and call ahead for times as there are various snow sessions each day.

Jurong East is the nearest MRT station – take the left-hand exit, walk through the shopping centre and across Jurong Town Hall Rd. A taxi from Orchard Rd will take around 20 minutes and cost around S\$15.

## Reflections at Bukit Chandu

Atop Bukit Chandu (Opium Hill), this WWII interpretive centre (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6375 2510; www.s1942.org.sg; 31K Pepsys Rd; admission S\$2; 12hr 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is inside a renovated villa. The focus is on the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Malay Regiment, who bravely defended the hill against the Japanese in the Battle of Pasir Panjang in February 1942. This was the last major battle for Singapore, the Malay battalions no match for 13,000 Japanese soldiers. Hi-tech displays, films and audio effects transport you to the battle scene.

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 the nearest MRT station, at Queens-town, will cost around S\$6.

## Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research

The small **Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6874 5082; www.rmbur.nus.edu.sg; Block 56, Level 3, NUS Faculty of Science, Science Dr 2, Lower Kent Ridge Rd; admission free; 12hr 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) on the National University of Singapore campus honours Sir Stamford Raffles' work as a naturalist. There are stuffed and preserved examples of rare and locally extinct creatures, including a tiger, a leopard cat, Atlas moths as big as your face, and a 4.42m king cobra killed quite recently at the Singapore Country Club. It's not exactly on the tourist trail, but it's worth the trip, especially if you combine it with the NUS Museums (opposite) nearby. Catch bus 95 from Buona Vista MRT.

## Chinese & Japanese Gardens

The highlights of the 13-hectare **Chinese Gardens** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6261 3632; explore@juronggardens.com; 1 Chinese Garden Rd; admission free; 12hr 6am-11pm), on an island in Jurong Lake, are the 176-step pagoda and the contorted Chinese bonsai (the 300-year-old *Pemphis acidula* steals the show). Pre-wedding photo sessions dominate weekend proceedings. At the time of writing, the Japanese Gardens were undergoing wholesale renovations.

Chinese Garden MRT station is a two-minute walk away.

## SENTOSA ISLAND

Five hundred metres off the south coast of Singapore is **Sentosa Island** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 1800-736 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.

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 you can stay overnight (see p553). 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, ranging from adult/child S\$25.90/17.90 to S\$32.50/22.50. The *Sentosa Island Guide* brochure from Singapore Tourism Board (STB) branches has all the details. Free stuff on the island includes the buses, beaches, and the nightly musical fountain and laser show.

## Underwater World

Sentosa's saving grace, Gracie the dugong is the star performer at **Underwater World** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6275 0030; www.underwaterworld.com.sg; adult/child S\$19.50/12.50; 9am-9pm). Leafy sea dragons and wobbling Medusa jellyfish are mesmeric, while stingrays and 10ft sharks cruise inches from your face as they traverse Ocean Colony's submerged glass tubes. Watch divers feeding the fish, or muster some nerve for the 30-minute *Dive with the Sharks* experience (from S\$95 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 pp534-5; 10.30am-6pm) at Palawan Beach where Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphins (aka pink dolphins) dutifully perform at 11am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm and 5.30pm. For S\$120 you can swim with the dolphins (9.45am, Thursday to Tuesday).

## Fort Siloso

Dating from the 1880s, when Sentosa was called Pulau Blakang Mati (Malay for 'Island behind which lies death'), is **Fort Siloso** (Map pp534-5; adult/child S\$8/5; 10am-6pm). Three self-guided tours lead you around the fort's various gun emplacements, tunnels and buildings, with waxwork re-creations and voice-overs. When it came to the crunch in the WWII Japanese invasion, Siloso's guns were all pointing the wrong way. The Japanese used the fort as a POW camp.

From 1989 until 1993, 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 pp534-5; adult/child S\$9/7; 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. The 'Festivals of Singapore' section is colourful; the 'Stories of the Sea' exhibition offers an interactive 'all-sensory' journey through Singapore's maritime heritage.

## Beaches

Sentosa's three southern beaches – **Siloso** to the west, **Palawan** in the middle and **Tanjong Beach** to the east – will never match the Malaysians or Indonesian islands, but the sandy coconut vibe is soporific even if the muddy Straits of Singapore is a little uninviting.

## Other Attractions

The free **Musical Fountain** (Map pp534-5; 5pm & 5.30pm) followed by the **Magical Sentosa Show** (Map pp534-5; 7.40 & 8.40pm) combine musical gushings with a spectacular S\$4 million sound, light and laser nightly extravaganza – worth hanging around for.

You'll be fluttered by more than 50 species of butterfly inside the **Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom** (Map pp534-5; adult/child S\$10/6; 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.

Among the trashier of Sentosa's attractions are the **Merlion** (Map pp534-5; 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. **Cinema** (Map pp534-5; adult/child S\$12.50/8; 11am-8pm) offers two different 3-D virtual-reality thrill rides per admission. The **Dragon Trail Nature Walk** has been typically livened up with plaster dragons and fossils. There are plenty of long-tailed macaques (monkeys) about – keep your food hidden!

Resembling a camembert impaled on a carrot, one of Sentosa's newer tourist magnets is the **Carlsberg Sky Tower** (Map pp534-5; adult/child S\$10/6; 9am-9pm). Take the slow ride up the 131m column for magical Singapore views. More terrifying is the prospect of the 'Carlsberg Float' – a beer and ice-cream monstrosity at the bar. Also new is the bone-rattling 650m downhill run of the **Sentosa Luge** (Map pp534-5; per ride S\$8; 10am-6pm).

## Getting There & Away

The easiest way to get to Sentosa is the orange shuttle bus from HarbourFront MRT station, running every 15 minutes from 7am to 11pm Sunday to Thursday, and until 12.30am on Friday and Saturday. You pay S\$3 (S\$2 admission and S\$1 for the bus) when you get to the Visitor Arrival Centre.

For a more memorable trip with eye-popping views, take the cable car to Sentosa from the top of Mt Faber or Cable Car Towers adjacent to the HarbourFront Centre (see p524). Standard cabins cost S\$9.90/4.50 for adults/children one way, operating between 8.30am and 11pm.

A Sentosa Express rail link from the mammoth new VivoCity (Map pp534-5) shopping/entertainment complex next to HarbourFront MRT should be up and running by 2007. You can also walk across the western side of the bridge to the island, but no-one ever does – reason enough to do it!

## Getting Around

Transport on the island is included in the admission price. There are four colour-coded bus lines zooming between attractions, and motorised trams connecting the beaches. Theoretically it's pedestrian-

friendly, but footpaths are intermittent, it's steep, hot and sticky, and you'll get some curious looks from air-conditioned tourist busloads as you stomp around. 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.

## ST JOHN'S & KUSU ISLANDS

Two other islands popular with castaway-fantasising locals are St John's (Pulau Saki-jang Bendera) and Kusu (Pulau Tembakul). On weekends they're crowded but during the week they can be almost deserted – good for a swim and a picnic, though the water is sometimes opaque. Both islands have changing rooms and toilets.

St John's Island (Map pp534-5) is the bigger of the two. It was once a quarantine station for immigrants, a drug rehabilitation centre and a prison. There's not much to do here other than traverse some rather uninspiring concrete pathways and chill out in shady picnic areas. Bring your lunch, as the culinary offerings here are limited. You can stay overnight in air-conditioned colonial-style bungalows (from S\$82.50 per night) – contact the **Sentosa Development Corporation** (☎ 1800-736 8672, 6279 1157) for details.

Kusu Island (Map pp534-5) is more interesting; devotees coming to pray for health, wealth and fertility at its Taoist temple and Malay *kramat* (shrine). There's a turtle sanctuary and the Tua Pek Kong Temple next to the ferry jetty; the yellow-painted *kramat* is at the top of some steep steps on a small hill. 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. Again, BYO food and drinks.

The liveliest time to visit Kusu is during the annual pilgrimage of Taoists in the ninth lunar month (around October). Ferries chug out from Marina South Pier all day long; try to avoid weekends when the island almost sinks under the weight of visitors.

## Getting There & Away

The ferry from **Sentosa Ferry Terminal** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6275 03888; adult/child return S\$11/8; 10am & 1.30pm Mon-Sat, every 2hr 9am-5pm Sun) runs to Kusu and then St John's. The only way to see both islands if you don't want to hang around for hours on Kusu or stay



overnight on St John's is on Sundays when you can hop off the ferry at Kusu, then get on the next one to St John's.

During the Kusu pilgrimage, ferries leave every 30 minutes from Marina South Pier (round trip Monday to Saturday S\$11, Sunday S\$12). Most harbour cruises also pass St John's Island and stop at Kusu for 20 minutes or so (see p533).

## OTHER SOUTHERN ISLANDS

Many of the islands off Singapore's southern shore have refineries on them generating much of Singapore's export income.

Relatively unspoilt are the **Sisters' Islands** (Map pp534–5) – Pulau Subar Darat and Pulau Subar Laut – and **Lazarus Island** (Map pp534–5). The sea here is clearer than on Kusu or St John's, and nearby coral reefs are good for divers. BYO food, water and diving gear.

To reach these islands you can rent a bumboat, with operator, from Marina South Pier. Expect to pay around S\$100 per hour per boat, which takes from six to 12 people. You can approach individual boat owners or contact the **Singapore Motor Launch Owners' Association** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6532 5656) at Marina South Pier.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

With so many cultures and religions, there are an astounding number of celebrations in Singapore. Some have fixed dates, but Hindus, Muslims and Chinese follow a lunar calendar that varies annually. See the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) *Festivals & Events* brochure or check out [www.visitsingapore.com.sg](http://www.visitsingapore.com.sg) for exact dates.

### January–February

**Ponggal** A four-day harvest festival celebrated by South Indians.

**Chingay** Singapore's biggest street parade rolls along Orchard Rd on the 22nd day after the Chinese New Year.

**Chinese New Year** Dragon dances, fireworks and over-the-top parades in Chinatown.

**Thaipusam** A dramatic Hindu festival honouring Lord Subramaniam; involves amazing acts of piercing and physical resilience.

### March–April

**Qing Ming Festival** The Chinese visit ancestral tombs and make offerings.

**Good Friday** A candlelit crucifixion procession at St Joseph's Church (Map p540).

**Take Art!** A month-long season of local and international art events, including the Singapore International Comedy Festival (☎ 6250 3347) and Singapore International Film Festival ([www.filmfest.org.sg](http://www.filmfest.org.sg)).

**Birthday of the Goddess of Mercy** Offerings are made to Guan Yin at temples across the region (the first of her three birthdays!).

**Birthday of the Monkey God** T'se Tien Tai Seng Yeh's birthday is celebrated twice a year. Entranced mediums pierce their cheeks and tongues and write charms in blood.

### April–May

**Chithirai Vishu** Start of the Hindu New Year.

**Birthday of the Queen of Heaven** Ma Cho Po, queen of heaven and sea goddess, is honoured.

**Vesak Day** A celebration of all things Buddha: birth, death and enlightenment.

### May–June

**Birthday of the Third Prince** The Chinese child-god is honoured with processions; entranced devotees spear themselves with spikes and swords.

**Dragon Boat Festival** Rice-dumpling-fuelled boat races across Marina Bay and offshore at East Coast Park.

**Great Singapore Sale** A two-month shopping extravaganza zooming in on Orchard Rd.

**Singapore Arts Festival** ([www.singaporeartsfest.com](http://www.singaporeartsfest.com)) Singapore's premier arts festival with world-class art, dance, drama and music.

**Birthday of the God of War** Kuan Ti's big day.

## ACTIVITIES

### CYCLING

You can hire a bike and trundle along the foreshore at East Coast Park, or on Pulau Ubin for between S\$5 and S\$10 per hour, depending on the quality of the bike.

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 beach – see p527.

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

Timah Nature Reserve (p523). For bike-hire there's **Trekology Bikes 3** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6732 7119; 01-02 Tanglin Pl, 91 Tanglin Rd; 24hr hire S\$35; ⌚ 11am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-3pm Sun).

**Two Wheel Action** (☎ 6471 2775; [www.twa.com.sg](http://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 pre-arranged point, then propel yourself into it. Cost is S\$10 per session.

### GOLF

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

### July

**Singapore Food Festival** ([www.singaporefoodfestival.com](http://www.singaporefoodfestival.com)) A month-long culinary fiesta, including the two-week World Gourmet Summit (see [www.worldgourmetsummit.com](http://www.worldgourmetsummit.com)).

### August

**National Day** Military and civilian pomp, circumstance and fireworks celebrate Singapore's 1965 independence on 9 August.

### August–September

**Prophet Mohammed's Birthday** Muslims pray and religious leaders recite verses from the Quran.

**Sri Krishna Jayanti** A 10-day Hindu festival celebrating momentous events in Krishna's life.

**Vinayagar Chathuri** Prayers are offered to Vinayagar, aka Ganesh, the elephant-headed god.

### September–October

**Festival of the Hungry Ghosts** The souls of the dead are released for feasting and entertainment on Earth.

**Birthday of the Monkey God** T'se Tien Tai Seng Yeh's second annual birthday party; see opposite.

**Mooncake Festival** The Mongol warlords' demise in ancient China is celebrated with mooncakes and colourful lanterns.

**Navarathri** A Hindu festival celebrating the wives of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma.

**For Art's Sake!** Encompasses the WOMAD world music festival and ARTSingapore, a contemporary Southeast Asian Art fair.

### October–November

**Hari Raya Puasa** Date varies based on Islamic calendar. A three-day celebration marking the end of Ramadan, the month-long Muslim fast.

**Kusu Island Pilgrimage** Tua Pek Kong, the god of prosperity, is honoured by Taoists who make a pilgrimage to his Kusu shrine.

**Thimithi** Hindu devotees hot-foot it across glowing coals at the Sri Mariamman Temple (p517).

**Deepavali** Little India is a month-long blaze of lights during this most important Hindu festival.

**Singapore River Buskers Festival** Bring your earplugs.

**Festival of the Nine Emperor Gods** Nine days of Chinese operas, processions and events.

### December

**Hari Raya Haji** Muslim festival honouring the conclusion of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

**Winter Solstice Festival** A Chinese harvest festival.

**Christmas Day** Christians celebrate the birth of Christ on 25 December.

There are two 18-hole golf courses at the **Sentosa Golf Club** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6275 0022; 18 holes S\$200-280). If long par fours don't appeal, **Sijori Wondergolf** (Map pp534-5; adult S\$8-10, child S\$4-7; 11 9am-7pm) offers 54 putting greens in three wacky courses, two of international tournament standard.

Most other clubs are members only, but the following courses will let you tee-off for S\$20 to S\$40 for nine holes on weekdays, or S\$30 to S\$50 on weekends:

**Executive Golf Course** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6556 0600; Upper Seletar Reservoir, Mandai Rd)

**Green Fairways** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6468 7233; 60 Fairways Dr)

**Seletar Base Golf Course** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6481 4745; 244 Oxford St, Seletar Base)

**Tanglin Golf Course** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6473 7236; Minden Rd)

## GYMS

Most big hotels have gyms, or gym junkies can head to **Fitness First** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6737 7889; 05-01 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd; per session S\$40; 11 6.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun).

The gym at **Amrita Spa** (Map p540; ☎ 6336 4477; www.amritaspas.com; 06-01 Raffles The Plaza, 80 Bras Basah Rd; per session S\$63; 11 5.30am-11pm) has all the requisite gadgets.

## JUNGLE TREKKING

Singapore can't offer anything on the same scale as Malaysia, but there are some verdant day-walks at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (p523) and around MacRitchie Reservoir (p523).

## KICKBOXING

Shake the aeroplane seat out of your spine with a free trial class at **TNT Kickboxing** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6222 5829; www.tntkickboxing.com.sg; 03-01 21 Tanjong Pagar Rd). Internationally accredited instructors can make your session as intense as you need it to be, with a full kit of punching bags, gloves and pads. Follow-up sessions are S\$30.

## KITE FLYING

Kite flying has a long tradition in Chinese culture – Singapore has some good open spaces and plenty of breeze to get airborne. **Go Fly Kite** (Map p540; ☎ 6536 9181; www.goflykite.com; 02-12/13 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Rd; 11 1-11pm Mon-Sat) sells kites and runs kite-making workshops, complete with flight simulator!

## DRAGONBOAT RACING

Sweat off your Friday night hangover with a frenzied paddle in a dragonboat! Every Saturday between 4pm and 6pm the **British Dragonboat Team** (☎ 9121 8103; www.britishdragonboat.com) meets at the Water Sports Centre, 10 Stadium Lane, a short walk from the Indoor Stadium at Kallang (Map pp538-9). You don't need to be British, or even an expat, to join in – just contact them to tell them you're coming, bring S\$10, a change of clothes and some water to drink on the boat. Refreshments are provided afterwards. Competitions are held occasionally between the different dragonboat teams.

## POOL & SNOOKER

Singaporeans *love* to play pool. Chalk your cue at **Pool Fusion** (Map p540; ☎ 6338 8329; abl122@singnet.com.sg; 02-00 Midland House, 112 Middle Rd; per hr S\$10.50; 11 noon-3am), or bend elbows with raucous teens at **SuperCue** (Map p540; ☎ 6334 1000; www.superbowl.com.sg; 03-200 Marina Sq, 6 Raffles Blvd; per hr S\$10.20; 11 10am-1am Sun-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat).

## RACKET SPORTS

Hire a tennis court (S\$3.50 per hour before 6pm, S\$9.60 after 6pm) or squash court (S\$5 per hour before 6pm, S\$10 after 6pm) at the **Kallang Squash & Tennis Centre** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6348 1291; www.ibook.ssc.gov.sg; 52 Stadium Rd; 11 7am-10pm). A court at the **Singapore Tennis Centre** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6241 8070; tennis@singnet.com.sg; 1020 East Coast Parkway; 11 7am-11pm) costs S\$10 per hour before 6pm, and S\$14 after 6pm. Lessons are S\$50.

You can also whack shuttlecocks around at **Singapore Badminton Hall** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6344 1773; www.singaporebadminton.org.sg; 02-03 102 Guillemard Rd; 11 noon-10pm). Bookings are essential; court fees start at S\$5.25 off-peak.

## ROCK CLIMBING

**Dairy Farm Quarry** (Map pp534-5; 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 – contact **Campers' Corner** (Map p540; ☎ 6337 4743; www.camperscorner.com.sg; 01-13 Capitol Bldg, 11 Stamford Rd;

11 noon-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun) to rope yourself onto an expedition.

## SPAS & MASSAGE

Massage, beauty treatments and reflexology are regulation Singaporean indulgences – everyone seems to have clear skin, clean nails and lustroously flowing hair. Check yourself into a day spa for an overhaul!

**Amrita Spa** (Map p540; ☎ 6336 4477; www.amritaspas.com; 06-01 Raffles The Plaza, 80 Bras Basah Rd; 11 10am-10pm) covers all the bases: massage (55 minutes S\$105), facials (S\$90 to S\$280), wraps (S\$105 to S\$155), manicures (S\$40), pedicures (S\$45), waxing (S\$25 to S\$80), and 'Ritual Packages' complete with disposable underwear (S\$155 to S\$365).

**Kenko Wellness Boutique** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6223 0303; www.kenko.com.sg; 199 South Bridge Rd; 11 10am-10pm) is the McDonalds of Singapore's spas with branches scattered throughout the city, but there is nothing drive-thru about its foot reflexology (30 minutes S\$33), romantic couples' sessions (2½ hours S\$328), or its Chinese/Swedish massage (30 minutes S\$49; note, Chinese involves rather forceful elbows!).

**Red Peach Boutique Spa** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6324 1250; spa@thredpeach.com; 66/68 Pagoda St; 11 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-7.30pm Sun) offers peachy body scrubs (S\$68), waxing (S\$25 to S\$70) and aromatic facials (S\$70 to S\$160). Ear candling (S\$58) will clear your jet-lagged head.

The manicures (S\$25) and pedicures (S\$35) at **Snails the Nail Spa** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6738 0100; 03-01 Wheelock Pl, 501 Orchard Rd; 11 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) are sublime, or submit yourself to the glamorous 'Dead & Fossilised' treatment (S\$65).

On Sentosa, **Spa Botanica** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6371 1318; www.spabotanica.com; Sentosa Resort & Spa, 2 Bukit Manis Rd, Sentosa; 11 10am-10pm) was Singapore's first indoor/outdoor spa. The signature **Galaxy Steam Bath** (S\$110) is a 45-minute wallow in medicinal chakra mud in a specially designed steam room.

**Spa Esprit Downtown** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6836 0500; www.spa-esprit.com; 05-10 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd; 11 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) offers massage (S\$95 to S\$165 per hour), facials (S\$90 to S\$220) and waxing (S\$15 to S\$52). Boost your circulation with the 'Vampirella Wrap' (S\$150), or vanquish 'cottage-cheese thighs' (their words, not ours) with the mechanised 'Endo Pump' (S\$140).

## SWIMMING

Given the polluted waters, Singapore's beaches aren't particularly swim-friendly, although there are safe swimming areas at East Coast Park, Sentosa and the southern islands (Map pp534-5). Alternatively, Singapore's 50m public swimming pools (per adult/child S\$1.30/1, open from 8am to 9.30pm) are winners:

**Delta Swimming Complex** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6474 7573; 900 Tiong Bahru Rd)

**Jalan Besar Swimming Complex** (Map p537; ☎ 6293 9058; 100 Tyrwhitt Rd)

**Katong Swimming Complex** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6344 9609; 111 Wilkinson Rd)

**Serangoon Swimming Complex** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6288 4606; 35A Yio Chu Kang Rd)

## TENPIN BOWLING

Just what the government ordered – good, clean family fun! **SuperBowl** (Map p540; ☎ 6334 1000; www.superbowl.com.sg; 03-200 Marina Sq, 6 Raffles Blvd; per 5 games S\$15; 11 10am-3am) 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.

We're not sure if it has any fresh pasta, but the **Pasta Fresca Seasport Centre** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6449 1855; members@pastafrescaseasportcentre.com.sg; 1212 East Coast Parkway; 11 9am-6.30pm) serves up some tasty windsurfing and sailing options. Sailboards cost S\$30 for two hours' hire; lessons are available. It also rents laser-class boats for S\$30 per hour and organises sailing courses.

The **Singapore Waterski & Wakeboard Federation** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6344 8813; www.swwf.org.sg; Water Sports Centre, 10 Stadium Lane, Kallang) runs water-skiing and wakeboarding lessons (from S\$90 per hour on weekdays, S\$120 on weekends). Call for details and bookings.

## BABYSITTING

The **YMCA Metropolitan** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6839 8333; www.ymca.sg; 60 Stevens Rd) operates a creche open to the children of the world at a charge of S\$25 per day. Alternatively, ask your hotel to organise a babysitter for you – it'll often allocate an experienced kid-proof member of staff to the job.

**Ski 360°** (Map pp534-5; % 6442 7318; www.ski360degree.com; per hr Mon-Fri S\$30, per hr Sat & Sun S\$40; 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun) is a new 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 pp534-5; % 6258 0057; Lornie Rd, MacRitchie Reservoir; 1-1/2-hr rental S\$10/15; 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) at MacRitchie Reservoir. To get here, take bus 157 from Toa Payoh MRT station.

## YOGA

The **Shambhala Yoga Centre** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 2163; www.comoshambhala.bz; 06-05 Forum, 583 Orchard Rd; 1½-hr class S\$28; 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat & Sun) has Hatha, Iyengar, Vinyasa and Ashtanga classes, and Pilates.

## SINGAPORE FOR CHILDREN

With its clean, safe streets and family-centric values, Singapore is cool for kids. Most restaurants can accommodate family feeds; most hotels have family rooms, extra beds and cots. Children under 90cm tall ride free on the MRT and often receive admission discounts around town.

There are plenty of places where kids can burn off excess energy. Try the **Singapore Botanic Gardens** (p520) or the Kinetic Garden at the **Singapore Science Centre** (p525). **Snow City** (p525) provides a chilly escape from the humidity, and there's a brand spankin' new **Skate Park** (Map pp544-5) near Somerset MRT on Penang Rd. Hire bikes and in-line skates at **East Coast Park** (p521), **Sentosa** (p527) and on **Pulau Ubin** (p522).

For lessons on local wildlife beat a path to the **Singapore Zoo** (p522) and **Night Safari** (p522), **Jurong Bird Park** (p525), **Jurong Reptile Park** (p525) and Sentosa's **Underwater World** (p526). Kids' sculpture classes at **Sculpture Square** (Map p540; % 6333 1055; www.sculpturesq.com.sg; 155 Middle Rd) nurture prospective Rodins.

**Wild Wild Wet** (Map pp534-5; % 6581 9128; www.wildwildwet.com; 1 Pasir Ris Close; adult/child S\$12.90/8.80; 9am-7pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) is tons of watery fun – there's a four-storey speed slide, a Jacuzzi and a 'river' that floats you around the park. Pasir Ris is the nearest MRT station, or take buses 3, 6, 21, 89 or 354.

Designed for under-fives, classes at **Gymboree** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 5290; gymboree@singnet.com.sg; 03-17/18 Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd; 9.30am-7pm) identifies whether your kid is a 'logical thinker', 'emerging creative' or 'thoughtful observer' (or maybe they just like drooling and bumping into things). A two-hour trial class is S\$30.

The **wet markets** at the Chinatown Complex (Map pp542-3), Tekka Centre (Map p537) and Geylang Serai Market (Map pp534-5) are squelchy good fun for kids, with baskets of stinky fish, squirming toads, stingrays, slippery eels etc.

Stamp-obsessed kids will get a kick out of the **Singapore Philatelic Museum** (Map p540; % 6337 3888; www.spm.org.sg; 23B Coleman St; adult/child S\$5/4; 1-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) – stamps, spiffy post boxes and notorious philatelists.

The self-proclaimed 'wacky' **Duck Tour** (opposite) is an amphibious city cruise the kids will enjoy. Guaranteed to bring a smile to everyone's face is a splash through the leaping, squirting **fountain** at Parco Bugis Junction (p574), and of course there's always **Sentosa** (p526) for beaches, the cable car and a slew of other diversions.

See www.sg/kids/index.htm for more ideas.

# COURSES

## COOKING

If you learn how to cook Singapore-style, you won't need to come back! Cooking classes generally run from two to four hours; some are hands-on, most are instruction only. Call for bookings and schedules.

**at-sunrice** (Map p540; % 6336 3307; www.at-sunrice.com; Fort Canning Centre, Fort Canning Park; classes S\$75-100) Half-day classes with a spicy hands-on emphasis.

**Cookery Magic** (Map pp534-5; % 6348 9667; www.cookerymagic.com; Haig Rd, Katong; classes S\$50-60) Ruxana's beginners classes in her own home. Paya Lebar is the closest MRT station.

**Coriander Leaf** (Map p540; % 6732 3354; www.corianderleaf.com; 02-03 Clarke Quay; classes from

S\$110) Chef Sami (a Pakistani New Yorker) instructs small groups in preparing pan-Asian and Euro delights.

**Raffles Culinary Academy** (Map p540; % 6412 1256; www.affleshotel.com; 02-17 Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Rd; sessions S\$65-130) Chinese, Indian and Thai straight from Raffles' kitchens. Few sessions are hands-on, but you do get lunch or dinner afterwards.

**Shermay's Cooking School** (Map pp534-5; % 6479 8442; www.shermay.com; 03-64 Block 43 Jln Merah Saga, Chip Bee Gardens, Holland Village; S\$50-60) Singaporean, Peranakan and chocolate are Shermay's faves! Buses 7, 61 and 77 will get you here.

## DANCING

**Singapore Dance Theatre** (Map p540; % 6338 0611; www.singaporedancetheatre.com; 2nd storey, Fort Canning Centre, Fort Canning Park) If you're in Singapore for a while, this group runs evening adult dance classes, specialising in ballet, jazz ballet, Japanese classical, Pilates and modern. Eight lessons cost between S\$120 and S\$200. BYO leotard.

**Youthopia** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 4233; www.youthopia.org.sg; 113 Somerset Rd) At the National Youth Centre, this place runs 'B-Boy Floorskillz' breakdancing classes for prospective homies from da 'hood. Eight lessons will set you back S\$110 – perfect your head-spin, then serve it up at the City Hall MRT concourse on Friday and Saturday nights (see p519).

## PEWTERSMTING

Royal Selangor (p114), purveyor of fine pewter, runs the **School Of Hard Knocks** (Map p540; % 6268 9600; www.royalselangor.com.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 dish you make and your natty SOHN apron.

# TOURS

The Singapore Tourism Board (p581) books a range of tours and publishes a handful of free, self-guided walking tour brochures. The **SIA Hop-On, CityBuzz** and **Singapore Trolley** tourist buses (p586) traverse Singapore's most-loved sites. See also the **Trishaws** boxed text (p586).

## FOOD TOURS

**Food Safari Tours** (% 6438 4038; www.makansutra.com) runs four-hour foodie tours (from S\$100), usually including three pit-stops. Options include the North-South-East-

## MEDICAL TOURISM

Fancy some cosmetic dentistry, angioplasty or perhaps a quick breast augmentation to really make your holiday memorable? Thailand and India are leading the pan-Asian boom in medical tourism, but Singapore isn't far behind. With affordable costs (10 times cheaper than the US), high-standard facilities and top-notch doctors, it's no wonder Westerners are queuing up for surgery after a morning shopping spree on Orchard Rd.

And then there's your five-star hotel to recover in – after a few laps of the pool, your new hip will feel as good as new. Curious? Contact the **Singapore Tourism Board** (p581) for advice, or check out www.singaporemedicine.com.

**West Tour** (street food), **Multicultural Tour** (Little India, Chinatown, Geylang and Katong), **Uniquely Singapore Tour** (laksa, fish-head curry, chicken rice etc) and **Mid-night Tour**.

## HARBOUR CRUISES

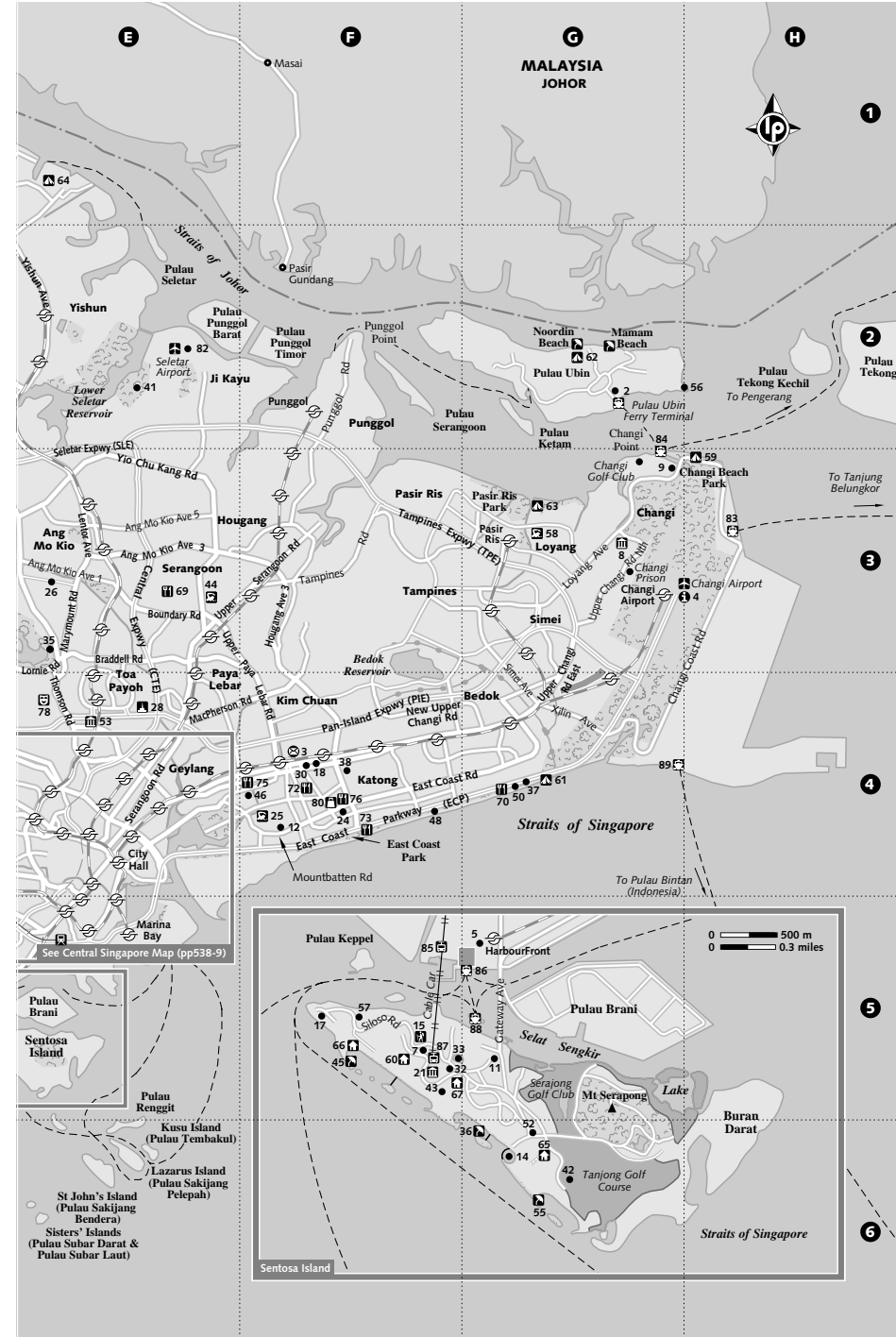
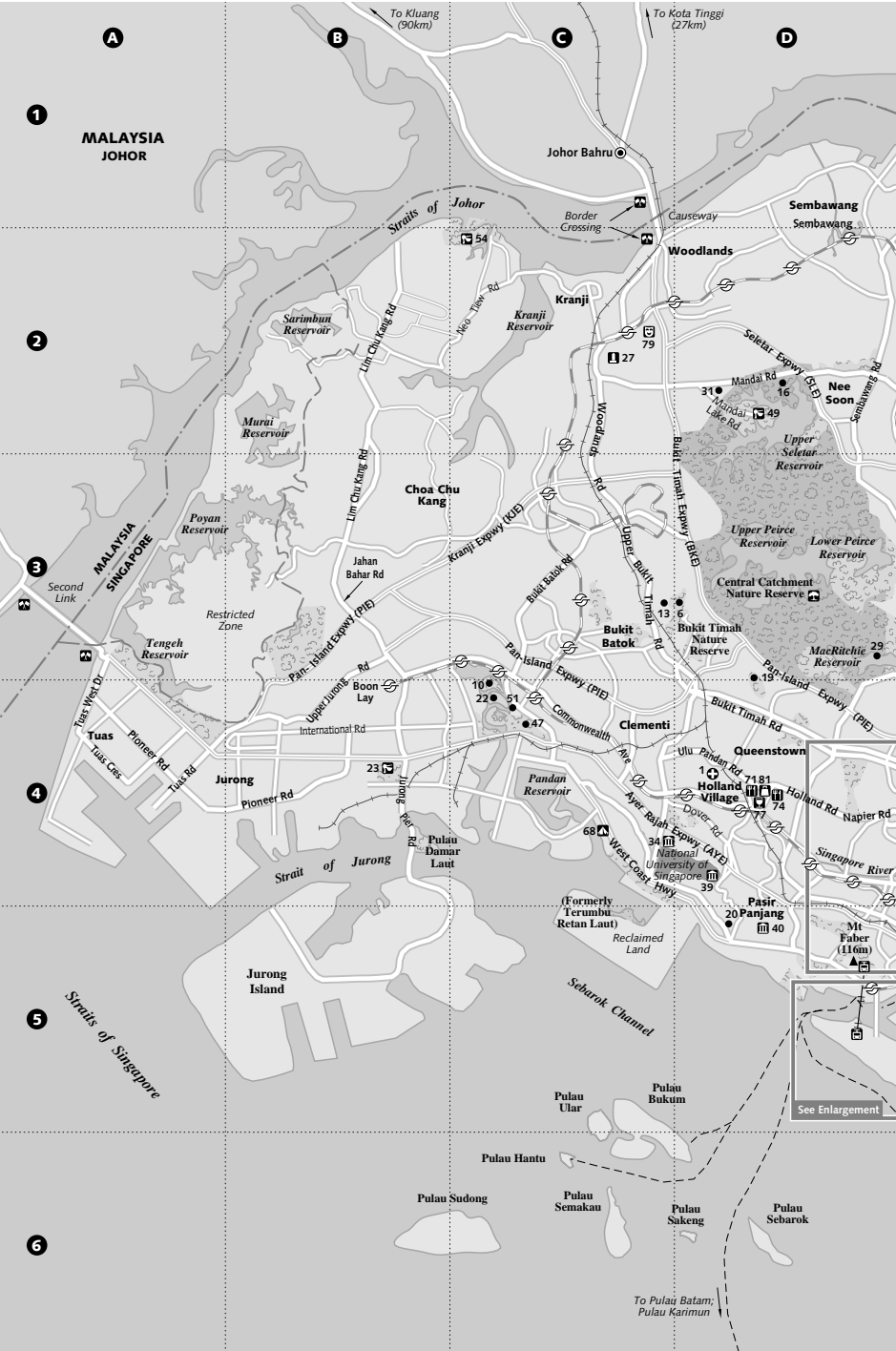
A host of operators has harbour cruises departing from South Marina Pier (Map pp542-3), east of Marina Bay MRT. **Eastwind Harbour Cruises** (Map pp542-3; % 6533 3432; www.fairwind.com.sg) The Chinese junk owned by this outfit recently burned to the sea floor, but its back-up boats still do 40-minute daytime cruises (adult/child S\$22/15) departing South Marina Pier hourly, and 2½-hour 6pm evening cruises with buffet dinner (S\$36/18). Tours take in Singapore's waterfront and southern islands.

**Cheng Ho Harbour Cruise** (Map pp542-3; % 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 South Marina Pier at 10.30am (adult/child S\$25/12) and 3pm (adult/child including afternoon tea S\$29/14). Its two-hour dinner cruise (adult/child S\$53/27) leaves at 6.30pm and loops past Sentosa.

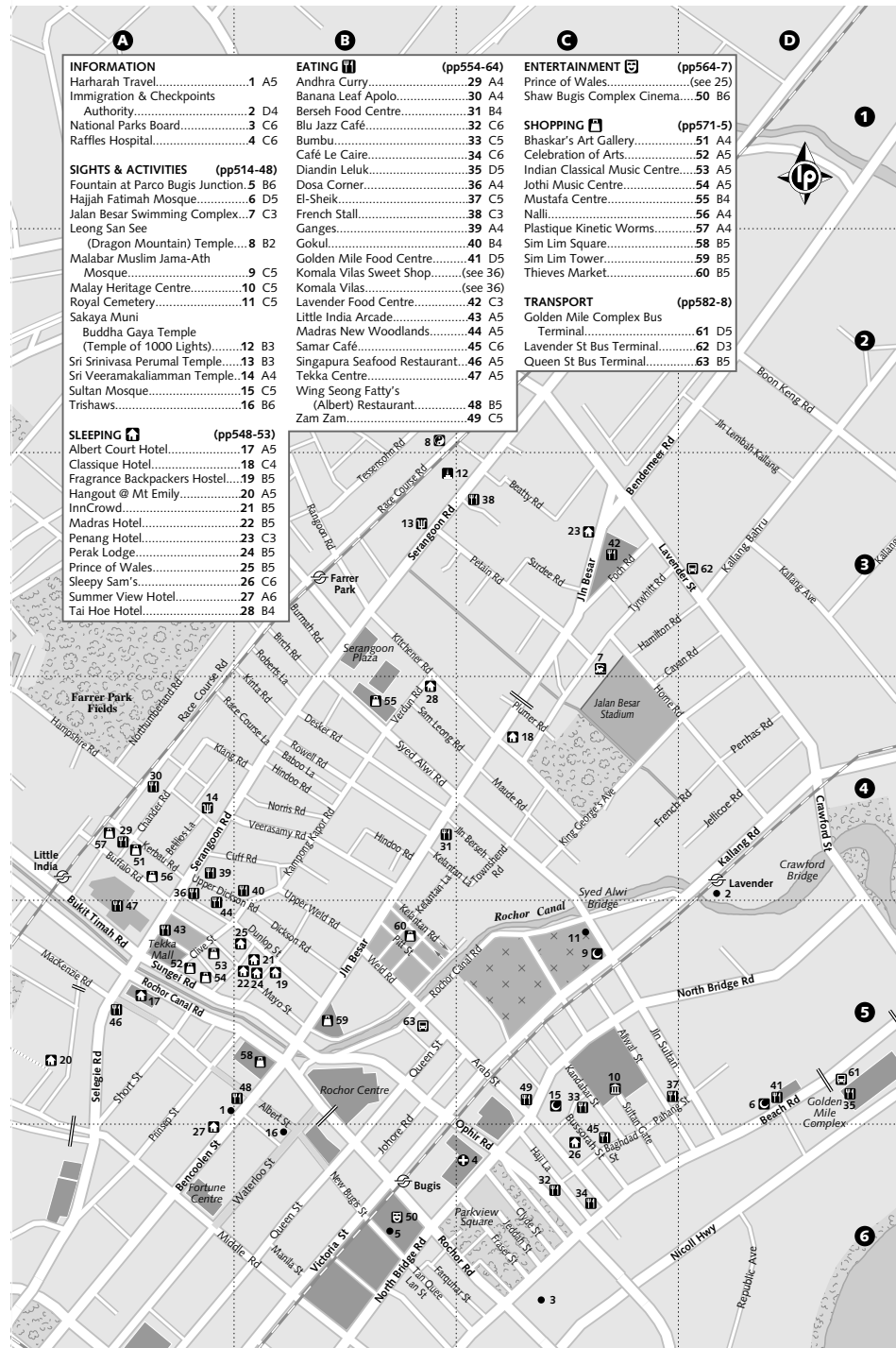
**Duck Tour** (Map p540; % 6338 6877; www.ducktours.com.sg; adult/child S\$33/17) A one-hour romp in the 'Wacky Duck', a Vietnam War amphibious curio, departing from Suntec City. Check out the city's sites from the road then hit the water for a harbour cruise. A good one for the kids!

(Continued on page 548)



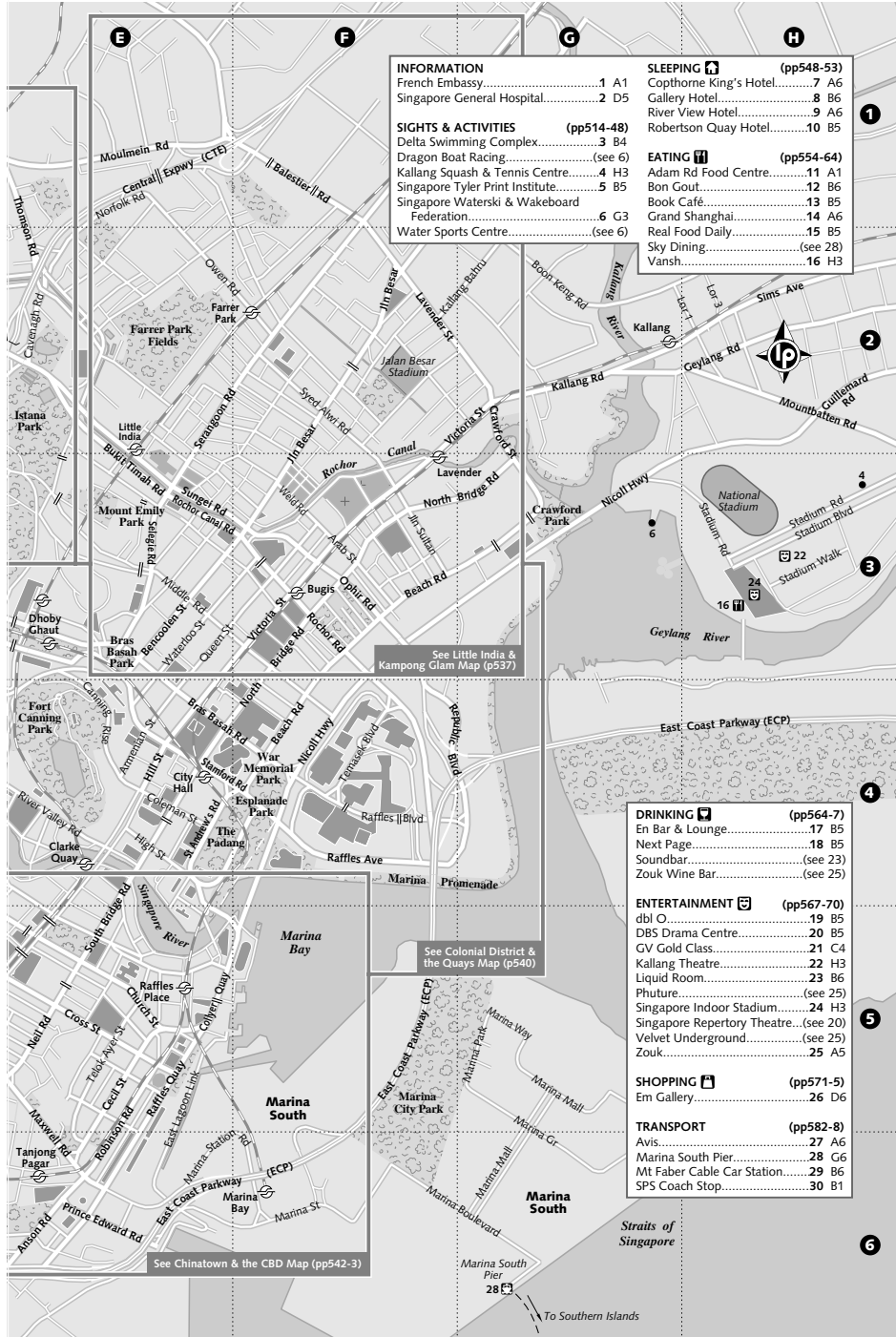
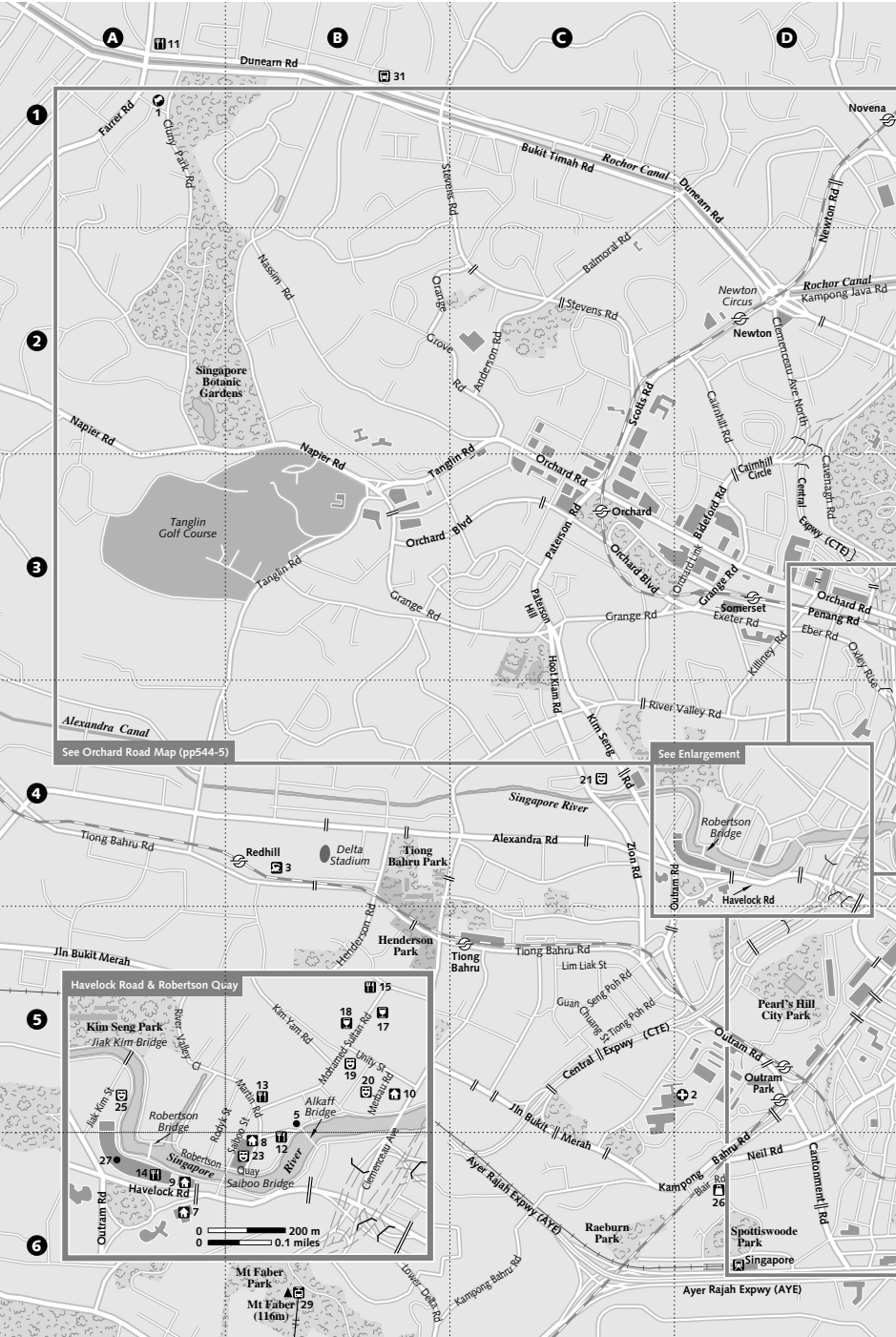


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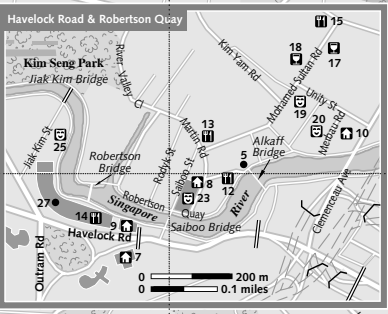
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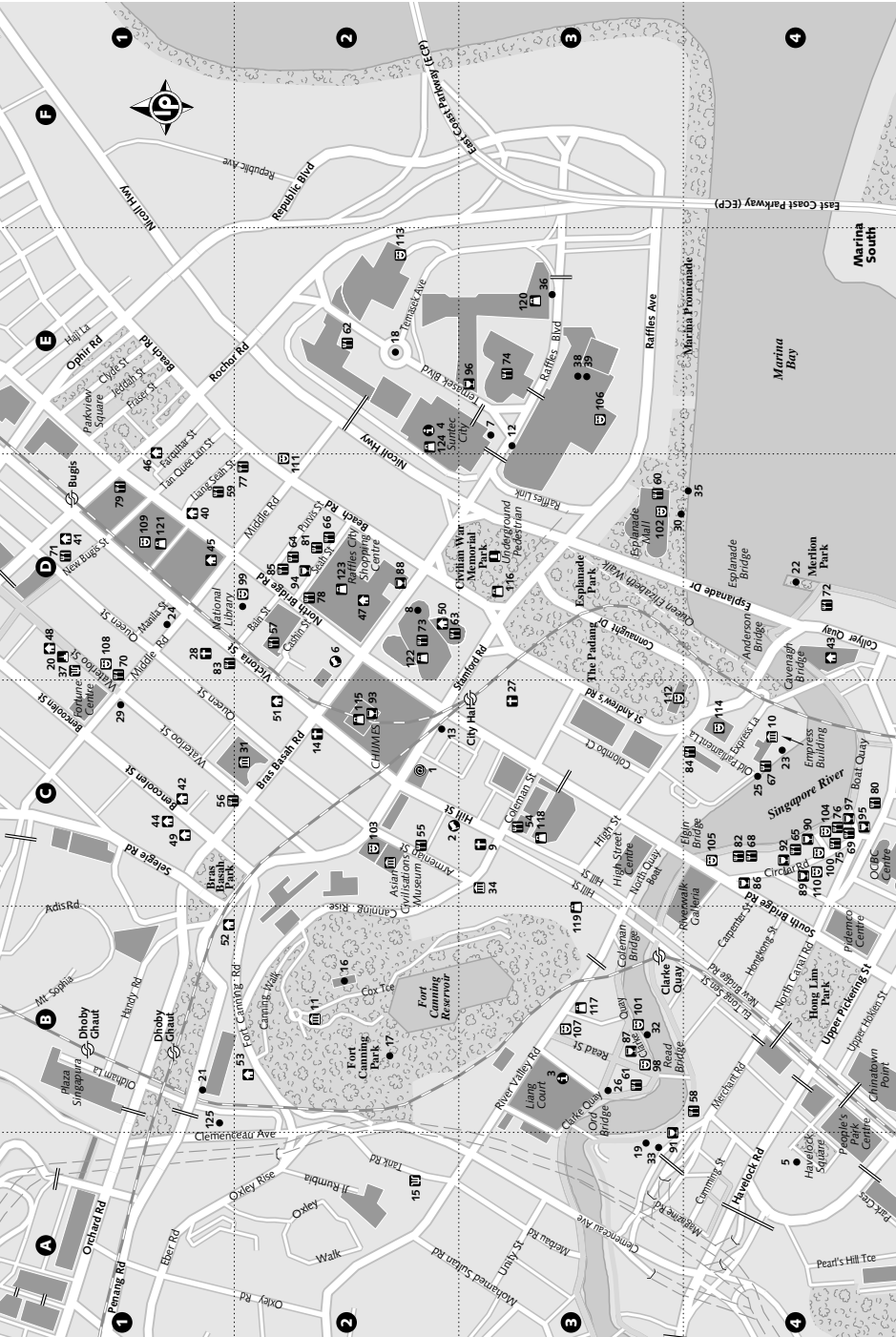
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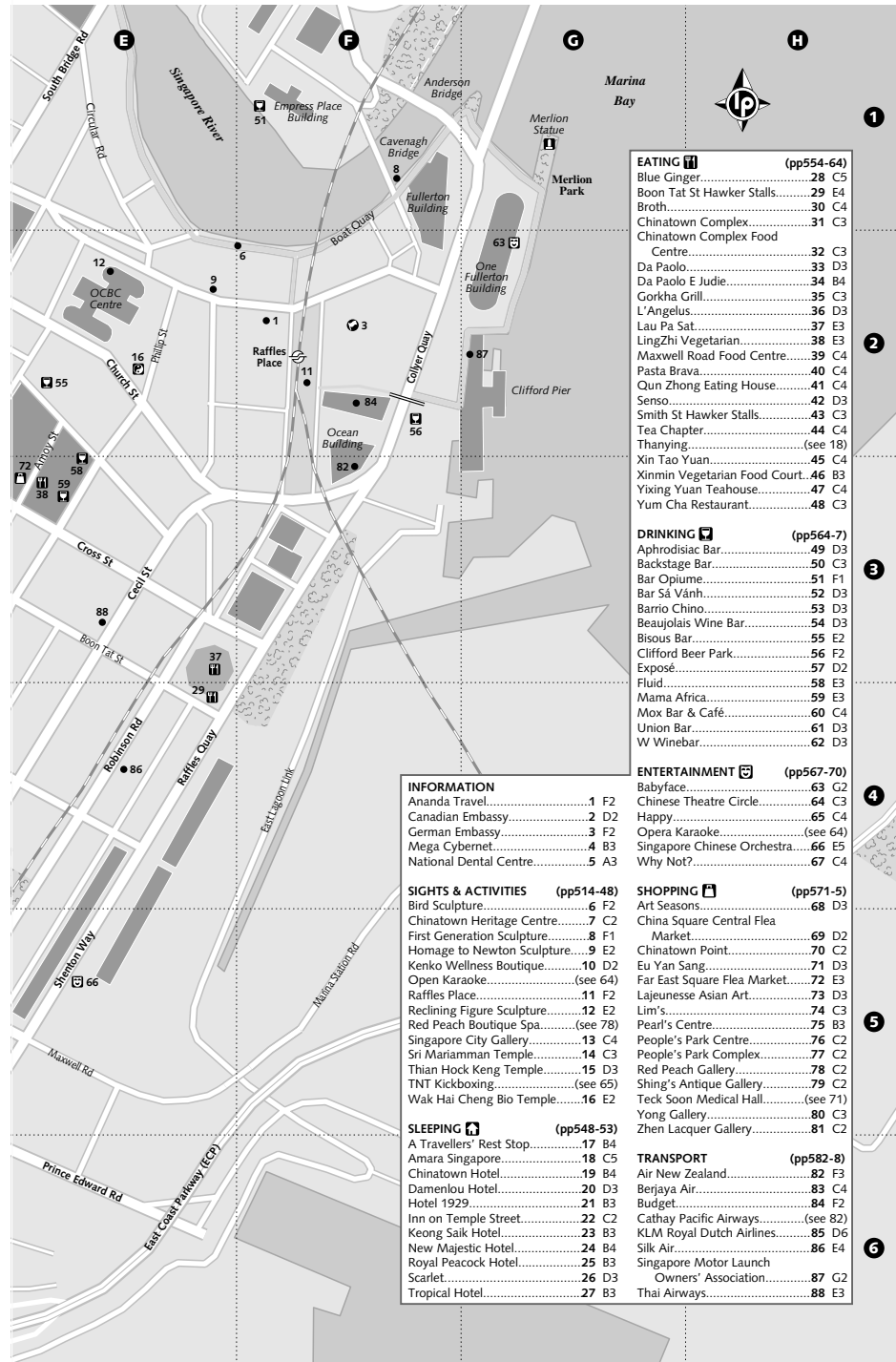
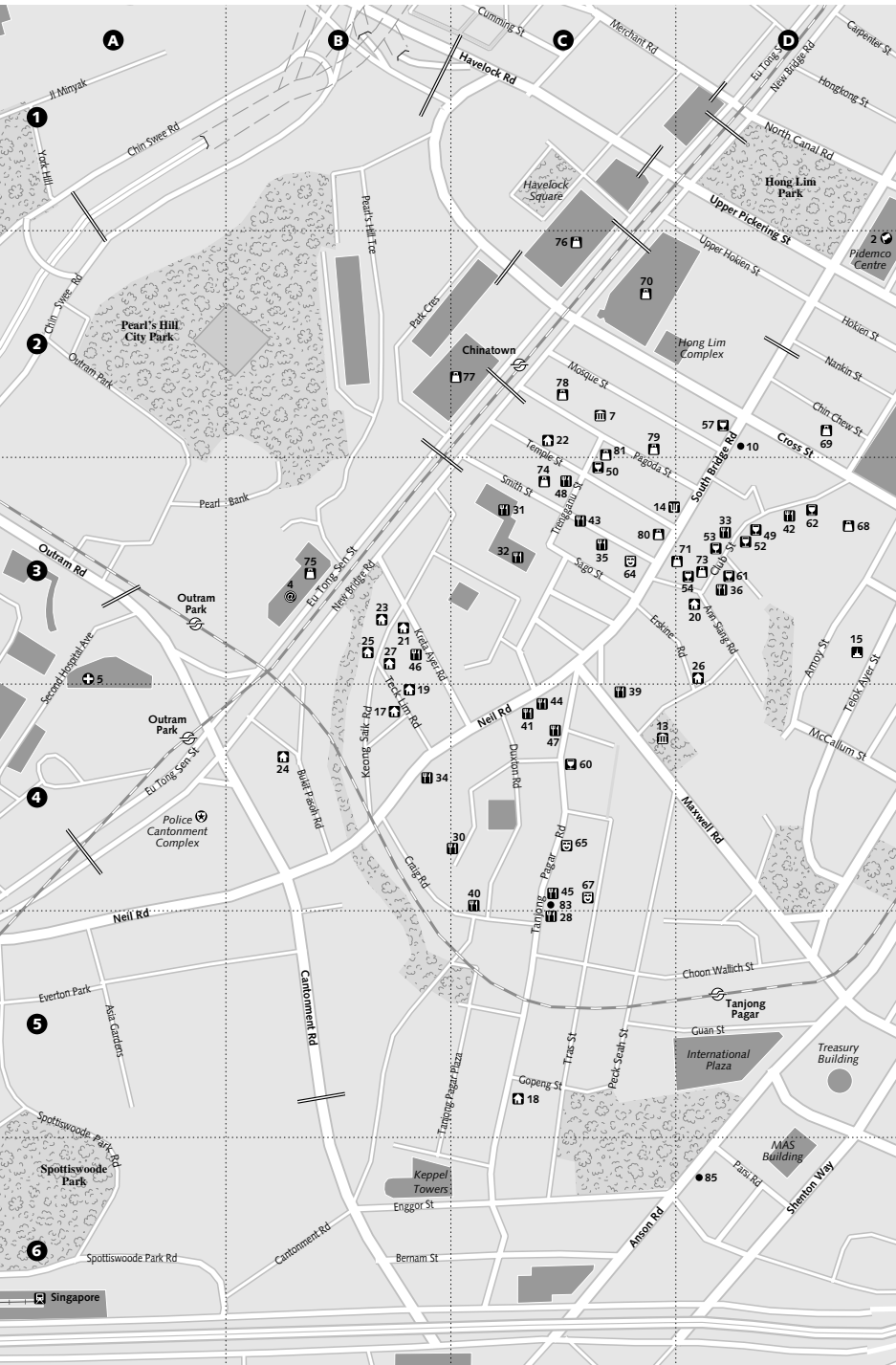
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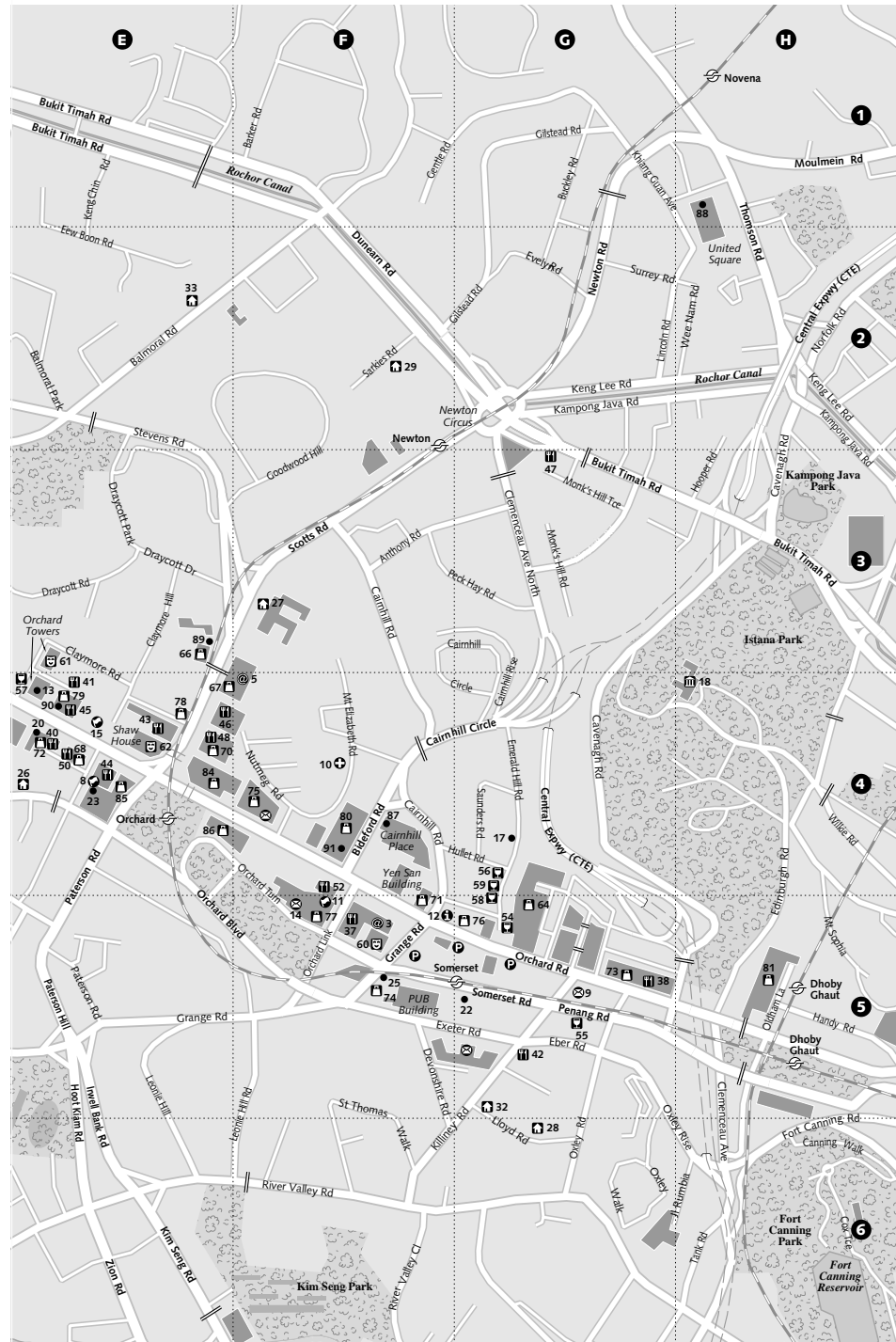
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## RIVER CRUISES

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.

**Singapore Explorer** (Map p540; % 6339 6833; [www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg](http://www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg)) Offers trips up and down the river in a glass-top boat (adult/child \$S16/8, 45 minutes) or traditional bumboat (adult/child \$S13/7, 30 minutes). Commentary ensures you know what you're looking at.

**Singapore River Cruises** (Map p540; % 6336 6111; [www.rivercruise.com.sg](http://www.rivercruise.com.sg)) Offer bumboat tours (adult/child \$S15/8, 30 to 45 minutes) from the Merlion at the river-mouth upstream to Robertson Quay, plus everything in between. At night, red Chinese lanterns romantically dangle from the boats' canopies.

## SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

**Original Singapore Walks** (% 6325 1631; [www.singaporewalks.com](http://www.singaporewalks.com); tours from adult/child \$S18/12) Conducts irreverent but knowledgeable off-the-beaten-track walking tours through Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam, the Colonial District and the Changi Museum. Rain-or-shine tours last for around three hours; check its website for a schedule.

**Geraldene Lowe-Ismail** (% 6737 5250; [geraldenestours@hotmail.com](mailto:geraldenestours@hotmail.com)) A wealth of information, Singapore-born Geraldene has been conducting Singapore walking tours for 40 years. Her various tours (per hour \$S80) lend a unique insight into Singapore's history and culture.

She'll happily tailor tours to suit your particular interests.

**Diana Chua** (% 9489 1999; [dianachua1999@yahoo.com.sg](mailto:dianachua1999@yahoo.com.sg)) Another recommended walking-tour guide; Diana also charges \$S80 an hour and offers similar tours to Geraldene, often aligning tours with festivals.

**Subaraj Rajathurrai** (% /fax 6787 7048; [serin@swifttech.com.sg](mailto:serin@swifttech.com.sg)) Specialises in bird-watching and nature tours. His enthusiastic and knowledgeable guidance is highly regarded.

## SLEEPING

Singapore's hotel accommodation is some of the most expensive in Southeast Asia, but the industry is extremely competitive; discounts of 25% to 50% are common for longer stays, repeat visits, corporate deals and special promotions. For hotel pricing details see p575.

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. Most budget places offer both air-con and fan rooms (fan rooms are cheaper).

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 boxed text, p553) – weekend rates and occupancy levels are higher than midweek.

Unless otherwise indicated, budget rooms have shared bathrooms; midrange and above have private bathrooms.

## BUDGET

### Colonial District

Note that the midrange YMCA International House and YWCA Fort Canning Lodge (see the boxed text, p552) also have dorm beds.

**Backpackers Cozy Corner** (Map p540; % 6338 8826; [www.cozycornerguest.com](http://www.cozycornerguest.com); 490 North Bridge Rd; dm \$S10-15, d \$S32-45, with breakfast; a i ) A serviceable, central option for the nonfussy, Cozy Corner can feel a bit *too* cosy when it's busy, but the location tends to lure people out onto the street. Rooms on North Bridge Rd can be noisy – ask for one further back. Free internet.

**Bugis Backpackers Hostel** (Map p540; % 6338 5581; [www.bugisbackpackers.com](http://www.bugisbackpackers.com); 162B Rochor Rd; dm/s/d \$S20/45/59; a i ) Barely two 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?!

**Victoria Hotel** (Map p540; % 6338 2381; 87 Victoria St; d from \$60; a ) Just sneaking into budget contention, the Victoria's anonymous, unspectacular rooms are nothing to write home about, but who writes letters these days?

**New 7th Storey Hotel** (Map p540; % 6337 0251; [www.nsshotel.com](http://www.nsshotel.com); 229 Rochor Rd; dm/s/d \$S17/53/79; a i ) An urban planning aberration, the New 7th Storey stands in Fothic isolation in

a park near Bugis MRT, as if all the buildings around it had somehow vanished. It's a well-run, friendly place with clean dorms and good-value doubles. Bike rental is \$S2.50 per hour. How long will it evade the developers' clutches?

### Chinatown

**A Travellers' Rest Stop** (Map pp542-3; % 6225 4812; [www.atravellersreststop.com.sg](http://www.atravellersreststop.com.sg); 5 Teck Lim Rd; dm/s/d \$S18/35/55; a i ) Clean, safe and well-run, this pastel-painted guesthouse gets positive reviews from rest-stopping travellers and runs at full capacity for most of the year – book two weeks in advance. Avoid the windowless shoebox single with no bathroom.

**Tropical Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6225 6696; [www.tropicalhotel-sg.com](http://www.tropicalhotel-sg.com); 22 Teck Lim Rd; s/d from \$S50/70; a ) This gay-friendly converted shophouse could do with a lick of paint and some new carpet, but the location compensates. Shower nooks are just big enough to splash around in. Some singles are windowless; larger balcony rooms go for \$S100.

**Keong Saik Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6223 0660; [keongsaik@pacific.net.sg](mailto:keongsaik@pacific.net.sg); 69 Keong Saik Rd; s/d from \$S60/70; a ) Lagging begrudgingly behind more-glamorous Chinatown hotel revolutionaries, Keong Saik offers old-school rooms and unschooled service. Still, it's a passable option in a good location.

### Kampong Glam

**Sleepy Sam's** (Map p537; % 9277 4988; [www.sleepysams.com](http://www.sleepysams.com); 55 Bussorah St; dm/s/d incl breakfast \$S25/39/65; a i ) It's not often you'd list a backpacker hostel as a 'must stay', but Sleepy Sam's qualifies. It's more like a boutique hotel than a hostel – dark-wood Asian furnishings, deep earthy colours, screened-off bunks, cushion-strewn DVD area, spotless kitchen, great staff and fabulous location in the shade of the Sultan Mosque.

### Little India

**Fragrance Backpackers Hostel** (Map p537; % 6295 6888; [www.fragrancehotel.com](http://www.fragrancehotel.com); 63 Dunlop St; dm \$S18; a i ) The midrange Fragrance chain has finally sniffed out a sweet-smelling niche in the budget market. Its Little India outfit is sparkingly clean, with leather couches strewn through the TV lounge, great security, chunky mattresses, and backpack-sized lockers. Basement dorms are sans windows, but smell OK.

### CAMPING IT UP

The **National Parks Board** (Map p537; % 6391 4488; [www.nparks.gov.sg](http://www.nparks.gov.sg); 18-01/08 Gateway West, 150 Beach Rd) maintains five free camp sites around Singapore: Changi Beach (Map pp534-5), East Coast Park (Map pp534-5), Sembawang Park (Map pp534-5), West Coast Park (Map pp534-5), and the east end of Pasir Ris Park (Map pp534-5). You need a permit to camp during the week, obtained on the spot from roaming park rangers.

Permits are free but there's a small fee to use the barbecue pits and shower facilities. For East Coast Park go to Area C near the tennis courts or Area D further east. On Pulau Ubin you can camp at Noordin Beach (Map pp534-5) on the island's north coast. The sites are free, but very basic. There's no drinking water, so bring your own.

**Prince Of Wales** (Map p537; % 6299 0130; [www.pow.com.sg](http://www.pow.com.sg); 101 Dunlop St; dm/d \$S16/38; a ) This Australian-style pub and hostel has a rowdy beer-and-sawdust rock bar downstairs (p569) and clean, lurid orange and blue dorms upstairs. Not everyone wants to rock-out, but it's a lively place in an ace location.

**Inn Crowd** (Map p537; % 6296 9169; [www.the-inncrowd.com](http://www.the-inncrowd.com); 73 Dunlop St; dm/d incl breakfast \$S18/48; a i ) Unleash your inner party-animal here, with the cheapest beer in town (\$S2.80 a pint!). What it loses on lager it recoups by sardine-ing dozens of fresh-faced dorm-dwellers into the loft. The atmosphere's convivial, with free lockers and internet, bubbly staff, bike hire and a dedicated party room 'round the corner.

**Classique Hotel** (Map p537; % 6392 3838, [www.classiquehotel.com.sg](http://www.classiquehotel.com.sg); 240 Jln Besar; d from \$S55; a i ) More stylish, spacious and private than its budget brothers, the Classique is worth considering even though it's on one of Little India's less than alluring main roads.

**Penang Hotel** (Map p537; % 6344 3113; [www.penanghotel.com.sg](http://www.penanghotel.com.sg); 407 Jln Besar; dm/d \$S20/65; a i ) The what-you-see-is-what-you-get Penang Hotel, close to the Lavender St Bus Terminal, offers acceptable rooms with bathrooms and TVs. Once upon a legend, itinerant hippies Tony and Maureen Wheeler holed-up here and penned the first edition of LP's *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring*.

**Hangout @ Mt Emily** (Map p537; % 6438 5588; www.hangouthotels.com; 10A Upper Wilkie Rd; dm/d/f \$35/88/220; a i s ) This sassy boutique hostel nestles between Orchard Rd and Little India in Mt Emily's leafy glades. Rooms are immaculate, and there's a sensational rooftop terrace with a 'standing pool', a library, a café, free internet and cosy lounge areas. Vibrant colours are splashed across walls; murals are by local art students.

### Orchard Road

**New Sandy's Place** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 1431; sandygiam@hotmail.com; 3C Sarkies Rd; s \$18, d \$30-55, with breakfast) **What? Budget accommodation near Orchard Rd?** This is *very* basic but friendly residential accommodation (so there's no sign) about 300m from Newton MRT. Shared-facility rooms range from a broom-cupboard single to a spacious double with fan.

## MIDRANGE

### Colonial District

**South-East Asia Hotel** (Map p540; % 6338 2394; www.seahotel.com.sg; 190 Waterloo St; d \$77-88, f \$118; a ) This friendly place claims, somewhat confusingly, that it has 'the art of hospitality down to an art'. Comfortable rooms don't reach any artisan heights, but they're well-priced, the location is primo and the vegetarian restaurant downstairs is a good 'un.

**Strand Hotel** (Map p540; % 6338 1866; www.strandhotel.com.sg; 25 Bencoolen St; d \$85-95; a i ) Some effort and imagination has gone into elevating the Strand above your average mid-ranger. Rooms are decorated with earthy colours, jungle-print fabrics and ballet-dancer door numbers. There's a pool table on the terrace and restrained, un-obsequious service.

**Hotel Bencoolen** (Map p540; % 6336 0822; www.hotelbencoolen.com; 47 Bencoolen St; s/d \$93/108; a i s ) Rooms at the 'Uncoolen' are far from stylish, but they're reasonably sized and affordable, with the full gamut of facilities. The outdoor spa pool is almost big enough for a soak.

**Summer View Hotel** (Map p537; % 6338 1122; www.summerviewhotel.com.sg; 173 Bencoolen St; d \$100; a i ) Reliable (if unexciting) midrange offering along the centrally placed Bencoolen St hotel strip. There's a decent Thai restaurant on site to spice up your experience.

**City Bayview Hotel** (Map p540; % 6337 2882; www.citybayview.com.sg; 30 Bencoolen St; d from \$260, f \$460; a s ) The City Bayview won't get your knickers in a knot, but rooms are better than reasonable. There's a self-serve laundry on the roof beside the pool, so you can cool off while your un-knotted knickers are in the wash.

### The Quays

**Robertson Quay Hotel** (Map pp538-9; % 6735 3333; www.robertsonquayhotel.com.sg; 15 Merbau Rd; s/d \$95/105; a s ) Probably the best-value hotel along the river, this chubby circular tower has immaculate but unadventurous rooms and a palm-fringed rooftop swimming pool. Ask for a room away from the Clemenceau Ave traffic. Internet discounts are often available.

**Copthorne King's Hotel Singapore** (Map pp538-9; % 6733 0011; www.copthornekings.com.sg; 403 Havelock Rd; d from \$155; a i s ) A brassy, curvaceous monolith that looks like it's just flown in from Vegas. River-facing balconies are draped with bougainvilleas; facilities include gym, pool and self-service laundry.

**River View Hotel** (Map pp538-9; % 6732 9922; www.riverview.com.sg; 382 Havelock Rd; s/d from \$220/250; a i s ) This trailblazing 21-storey edifice was built when Robertson Quay still had a muddy, vaguely malarial riverbank lined with crumbling warehouses. Comfortable, good-sized rooms have tried to keep with the times, there's a free shuttle bus to Orchard Rd and Chinatown, and speaking elevators greet you in three languages!

### Chinatown

**Royal Peacock Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6223 3522; www.royalpeacockhotel.com; 55 Keong Saik Rd; s \$65-85, d \$95-155; a ) Beautiful lobby, beautiful staff, and peacock-palette rooms with character by the bucket-load. Cheaper rooms are windowless and a little cramped; prices are sometimes slashed to budget level.

**Chinatown Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6225 5166; www.chinatownhotel.com; 12-16 Teck Lim Rd; s/d with breakfast \$98/108; a ) The doors automatically swing open as you enter the obviously named Chinatown Hotel, trading on its faithful old-timer appeal. Bathrooms are basic and a little shabby.

**Damenlou Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6221 1900; www.damenlou.com; 12 Ann Siang Rd; s/d from \$100/120; a ) Damenlou's rooms have aged with a certain lack of grace, but the location – hovering at arm's length from the Club St melee – is hard to beat. A rooftop drink with Chinatown views isn't bad either.

**Inn on Temple Street** (Map pp542-3; % 6221 5333; www.theinn.com.sg; 36 Temple St; s/d \$128/148; a i ) Nondescript, uninspired, run-of-the-mill...all terms you could easily bandy about these quarters, but sometimes in life you just need something solid to lean on: clean, safe, good-value, reliable accommodation in a top location.

**Hotel 1929** (Map pp542-3; % 6347 1929; www.hotel1929.com; 50 Keong Saik Rd; s/d/ste \$145/170/280; a ) The rooms at Singapore's grooviest 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 and technicolour mosaics. Rooftop suites have private terraces and outdoor clawfoot baths.

**New Majestic Hotel** (Map pp542-3; % 6511 4700; www.newmajestichotel.com; 31-37 Bukit Pasoh Rd; d from \$180; a s ) Oozing boutique sleek, the New Majestic has undergone an architectural overhaul, turning the old Majestic's

60 squishy rooms into 30 generous ones. Highlights include terrazzo lobby floors, private balconies and voyeuristic portals in the restaurant ceiling looking up into the swimming pool (skinny-dip at your peril).

### Little India

**Tai Hoe Hotel** (Map p537; % 6293 9122; www.taihoehotel.com; 163 Kitchener Rd; d \$68; a i ) The cheerfully painted, compact rooms at Tai Hoe could use a bit of an airing, but they're modern, tidy and good bang for your buck. The humongous 'City Square' development emerging across the road means street-facing rooms are noisy.

**Madras Hotel** (Map p537; % 6392 7889; www.madras.singapore.com; 28-32 Madras St; s/d/f incl breakfast \$65/75/120; a i ) An amazing architectural relic, Madras Hotel's sexy Art Deco curves belie a mundanely decorated interior, but it's clean and superbly located. Ask for a balcony room. All rooms have TV and DVD.

**Perak Lodge** (Map p537; % 6299 7733; www.peraklodge.net; 12 Perak Rd; d with breakfast \$108-188; a i ) The renovated Peranakan-style Perak Lodge is deservedly popular. Staff are helpful, interiors feature lashings of natural timber and ceramics, and a babbling fountain eases you through breakfast. Cheaper rooms don't have windows, but they're well furnished and have cable-TV access. Ask about rates for long-term stays.

**Albert Court Hotel** (Map p537; % 6339 3939; www.albertcourt.com.sg; 180 Albert St; d from \$180; a i ) At the southern fringe of Little India, this midrange winner is an immaculate, colonial-era hotel in a shophouse redevelopment that now shoots up eight storeys. Rooms have the usual mod cons, with a choice between fan and air-con. Promotional rates nudge budget levels.

### Orchard Road

**Lloyd's Inn** (Map pp544-5; % 6737 7309; www.lloydsinn.com; 2 Lloyd Rd; d from \$70; a ) Surrounded by crumbling mansions just off Orchard Rd, this strange, interestingly weathered 1940s building seems to have been perversely designed to minimise natural light and access to the adjoining garden. Rooms are tidy and good value; some on the 2nd floor have garden views.

**Sloane Court Hotel** (Map pp544-5; % 6235 3311; sloane@singnet.com.sg; 17 Balmoral Rd; s/d \$85/95; a i ) This mock-Tudor survivor sits in a recessed

### AIRPORT HOTEL DESKS & THE TRANSIT HOTEL

If you arrive in Singapore without a bed for the night, don't have an apoplectic fit. The Singapore Hotel Association runs four desks at Changi Airport: Terminal 1's **East Wing** (h 10am-11.30pm) and **West Wing** (h 24hr); and Terminal 2's **North Wing** (h 7am-11pm) and **South Wing** (h 24hr).

There are dozens of hotels on its books, ranging from budget singles/doubles at \$36/40 a night, right up to Raffles Hotel at \$750-plus. Its service is free, and promotional/discounted rates, when available, are passed on to you. You can also book hotels on the Association's website: www.stayinginsingapore.com.sg.

If you're only in Singapore for a short time or have an endless wait between connections, try the **Ambassador Transit Hotel** (% Terminal 1 6542 5538, Terminal 2 6542 8122; www.airport-hotel.com.sg; s/d \$58/65; a ). Rates quoted are for the first six-hour stay; rooms don't have windows and some singles have shared bathrooms. The Terminal 1 branch has a sauna, gym and outdoor pool.



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

Singapore has three YMCAs providing consistent midrange accommodation. They're not the bargain they used to be, but they remain popular. Three weeks' advance booking with one night's deposit is usually required. Non-YMCA members pay an additional charge for temporary membership.

The cheapest rooms at the rather surly **YMCA Metropolitan** (Map pp544-5; % 6839 8333; [www.ymca.sg](http://www.ymca.sg); 60 Stevens Rd; d with breakfast \$875-150; a i s ) don't have windows, but they're spacious and well-appointed. It's a good 1km walk north of Orchard Rd; take bus 190, or there's a morning shuttle bus to Orchard Rd from Monday to Saturday. It also has babysitting facilities (see p531).

Inexplicably popular with visiting German sports teams, **YMCA International House** (Map p540; % 6336 6000; [www.ymca.org.sg](http://www.ymca.org.sg); 1 Orchard Rd; dm/s/d/f incl breakfast \$29/113/130/150; a i s ) has a handy location at the city end of Orchard Rd. There's a restaurant, fitness centre, rooftop pool, squash and badminton courts and a billiard room. Rooms have been upgraded, but they're still pretty average, as is the attitude behind the front desk.

**YMCA Fort Canning Lodge** (Map p540; % 6338 4222; [www.ywcafcldodge.org.sg](http://www.ywcafcldodge.org.sg); 6 Fort Canning Rd; dm/s/d incl breakfast from \$845/120/\$1140; a i s ) has a similar list of facilities in a central location. Five-bed female-only dorms have air-con, TV and bathrooms; standard rooms are surprisingly stylish with parquet floors and bar fridges.

garden surrounded by high-rise apartments not far from Orchard Rd. Character-filled rooms deserve better than the beer-swilling clientele targeted by hotel advertising.

**RELC International Hotel** (Map pp544-5; % 6885 7888; [www.relich.com.sg](http://www.relich.com.sg); 30 Orange Grove Rd; d \$135; a i s ) As far as physical beauty goes, this is a real plain Jane, but roomy, well-appointed balcony rooms have views and are good value. RELC stands for Regional English Language Centre – the bottom floors house conference and teaching facilities.

**Sha Villa** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 7117; [www.sha.org.sg](http://www.sha.org.sg); 64 Lloyd Rd; s/d from \$145/165; a i s ) Just around the corner from the towering bustle of Orchard Rd, this 40-room colonial white elephant has endured while neighbouring relics have tasted the wrecking ball. Timber-floored rooms are evocatively furnished; even the smallest seem more cute than poky. Standard rooms have generous bathrooms but no windows.

**TOP END  
Colonial District**

**Gallery Hotel** (Map pp538-9; % 6849 8686; [www.galleryhotel.com.sg](http://www.galleryhotel.com.sg); 76 Robertson Quay; d from \$295; a i s ) Singapore's first boutique hotel is still totally hip. Rooms feature retro furnishings, zany coloured linen, low-volt track lighting, frosted-glass bathroom walls and room numbers branded into the floorboards; even standard-category rooms are

spacious. The glass rooftop pool and free internet access are bonuses.

**Swissôtel the Stamford** (Map p540; % 6338 8585; [www.swissotel-thestamford.com](http://www.swissotel-thestamford.com); 2 Stamford Rd; d from \$840; a i s ) Everyone raves about IM Pei's 2000-room Swissôtel, the tallest hotel in Southeast Asia. It boasts one of Singapore's hippest dining complexes, the views are predictably sublime, and service standards are as elevated as the building.

**InterContinental Singapore** (Map p540; % 6338 7600; [www.intercontinental.com](http://www.intercontinental.com); 80 Middle Rd; d from \$440; a i s ) Built into the Parco Bugis Junction mall, the InterContinental is splashed with appealing Peranakan-colonial stylings. Shophouse-style rooms have wooden floors, Oriental rugs, hand-painted lamps and chessboard bathroom tiles. Desperate housewives compare sandals in the lobby.

**CBD & the Quays**

**Fullerton Hotel** (Map p540; % 6733 8388; [www.fullertonhotel.com](http://www.fullertonhotel.com); 1 Fullerton Sq; d from \$560; a i s ) Named after Robert Fullerton, the first Straits Settlements' Governor, this converted 1928 post office is one of *the* places to stay in Singapore. All rooms have broadband, minibar, safe, king-sized bed, spa, huge TV, honey-coloured marble bathrooms and plush bathrobes. Standard rooms face the courtyard; suites have river views. The concierge is outrageously helpful.

**Raffles Hotel** (Map p540; % 6337 1886; [www.raffleshotel.com](http://www.raffleshotel.com); 1 Beach Rd; ste from \$8750; a i s ) Is it worth coughing up the cash to stay at Raffles? The rooms aren't as bright as modern hotels, but wooden floors, high ceilings, leafy verandas, red pompom slippers, fresh roses, unwavering colonial ambience and famous Sikh doormen more than compensate. Maybe you'll get Noel Coward's bed.

**Chinatown**

**Scarlet** (Map pp542-3; % 6511 3333; [www.thescarlet.com](http://www.thescarlet.com); 33 Erskine Rd; d/ste from \$200/500; a i s ) Sexy Scarlet has seduced Singapore's boutique hotel market, leaving its competitors drooling. Occupying a string of gorgeous 1924 shophouses, 84 rooms are lustily decorated with deep velvet, gilt-framed mirrors, ebony timbers and plush Arabic cushions. The rooftop bar, Breeze, is perfect for pre-dinner drinks.

**Amara Singapore** (Map pp542-3; % 6879 2555; [www.amarahotels.com](http://www.amarahotels.com); 165 Tanjong Pagar Rd; d from \$320; a i s ) The super-friendly, competent staff at Amara have a distinct absence of chips on their shoulders. From tasteful black-and-whites of old-time Singapore to the stone-walled swimming pool and Balinese spa, it's an undeniably classy establishment, just far enough from the tourist trail.

**SENTOSA NIGHTS**

If you feel like bunking down on Sentosa Island (p526) after a day basking on the beach, there are four options to choose from.

**Sijori Resort** (Map pp534-5; % 6271 2002; [www.sjoriresort.com.sg](http://www.sjoriresort.com.sg); 23 Beach View; d with breakfast from \$180; a i s ) is the least fancy of Sentosa's three upmarket hotels, but it has a certain historic paint-peeling charm. Rooms and facilities, including pool room and video arcade, are far from inspiring, but reasonable value. Avoid rooms facing the Merlion.

The midrange **Costa Sands Resort** (Map pp534-5; % 6275 1034; [www.costasands.com.sg](http://www.costasands.com.sg); 30 Imbiah Walk; huts from \$60, d from \$140; a i s ) is Sentosa's cheapest option, with motel-style rooms and 15 small wooden huts sleeping up to three (air-conditioned, with shared bathrooms). Landing a weekend bed can be near impossible unless you book months ahead, but midweek it's usually OK. The cliff-top pool is ace.

The wedding-cake cascades of the **Shangri-La Rasa Sentosa Resort** (Map pp534-5; % 6275 0100; [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com); 101 Siloso Rd; d with breakfast from \$290; a i s ) step down to a private beach. Note it's probably worth paying a bit more for sea-facing rooms, all of which have spacious balconies. There is a huge swimming pool if you don't fancy swimming in the Straits of Singapore.

The salubrious five-star **Sentosa Resort & Spa** (Map pp534-5; % 6275 0331; [www.thesentosa.com.sg](http://www.thesentosa.com.sg); 2 Bukit Manis Rd; d from \$380; a i s ) is a low-rise cliff-top belle, replete with contemporary furnishings, alfresco restaurants, Singapore's only garden spa – Spa Botanica (p531) – and peacocks wandering aimlessly underneath frangipani trees. Promotional rates plummet to \$178 during the week.

**Orchard Road**

**Regent Singapore** (Map pp544-5; % 6733 8888; [www.regenthotels.com](http://www.regenthotels.com); 1 Cuscaden Rd; d from \$350; a i s ) Too often, top-notch hotels make budget travellers feel like impostors when splashing out on an indulgent night. You will get none of that at the Regent Singapore – superfriendly service fills the 12-storey marble-clad void above the lobby as the grand piano tinkles unassumingly nearby.

**Goodwood Park Hotel** (Map pp544-5; % 6737 7411; [www.goodwoodparkhotel.com.sg](http://www.goodwoodparkhotel.com.sg); 22 Scotts Rd; s/d from \$385/425; a i s ) Dating from 1900, this Rhineland-inspired remnant was here when tigers roamed Orchard Rd's pepper plantations. Old-world opulence strays into uncool territory here and there (garish signs and naff pinkish-grey paint), but it's worth tolerating for the history whispering from the walls. Poolside suites are the pick of the plantation.

**Four Seasons Hotel** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 1110; [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com); 190 Orchard Blvd; d from \$495; a i s ) The Four Seasons resides in quiet luxury a block behind Orchard Rd, its traditional Euro furnishings offset by Asiatic touches. Body buffs adore the air-conditioned tennis courts, while the top-notch restaurants sate the gourmands.

## EATING

Food, glorious food! All kinds of international cuisine line Singapore's collective stomach, but Chinese, Indian, Malay and regional Peranakan (Malay-style sauces with Chinese ingredients) dishes are what you're here for. 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! What's on the plate is always more important than the service or the quality of the china.

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

Most restaurants serve lunch from around 11.30am to 2.30pm and dinner from 6pm to 10.30pm. Some places close for lunch on weekends and all day Sunday – call ahead. 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 10.30am until late (some 24 hours); most hawker dishes range from S\$3 to S\$6.

### COLONIAL DISTRICT American

**Seah Street Deli** (Map p540; % 6412 1110; 01-22 Raffles Hotel Arcade, 1 Beach Rd; mains S\$10-15; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Swing back to 1950s US of A at this authentically styled deli serving bagels, Reuben sandwiches, pumpkin pie, pretzels, and 'honest to goodness' burgers. Where are the *Happy Days* booths?

### Asian

**Colours by the Bay** (Map p540; % 6835 7988; 01-13A/G Esplanade Mall; mains S\$10-20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Colours by the Bay comprises seven different Thai, Chinese and Japanese restaurants, where you can sit at one and order from any of the others. The Garlic Restaurant creatively uses the pungent bulb in many of its dishes, including ice cream!

**Baccarat** (Map p540; % 6884 9929; 51 Bras Basah Rd; mains S\$10-25; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) There are so many windows enveloping this fish-bowl restaurant that it's had to erect bamboo screens to provide some intimacy. Tall-hatted chefs waltz around the central kitchen, keeping the buffet overflowing.

### Cafés

**Christa & Naomi (CAN) Café** (Map p540; % 6337 3732; 01-12/14, 1 Liang Seah St; mains S\$7-10; 𠄎 afternoons & dinner) Crowded with weird furniture and second-hand gas masks, telephones and abacuses, CAN Café is a remedy for Singaporean rigidity. Twenty-somethings smoke, chug jugs of beers and munch pizzas, noodles, cakes and curries. Music drifts from jazz to trance.

**Armenian Kopitiam** (Map p540; % 6339 6575; 34 Armenian St; meals S\$4-10; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Scungy walls, red plastic chairs, exposed plumbing, cigarette butts, rattling ceiling fans, irritable cooks and clattering woks – this joint celebrates everything Singapore has tried so hard to purge. Grab some *char kway teow* (broad noodles, clams and eggs fried in chilli and black-bean sauce) and a kick-ass Chinese coffee.

### Chinese

**Soup Restaurant** (Map p540; % 6333 9388; 39 Seah St; mains S\$8-24; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) One of 11 'Soups' around town celebrating dishes enjoyed by Samsui women, tough Chinese construction-worker gals. House specialities are the double-boiled medicinal soups which (among other things) prevent coldness and cure 'windiness'.

**Crystal Jade Kitchen** (Map p540; % 6338 3511; B1-013/014 Suntec City, 3 Temasek Blvd; mains S\$7-18; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) This busy, carpeted Cantonese place is one of many reliable Crystal Jades across the city. There's an extensive numbered 'I want that one' menu (try the *congee*) and several set menus.

**Imperial Herbal Restaurant** (Map p540; % 6337 0491; 3rd fl, Metropole Hotel, 41 Seah St; mains from S\$20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) The in-house Chinese physician 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!

**Lei Garden** (Map p540; % 6339 3822; 01-24 Chijmes, 30 Victoria St; mains from S\$20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) A wall-length fish tank glows behind round tables packed with business types and feasting Chinese families. Set menus range from S\$55 to S\$98; the lunchtime dim sum is a winner.

**My Humble House** (Map p540; % 6423 1881; 02-27/29 Esplanade Mall; mains S\$20-25; 𠄎 lunch & dinner)

With décor that's Alice in Wonderland-meets-Phillippe Starck, this place is anything but humble. Business groups chow down on subtly flavoured abalone, truffles and seafood from an elaborate Sichuan (Szechwan) menu. Dress snazzy; reservations essential. Service can be hit and miss.

### Indian

**Annalakshmi** (Map p540; % 6339 9993; 02-10 Excelsior Hotel & Shopping Centre, 5 Coleman St; pay by donation; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The policy at this extravagantly decorated vegetarian buffet is 'Eat as you like, give as you feel'. It's run by volunteers, the profits supporting various Indian arts foundations and charitable causes.

**Rang Mahal** (Map p540; % 6333 1788; 3rd fl, Pan Pacific Hotel, 7 Raffles Blvd; mains S\$16-40; 𠄎 lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily) Much-praised Indian in sophisticated stone and teak subcontinental surrounds. The vegetarian selection offers silky dhals, while we can confirm the scarlet masala prawns are 'gutsy' rather than 'gusty' as the menu suggests.

### Indonesian

**Sanur** (Map p540; % 6338 2777; B1-010 Suntec City, 3 Temasek Blvd; mains S\$15-27; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) It's hard to ignore Sanur's beef *rendang* (beef simmered in coconut-milk curry sauce), a classically hewn Indonesian indulgence; the fragrant *ayam bali* (chicken in lemongrass curry) might take your mind off the Fountain of Wealth outside. There's another branch at Ngee Ann City on Orchard Rd (Map pp544-5).

### International

**Equinox** (Map p540; % 6837 3322; 70th fl, Swissôtel the Stamford, 2 Stamford Rd; mains S\$20-50, buffet S\$48; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Adjectives struggle to cope with 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; dress sharp.

### Italian

**Garibaldi** (Map p540; % 6837 1468; 36 Purvis St; mains S\$25-48; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Swish, sequestered Garibaldi is about as Italian as Singapore gets: Italian chefs, 250 different Italian wines and debonair Italian staff. The menu is *classico*;

try the antipasti, then inhale the homemade *tortellini di zucca* (pumpkin tortellini with sage butter, raisins and nutmeg).

### Japanese

**Ichiban Boshi** (Map p540; % 6423 1151; 02-14 Esplanade Mall; sushi S\$1.90 & S\$5.30; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) 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.

**Sakana** (Map p540; % 6336 0266; 01-03/04 Liang Seah St; mains S\$10-20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Sakana is one of those great little informal eateries you so rarely find outside Japan – supercompact and uncomplicated with tiny screened booths, calligraphic art and rattling racks of sake (rice wine) bottles. Try the set lunch for S\$15.

### Thai

**Yhingthai Palace** (Map p540; % 6337 1161; 01-04, 36 Purvis St; mains S\$10-15; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) This long-running favourite comes up short on aesthetics, but its classic Thai and Thai-Chinese fusion dishes will keep you distracted.

### Vietnamese

**Vietlang** (Map p540; % 6337 3379; 01-03 Old Parliament House Annex, 1 Old Parliament Lane; mains S\$10-23; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Viet Lang's cool, captivating interior fills with muttering parliamentarians enjoying *pho ga* (white rice noodle soup), soft-shell pepper crab and French-influenced desserts. Perfect for a special occasion.

### Quick Eats

Colonial District food courts and hawker centres fill with a strange mix of suits and locals.

**Victoria Street Food Centre** (Map p540; 143 Victoria St; 𠄎 noon-3am) Seemingly manifested to fill a space between high-rises, and with its small shrine outside, this is great for a late-night feed. Locals wheel and deal, friends neck bottles of beer, solo guys read books – you might even catch some English Premier League on the telly.

**Bras Basah Food Court** (Map p540; 232 Victoria St; 𠄎 7am-9pm) Surprisingly untouristy, this cooks up Malay and Chinese favourites – the chicken noodle oyster sauce from May Flower (stall 79-05) will fill you full of carbs.

**Nan Tai Eating House** (Map p540; 262 Waterloo St; h 6am-9pm) Try the *rojak* (fruit and vegetable salad with peanut sauce and prawn paste) from Sajis Indian Food (stall 01-29).

**New Bugis Food Village** (Map p540; New Bugis St; h 10am-10pm) At the centre of Bugis St Market, this has Malay, Indonesian, Thai, Chinese and an embarrassing 'Western' food outlet. It's stifling during the day, the pink plastic chairs taking on a surreal appeal.

The 3rd floor of **Raffles City** (Map p540; 252 North Bridge Rd; h 11am-10pm) and basements of **Funan Digital Life Mall** (Map p540; 109 North Bridge Rd; h 10.30am-8.30pm) and **Seiyu** department store at **Bugis** (Map p540; 200 Victoria St; h 9am-10pm), have fluoro-lit, hygienic food courts. Raffles City is predictably slick (anything carrying Sir Stamford's moniker invariably is), with plenty of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indonesian options.

## CBD & THE QUAYS Asian Fusion

**IndoChine Waterfront** (Map p540; % 6339 1720; 1 Empress Pl; mains \$S10-18; h 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. You'll have a similar experience (at café prices) at Siem Reap II (% 6338 7596) next door.

**Coriander Leaf** (Map p540; % 6732 3354; 02-03 Clarke Quay; mains \$S24-35; h lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat) Slide into a wicker chair far from Clarke Quay's madding architecture and peruse a menu traversing Australian, Indian, Vietnamese, Thai and Japanese culinary stylings. The desserts are stellar, and it also runs cooking courses (see p532).

## Australian

**Moomba** (Map p540; % 6438 0141; 52 Circular Rd; mains from \$S28; h lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat) The quasi-Aboriginal murals are about as far from credible as Singapore is from Sydney, but the mod-Oz Wagyu beef, kangaroo and fish dishes are super. Toasty Australian wines come by the glass or bottle.

## Cafés

**Book Café** (Map pp538-9; % 6887 5430; 01-02 Seng Kee Bldg, 20 Martin Rd; mains \$S10-20; h breakfast, lunch & dinner Fri & Sat) This cool (literally) café has a wall full of dog-eared mags, piles of international newspapers, comfy sofas, big breakfasts, tasty pasta, noodle and rice dishes and good coffee – perfect for a rainy afternoon.

## 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 pp538-9; cnr Adam & Dunearn Rds; h 6am-3am) Hawker food in-the-round, just beyond the Botanic Gardens. Try the *char kway teow* (broad noodles, clams and eggs fried in chilli and black-bean sauce) or barbecued stingray.

**Chinatown Complex Food Centre** (Map pp542-3; Smith St; h 9am-11pm) One hundred and fifty cheap, grungy and magically authentic stalls. Lubricate some roast duck and rice with a *kopi* (coffee with condensed milk).

**Chomp Chomp** (Map pp534-5; Kensington Park Rd; h 6pm-1am) Wander the smoky aisles to see what else 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 pp542-3; 18 Raffles Quay; h 24hr) Steamed dim sum, chilli crab and sizzling satay for 50¢ a pop under a magnificent wrought-iron structure.

**Lavender Food Centre** (Map p537; cnr Jln Besar & Foch Rd; h 11am-3am) Much less touristed than most and staying open until the wee smalls. The won-ton noodles are worth queuing for.

**Maxwell Road Food Centre** (Map pp542-3; cnr Maxwell & Neil Rds; h 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 p537; cnr Bukit Timah & Serangoon Rds; h 10am-late) A hectic, malodorous wet market with Indian, Muslim, Keralan, Sri Lankan and vegetarian food stalls; don't miss the *roti prata* (unleavened flaky bread).

**Real Food Daily** (Map pp538-9; % 6733 8231; 5 Mohamed Sultan Rd; meals \$S17-35; h breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat) The food here is indeed real – browse the chalkboard for delicious breakfasts, organic chicken burgers and wild king-salmon steaks. There's jazz, newspapers, good coffee and a deli out the back.

## Chinese

**Superbowl – The Art of Eating Congee** (Map p540; % 6538 6066; 80 Boat Quay; mains \$S9-25; h lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) There aren't many American gridiron players here, but we did find dozens of MSG-free varieties of *congee* (Chinese porridge). Try it with 'drunken' chicken, pigs' kidneys, preserved eggs, or a more appetising-sounding combo of your own.

**Grand Shanghai** (Map pp538-9; % 6836 6866; Level 1, King's Centre, 390 Havelock Rd; mains \$S15-25; h lunch & dinner Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Sat) The concept here – deco Chicago-meets-Shanghai surrounds and traditional dishes with contemporary zing – is a winner. The minced chicken stuffed pastry pockets are awesome. Jazz lilt from the stage nightly.

**Si Chuan Dou Hua Restaurant** (Map p540; % 6535 6006; 60-01 UOB Plaza 1, 80 Raffles Pl; mains \$S15-25; h lunch & dinner) Select a tasty main or one of 10 set menus (\$S40 to \$S180), then absorb the bodacious 60th-floor views. Standout dishes like braised abalone with mushrooms and steamed king fish in soy sauce will temporarily tear your eyes away from the windows.

## French

**Saint Pierre** (Map p540; % 6438 0887; 01-01 Central Mall, 3 Magazine Rd; mains from \$S30; h lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) Saint Pierre serves ultramodern French in a minimalist setting, jazzy tunes resonating around walls covered in alphabetised lists of French cooking ingredients. Try the pan-fried foie gras (goose-liver pâté) with green apples and port sauce, or the excellent two- or four-course set lunches (\$S28/45).

## Indian

**Saffron Bistro** (Map p540; % 6536 5025; 50 Circular Rd; mains \$S10-20; h lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily) Saffron Bistro offers a modern take on classic Indian dishes, its chefs using less oil for a healthier product. The lamb vindaloo will clear the hu-

midity from your nasal passages; the cheesy *palak paneer* (spinach and soft chees in a roti) will have a more calming effect.

**Kinara** (Map p540; % 6533 0412; 57 Boat Quay; mains \$S10-30; h lunch & dinner) *Kinara* means 'river shore' in Punjabi. Take a riverside table or eat inside the renovated shophouse, decked-out like a *haveli* (ornately decorated Indian residence) with copper, iron, teak and sandstone. Try the tandoori *hari machli aftar* (boneless fish tikka marinated and cooked in the oven).

## Indonesian

**House of Sundanese Food** (Map p540; % 6534 3775; 55/55A Boat Quay; mains \$S15-30; h lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) A beacon of low-key amicability on hyper Boat Quay; dine under the riverside boughs or upstairs surrounded by artefacts. Tickle your tonsils with the *ayam bumbu* (mildly spiced chicken in semisweet lemon gravy) or west-Javanese grilled sea bass, saturated with a quenching lime juice. There's another outlet at Suntec City (Map p540).

## Japanese

**Bon Gout** (Map pp538-9; % 6732 5234; 01-01 The Quay-side, 60 Robertson Quay; mains \$S5-15; h 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 hybrid full of students and literati, reading, laughing and slurping *ramen* (noodle soups), Japanese curries and Tiger beer (sometimes all at once).

## Mexican

**Café Iguana** (Map p540; % 6326 1275; 01-03 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Rd; mains \$S7-20; h lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily) Finding good Mexican in Singapore is like looking for El Dorado, but if you're itching for fajitas and nachos, this breezy riverside place just might be your city of gold. The margarita jugs kick like a mule.

## Seafood

**Palm Beach Seafood** (Map p540; % 6432 0040; 01-08 One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Rd; mains \$S8-24; h lunch & dinner) There's not a palm or a beach in sight, but the bay views from this split-level, L-shaped diner are pretty good. Groups of suits spin the lazy-Susan enjoying 'Herbs & Drunk Prawns' and salt-and-pepper Sri Lankan crab.



## Quick Eats

**Lau Pa Sat** (Map pp542-3; 18 Raffles Quay; 11 24hr) Originally used as market (Lau Pa Sat means 'old market' in Hokkien), this handsome wrought-iron canopy was freighted out from Glasgow in 1894. Try the steamed dim sum from stalls on Street 8.

**Boon Tat Street** (Map pp542-3; 11 7pm-3am Mon-Fri, 3pm-3am Sat & Sun) In the evenings, additional hawker stalls specialising in satay set up along this street. Satays go for 50¢ a pop; the chilli crab is excellent too.

## CHINATOWN Chinese

**Yum Cha Restaurant** (Map pp542-3; 6372 1717; 02-01, 20 Trengganu St; dishes from S\$2.60; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This capacious place with broad clattering floorboards and grumpy trolley ladies serves meals from early till late, so there's definitely no excuse for going hungry. Munch into bite-sized prawn-and-abalone or crystal-chive dumplings at bite-sized prices.

**Oun Zhong Eating House** (Map pp542-3; 6221 3060; 21 Neil Rd; mains S\$8-10; 11 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.

**Xin Tao Yuan** (Map pp542-3; 6323 6367; 63 Tanjong Pagar Rd; mains S\$5-10; 11 lunch & dinner) Watch fresh Taiwanese-style noodles being rolled, pressed, stretched out wingspan-wide then dumped into boiling vats in the restaurant window. Try them cold with sesame paste and cucumber. The dumplings are good too.

**Xinmin Vegetarian Food Court** (Map pp542-3; 6324 2481; 29 Kreta Ayer Rd; mains S\$5-10; 11 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A few doors down from the Chinese Buddhist Association, Xinmin is an inexpensive vegetarian option. Chow down on bean curd, noodles and faux duck/pork/shark-fin in a traditional shophouse.

## French

**L'Angelus** (Map pp542-3; 6225 6897; 85 Club St; mains around S\$30; 11 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Comfort-food staples at this unpretentious Provençal bistro makes it one of Singapore's better French eateries. Launch into the chicken-liver salad, the mustard pork fillet and the famous hot chocolate cake.

## International

**Broth** (Map pp542-3; 6323 3353; 21 Duxton Hill; mains from S\$30; 11 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat) In a leafy oasis atop sleepy Duxton Hill, this welcoming old shophouse has friendly staff, bentwood chairs, ceiling fans and a wall of wine and cookbooks. Candlelit dining outside is altogether romantic. Try the lamb loin followed by the chocolate torte with raspberries.

## Italian

**Pasta Brava** (Map pp542-3; 6227 7550; 11 Craig Rd; mains S\$16-29; 11 lunch & dinner) This discreet backstreet bistro is the place for fabulous homemade pasta. Every table has a white paper sheet over the table cloth and a basket of chalks – doodle away, and if they like your work, it'll get pinned on the wall.

**Da Paolo** (Map pp542-3; 6224 7081; 80 Club St; mains S\$15-28; 11 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) One of a chain of chi-chi Italian eateries with

a warm, jazzy interior and efficient staff. Da Paolo's famous dish is squid-ink pasta, which is also available at the more-upmarket seafood-focussed **Da Paolo E Judie** (Map pp542-3; 6225 8306, 81 Neil Rd; mains S\$17-30; 11 lunch & dinner).

**Senso** (Map pp542-3; 6224 3534; 21 Club St; mains S\$20-34; 11 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Sensuous Senso could well be Singapore's top restaurant. After a pre-dinner drink at the lustrous bar, retreat to the courtyard for trad dishes like *osso bucco* (braised veal shank) and homemade ravioli. Wine-list: long; service: immaculate; music: is very *Godfather*.

## Nepalese

**Gorkha Grill** (Map pp542-3; 6227 0806; 21 Smith St; mains S\$10-20; 11 lunch & dinner) Recommended by readers, this affordable, all-comers curry house serves up a peak of the Himalayas in Chinatown. Try the Kashmiri chicken curry, or the *jheenge papita* (prawns marinated in wine and mountain herbs, served in a papaya boat).

## Peranakan

**Blue Ginger** (Map pp542-3; 6222 3928; 97 Tanjong Pagar Rd; mains S\$17-28; 11 lunch & dinner) Blue Ginger serves traditional Peranakan cuisine in a woody shophouse, enlivened by local artist Martin Loh's striking contemporary paintings. Trademark dishes include beef *rendang* and *undang ketak nana lemak* (crayfish with pineapple and coconut milk).

## Thai

**Thanying** (Map pp542-3; 6222 4688; 2nd fl, Amara Hotel, 165 Tanjong Pagar Rd; mains S\$14-28; 11 lunch & dinner) Thanying (which means 'the noble lady') is one of Singapore's best Thai restaurants. Meticulously prepared Royal Thai curries and stir-fries are shuffled out by efficient, unintrusive staff.

## Quick Eats

**Chinatown Complex** (Map pp542-3; Smith St; 11 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 unempt.

**Smith Street Hawker Stalls** (11 4pm-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 pp542-3; cnr Maxwell & Neil Rds; 11 24hr) Generally esteemed as one of Singapore's best hawker centres, this is in an open-sided food barn. Don't miss the *ham chin pang* (long pieces of deep-fried dough) and the chicken rice from Tian Tian (stall 10).

## EAST COAST Chinese

**Five Star Hainanese Chicken Rice & Porridge** (Map pp534-5; 191 East Coast Rd; chicken rice S\$3; 11 lunch & dinner) 'You want chicken rice?' is the stock greeting here. Say 'Yes, indeed I do!'. Two minutes later you'll be tucking into fast food that's actually worth waiting for. The *mee goreng* (fried noodles) is a steal at S\$4.

**Sin Hoi Sai Eating House** (Map pp534-5; 6440 6956; 187 East Coast Rd; mains S\$5-10; 11 dinner) Simple, cheap Cantonese is what this roadside eatery is all about. Standard-issue red plastic chairs gravitate to timber-veneer tables under a huge awning; happy diners hug beers and converse into the night.

## Indian

**Mango Tree** (Map pp534-5; 6442 8655; 1000 East Coast Parkway; mains S\$9-25; 11 lunch & dinner) Tasty Mango Tree specialises in Kerala and Goan Indian cuisine. Splash on some mosquito repellent and hit the terrace for the Malabar seafood platter or the garlic crab. Walk it off along the beach afterwards.

**Vansh** (Map pp538-9; 6345 4466; 01-04 Singapore Indoor Stadium, 2 Stadium Walk; mains S\$15-25; 11 lunch & dinner). Moodily lit Vansh looks more like a nightclub than an Indian eatery. The kitchen takes centre stage: watch chefs shovelling naan in and out of the tandoor as you shovel cushions beneath your posterior. Finish your scrumptious chicken *tikka masala* (mild chicken curry in tomato-based sauce) with a rose-petal sherbet.

## Peranakan

**Charlie's Peranakan Food** (Map pp534-5; 6344 8824; 205 East Coast Rd; mains S\$10-18; 11 lunch & dinner) When chef Charlie Tan retired 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* (chicken with black nut) – Charlie's version is brilliant.

## 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 pp542-3; 6224 6961; 30/32 Tanjong Pagar Rd; 11 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 an hour (S\$15). Book ahead for a dim sum lunch (S\$25).

Once you know your green tea from your oolong, duck around the corner to **Tea Chapter** (Map pp542-3; 6226 1175; 9-11 Neil Rd; 11 10am-11pm), where Queen Elizabeth dropped by for a cuppa in 1989. Choose your seat carefully – the more private areas incur a higher surcharge. If you don't know the tea-making drill, the waiter will give you a brief demonstration. It also sells hand-painted tea sets, kettles, trays, hampers and other cha-centric paraphernalia.

If you're out in Katong, check out **Amoy Tea** (Map pp534-5; 6346 0929; 331 Joo Chiat Rd; 11 9am-6pm), which imports a huge range of ready-packed and loose-leaf Chinese teas.

**Guan Hoe Soon** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6344 2761; 214 Joo Chiat Rd; mains under S\$20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This modest brick-fronted restaurant is the oldest Peranakan restaurant in Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew gets his takeaways here – Lee-baby recommends the *sotong assam goreng* (fried squid in sour sauce) on lettuce leaves or the definitive Peranakan *ayam buah keluak*.

## Seafood

**No Signboard Seafood** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6842 3415; 414 Geylang Rd; mains S\$10-20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) The irony of the 30ft crustacean-emblazoned neon signboard seems to escape the diners here – they're too busy munching into plates of white pepper crab under a fluoro-lit marquee. There's another branch at the East Coast Seafood Centre (below).

**East Coast Seafood Centre** (Map pp534-5; 1202 East Coast Parkway; mains S\$12-25; 𠄎 dinner) Overlooking the Straits of Singapore in the salty breeze, this renowned seafood centre boasts eight excellent Chinese and Thai restaurants, all with outdoor seating. Don't miss the chilli crabs and the intoxicating 'drunken' prawns.

## HOLLAND VILLAGE

### British Pub Grub

**Fosters** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6466 8939; 277 Holland Ave; mains S\$16-36; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Fosters is an Australian beer and the staff here are Chinese, but they manage to conjure up some decent Brit pub food (steaks, pork sausages, fish and chips, steak and mushroom pie etc) without the annoying olde-worlde interior design. The leafy outdoor deck is great for a pint.

### Mediterranean

**Original Sin** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6475 5605; 01-62, 43 Jln Merah Saga; mains S\$20-30; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) This originally sinful menu roams from crispy porcini polenta to veggie burgers and excellent risottos with an expansive/expensive Antipodean wine list. Book a mosaic-topped outdoor table.

**Michelangelo's** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6475 9069, 01-60 Chip Bee Gardens, 44 Jln Merah Saga; mains S\$22-39; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Michelangelo's offers an artistic selection of pastas (the penne vodka in a creamy orange sauce is the signature dish) and salads. Choose between the fan-cooled streetside terrace, or the romantic

dining room with its Sistine Chapel-esque ceiling efforts.

## Mexican

**Cha Cha Cha** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6462 1650; 33 Lg Mam-bong; mains S\$11-26; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) For a Singaporean slant on Mexican classics, Cha Cha Cha makes an interesting outing. Join the pallid expats sucking cigarettes on the forecourt or head into the cheery yellow dining room for crab-meat enchiladas, and margaritas by the pitcher.

## KAMPONG GLAM

**Zam Zam** (Map p537; ☎ 6298 7011; 699 North Bridge Rd; meals S\$3-6; 𠄎 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 moving cars through the door as frenetic chefs whip up *murtabaks* (mutton-, chicken- or vegetable-filled flaky, flat bread).

**Café Le Caire** (Map p537; ☎ 6292 0979; 39 Arab St; meals S\$6-15; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Once you start eating at this Egyptian café you'll need an iron will to stop. Try the sweet and sticky *harissa* (hot sauch), or the *ba'mia* (lamb and okra stew). At night the old guys puff on *sheesha* pipes (S\$12) and dissect the day.

**Bumbu** (Map p537; ☎ 6392 8628; 44 Kandahar St; mains S\$15-20; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Beneath the dome of the Sultan Mosque, endearing Bumbu's upstairs dining room pairs traditional furnishings with a giant antique gramophone. Try the *tahu telur* (egg and tofu with peanut sauce).

**El-Sheik** (Map p537; ☎ 6296 9116; cnr Pahang & Alivval Sts; mains S\$15-25; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Desert hues wash over this upmarket Lebanese option on the fringe of Kampong Glam. If the English Premier League in the front room proves distracting, take your tub of blue Mediterranean honey (!) and jaw-clenchingly strong coffee and head for the lantern-lit roof terrace.

## Quick Eats

**Samar Café** (Map p537; ☎ 6398 0530; cnr Kandahar & Baghdad Sts; meals S\$12-24; 𠄎 24hr) The menu here rides a magic carpet across the Arabic world. Moroccan lanterns cast intricate shadows; *sheesha* pipes bubble in smoky corners.

**Blu Jazz Café** (Map p537; ☎ 6292 3800; 11 Bali La; meals S\$7-18; 𠄎 11am-1am) Also give this place a try.

**Golden Mile Food Centre** (Map p537; 505 Beach Rd; 𠄎 4pm-late) Promotes the government's 'Ask for Healthier Changes' policy (less oil, syrup, fat etc), but the famous *tulang* soup (S\$5) from basement stalls 13, 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; try Diandin Leluk (Map p537, ☎ 6333 3362, 01/67-69 Golden Mile Complex, mains under S\$10, open lunch & dinner) for tasty *tom yum* (hot and sour soup) and beef noodles.

## LITTLE INDIA

### Chinese

**Wing Seong Fatty's (Albert) Restaurant** (Map p537; ☎ 6338 1087; 01-31 Burlington Sq, cnr Albert & Bencoolen Sts; mains S\$5-16; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Standing the test of time, Fatty's has been knocking around various Albert St locations since 1926. Today's incarnation fills with flight crews tucking into the signature chicken clay pot (with special spicy sauce!).

**Singapura Seafood Restaurant** (Map p537; ☎ 6336 3255; Block 9, Selegie House, 01-31 Selegie Rd; mains S\$8-24; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) This old-school, family-run restaurant at the base of an apartment tower has carved itself a culinary niche preparing Foochow-style food from southern China. Try the excellent cold crab, fragrant crispy duck, and prawn rolls.

### French

**French Stall** (Map p537; ☎ 6299 3544; 544 Serangoon Rd; mains S\$10-20; 𠄎 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

**Komala Vilas** (Map p537; ☎ 6293 6980; 76-78 Serangoon Rd; mains S\$5-10; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Wildly popular Komala Vilas serves terrific, cheap vegetarian meals all day long. Try some spicy samosas (stuffed pastries), or order the *thali* – veggie curries, dhal and

condiments served on a banana leaf (scoop it up with your right hand). Its outlet at 82 Serangoon Rd sells sugary Indian sweets.

**Madras New Woodlands** (Map p537; ☎ 6297 1594; 12-14 Upper Dickson Rd; mains S\$5-10; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This enduring family favourite is nothing flash to look at, but sometimes you need a break from all that Bolly schmaltz. The banana-leaf thalis are more than generous; the service is gracious and unintrusive.

**Dosa Corner** (Map p537; ☎ 6297 6297; 70 Serangoon Rd; dosas S\$5-12; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This lurid-lit vegetarian place is wicked! Wash your hands at the basin near the counter then chow down on 2ft rolled paper *dosas* (crispy pancakes) stuffed with funky potato, turmeric and onion masala.

**Ganges** (Map p537; ☎ 6294 3527; 3A-9A Upper Dickson Rd; lunch/dinner buffet S\$10/12; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) The Ganges' cool granite floors and calm sensibilities are a departure from the grimy streets downstairs. Once you've chilled out, flow like a river towards the burgeoning buffet and load up your plate.

**Andhra Curry** (Map p537; ☎ 6293 3935; 41 Kerbau Rd; mains S\$8-22; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) This easy-going restaurant prides itself on fiery recipes from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Order up some Andhra Hyderabadi biryani (oven-baked rice with vegetables and meat), or absorb a flavoursome punch from the lamb dry curry. On Sunday nights it's mayhem!

**Banana Leaf Apollo** (Map p537; ☎ 6296 5995; 54-58 Race Course Rd; mains S\$8-18; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Fish-head curry sounds mildly disconcerting, but as the taxi drivers who eat here profess, there's a lot of delicious meat on those fishy cheeks! Can't face a fish face? Standards like *rogan josh* (tomato and red-pepper lamb curry) and lamb vindaloo (very spicy Central- or South-Indian curry) are less confronting.

**Gokul** (☎ 6396 7769; 19 Upper Dickson St; buffet S\$17.50; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Plates up similar fare as Ganges, at street level. 'It's cool to Gokul!'

## Quick Eats

**Tekka Centre** (Map p537; cnr Bukit Timah & Serangoon Rds; 𠄎 10am-late) There's a sensational range of Indian-Muslim stalls here. The prawn *vadai* (deep-fried dumplings served with savoury lentil sauce or yogurt) from the outer-spacey Sky Lab (stall 01-293) has punters falling from the sky. If you aren't up to a full meal, come for a cold drink or a spicy Indian tea.

**Little India Arcade** (Map p537; 10am-late) Across Serangoon Rd, this smaller spot has several stalls selling vegetarian, Muslim, Keralan and Sri Lankan food.

**Lavender Food Centre** (Map p537; cnr Jln Besar & Foch Rd; 11am-3am) Much less touristed than most and stays open until the wee hours. The won-ton noodles and dim sum are worth queuing for.

**Berseh Food Centre** (Map p537; cnr Jln Besar & Jln Berseh; 11am-10pm) Has some great vegetarian and fruit juice outlets over two levels, but beer swilling seems to be the primary preoccupation!

## ORCHARD ROAD Asian

**Halia** (Map pp544-5; 6476 6711; Singapore Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Rd; mains \$10-20; 11am-10pm) Breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea & dinner) Bedecked with natural timbers, this airy, laid-back oasis nestles into a nook of the Botanic Gardens. House faves include soft-shell black pepper crab and the special curry chicken. Plunder the fully stocked bar and head right for the terrace.

## Cafés

**Marmalade Pantry** (Map pp544-5; 6734 2700; B1-08 Palais Renaissance, 390 Orchard Rd; 11am-10pm) Lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) Crisp white tablecloths, comfy booths and glossy mags set the scene at this sub-street café serving tasty (if pricey) morsels. Yuppies flock for Sunday brunch (10.30am to 4pm, bookings essential).

**Killiney Kopitiam** (Map pp544-5; 6734 9648; 67 Killiney Rd; meals \$3-10; 11am-10pm) Breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon

& Wed-Sat, breakfast & lunch Tue & Sun) This Singaporean institution is *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.

**Graffiti Café** (Map pp544-5; 6238 0422; 05-29 The Heeren, 260 Orchard Rd; mains \$5-15; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) Teens vent their spleen by doodling on the tabletops at this cosy café. Bowls of hand-made won-ton noodles and cheap curries clatter across heartfelt 'I love Elaine's ass' and 'Free Sex!' decorations.

**Café Les Amis** (Map pp544-5; 6467 7326; Singapore Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Rd; meals \$7-14; 11am-10pm) Breakfast, lunch & afternoon tea daily, dinner Sat & Sun) The mild-mannered all-day menu here covers all the bases: soups, cakes, noodles, burgers and stir-fries served on an outdoor fountain terrace. Use the Cluny Rd entrance.

## Chinese

**LingZhi Vegetarian** (Map pp544-5; 6734 3788; 05-01 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd; mains \$12-22; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) You might feel like you're going to work as you take the elevator to the 5th floor, but LingZhi's vegetarian ain't cafeteria fodder. Its Su Cai cooking style utilises onions and leeks, unlike Zhai Cai, which forbids these ingredients because they incite sexual passion! Bring a date and see what transpires. There's another branch at Far East Square in Chinatown (Map pp542-3).

**Chatterbox** (Map pp544-5; 6831 6291; South Tower Lobby, Mandarin Singapore, 333 Orchard Rd; mains

## BRUNCH, TIFFIN & HIGH TEA

Modern Singapore has inherited the Brits' passion for toffy champagne brunches, highbrow high teas and Tiffin, the colonial midday light meal. The five-star hotels all do a good job in laying out Eastern and Western savouries, cakes, puddings, fruits and champagne for the hungry hordes. Prices range from \$50 to \$90 per head, but kids often eat for free; ask about child-minding facilities. To be assured of a seat, book several days ahead.

Try the oh-so colonial Billiard Room or Tiffin Room at the **Raffles Hotel** (Map p540; 6337 1886; 1 Beach Rd), champagne brunch at the **Hilton** (Map pp544-5; 6730 3390; 581 Orchard Rd), **Waterfront Post** (Map p540; 6733 8388; Fullerton Hotel, 1 Fullerton Sq), **One-Ninety** (Map pp544-5; 6734 1110; Four Seasons Hotel, 190 Orchard Blvd); the **Regent** (Map pp544-5; 6733 8888; 1 Cuscaden Rd), **Mezza9** (Map pp544-5; 6738 1234; Grand Hyatt Singapore, 10 Scotts Rd), or the **Marmalade Pantry** (Map pp544-5; 6734 2700; B1-08 Palais Renaissance, 390 Orchard Rd).

\$S19-24; 11am-10pm) Breakfast, lunch & dinner) The aesthetic is uncompromisingly 'hotel lobby', but Chatterbox's chicken rice is legendary. Boiled chicken is plunged into ice then served cold with warm broth, fragrant rice, rich soy, chilli and freshly ground ginger.

**Jiang-Nan Chun** (Map pp544-5; 6734 1110; Four Seasons Hotel, 190 Orchard Blvd; mains from \$20; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) Discreet Jiang-Nan Chun is the place to bring someone you want to impress. The diverse menu is bolstered by a fabulous wine list and impeccable service. The marinated crab claws are show-stoppers.

## Indian

**Bombay Woodlands Restaurant** (Map pp544-5; 6235 2712; B1-01/02 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd; mains \$5-15; 11am-10pm) Breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ethically and spiritually aware, this heavily wooded vegetarian joint's mission is to help you kick the 'meat habit'. Its set *thali* meals (\$S14 to \$S24) are bountiful.

**Samy's Curry Restaurant** (Map pp544-5; 6472 2080; Civil Service Club, Block 25 Dempsey Rd; mains \$10; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) For 25 years the ceiling fans have spun above Samy's munificent curries in this leafy, open-walled, timber-shuttered colonial throwback. The fish-head curry is sublime, or wolf down chicken, lamb and vego delights. Come early for a veranda table.

## International

**Canteen** (Map pp544-5; 6333 8966; 02-10 Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Rd; mains \$18-26; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) Unappealing office-block views fail to deter romantic couples here, gazing into each other's eyes over sharp-edged tablecloths and weathered floorboards. The fare is

meaty – the veal cheek cooked in red wine and orange reduction is a standout.

**Mezza9** (Map pp544-5; 6738 1234; Grand Hyatt Singapore, 10-12 Scotts Rd; mains from \$25; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) Lobsters on ice, baskets of Tabasco Sauce bottles, glazed wine cool-rooms, floor-to-ceiling windows and six open kitchens so you can watch the flames under your wok – there's plenty to look at, and plenty of suits doing the looking.

## Japanese

**Akashi** (Map pp544-5; 6732 4483; B1-9-11 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd; mains \$15-25; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) Sandwiched midway between the basement and the footpath, Akashi's blond wood and purple suede interior sets the scene for elegant Japanese dining. Firm sushi, crunchy tempura, sticky teriyaki – reliably delicious.

## Organic

**Supernature** (Map pp544-5; 6735 4338; 01-21 Park House, 21 Orchard Blvd; mains \$10-15; 11am-10pm) Lunch & afternoons) Feeling rough after a night on the tiles? Drop in for a detox juice (try the predictably green 'Incredible Hulk'), an organic sandwich or a soy burger. Its deli's shelves heave with chemical- and gluten-free vegies, groceries, wine, fruit and meats.

## Peranakan

**House of Peranakan Cuisine** (Map pp544-5; 6733 4411; Level 1, Meritus Negara Hotel, 10 Claymore Rd; mains \$15-35; 11am-10pm) Lunch & dinner) This place milks the heritage/tradition/nostalgia angle for all it's worth. Labour-intensive meals are prepared with aplomb, many featuring the definitive Peranakan 'black nut'. Shame about the Michael Bublé soundtrack.

## SELF-CATERING

Cold Storage and Carrefour are the main players in the Singapore supermarket scene, with outlets in many of the big shopping malls, including Suntec City, Plaza Singapura, HarbourFront, Holland Village, Takashimaya at Ngee Ann City and under Seiyu department store near Bugis MRT. **Tanglin Market Place** (Map pp544-5; Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd) has similar offerings.

For small-time food and drink, Singapore has more 7-Eleven stores than you can poke a chopstick at.

Wet markets ('wet' because they hose down the floors every night) at the Chinatown Complex (p559), Tekka Centre (p561) and Geylang Serai Market (p521) are great for seafood, meat, fresh fruit and vegetables and all kinds of exotic produce (toads, eels, turtles etc).

For organic, chemical-free produce including fresh fruit and vegetables, try Supernature (opposite) or **Brown Rice Paradise** (Map pp544-5; 6738 1121; 03-15/16 Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd; 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-9pm Sat & Sun).

**Lazy Gourmet Deli by Les Amis** (Map pp544-5; 6333 8722; 02-10 Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Rd; 11am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-9.30pm Sat & Sun) has everything you need for a DIY French picnic, including breads, spreads, pastries and vegetables.



## Russian

**Shashlik** (Map pp544-5; % 6732 6401; 06-19 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd; mains S\$7-24; 1 lunch & dinner) OK, so the food isn't *really* Russian, but it does 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.

## Quick Eats

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

**Asian Food Mall** (Map pp544-5; Lucky Plaza, 304 Orchard Rd; 1 9am-10pm) Come here for a variety of noodle, chicken rice and clay pot outlets, as well as drinks and desserts.

**Great Treat** (Map pp544-5; 100 Orchard Rd; 1 10.30am-11pm) Under Le Meridien Hotel is this cleaner-than-usual food court, with 14 of the 18 outlets devoted to Thai food. Wailing Mariah Carey classics seem oddly appropriate.

**Picnic at Scotts** (Map pp544-5; Scotts Shopping Centre, 6 Scotts Rd; 1 11am-10pm) This has a certain considered sheen to it, without straying from the path of budget-ness. Korean, Thai, North Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian stalls prevail.

**Takashimaya Food Village** (Map pp544-5; Takashimaya, Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; 1 10.30am-9pm) This has similar fare as Picnic at Scotts, plus cakes and chocolate stalls.

**Tasty Food Court** (Map pp544-5; Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd; 1 9am-9.30pm) Pastel-coloured furniture and bad commercial radio complement the usual noodle purveyances at this spotless food court.

**Newton Food Centre** (Map pp544-5; Newton Circus; 1 24hr) Near Newton MRT, this food centre has shifted along Bukit Timah Rd while an extreme makeover takes place at the original site. It gets a good rap from locals and tourists alike, though the touting can be in your face. Try the barbecued oysters.

## DRINKING

Despite ludicrously high alcohol prices, high disposable incomes and relaxed licencing 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, while some bars sell entire bottles of spirits to groups.

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 cost around S\$5 at hawker centres and coffee shops.

## COLONIAL DISTRICT

**Chijmes** (Map p540; 30 Victoria St) Perennially popular Chijmes is a high-density collection of bars and chilled-out patio areas. **Liberté** (Map p540, % 6338 8481) is a sassy joint attracting expats and tourists. Try the 'Lady Liberté' house cocktail (S\$); avoid Thursday's R&B night if you're feeling less than sentimental. Can't sleep? **Insomnia** (Map p540, % 6338 6883) has occasional live bands and affordable bar food, with 10 happy hours from 11am to 9pm (it's open from 11am to 5am). Downstairs, the unutterably Irish pub **Father Flanagan's** (Map p540, % 6333 1418) offers courtyard tables, soccer on the TV and a steady supply of Guinness; its hours are noon to midnight Sunday to Thursday, to 2am Friday and Saturday. **Table 108** (% 6836 6096) is a classy alternative with a red and dark-wood fit-out.

**Lot, Stock & Barrel** (Map p540; % 9759 4133; 29 Seah St) We're not sure what happened to the 'Lock' and 'Two Smoking', but this long, lean, regulation bar is perfect for a dim-lit evening ale or five and some jukebox abuse. There's a solid selection of beers on tap for reasonable prices.

**Intobar** (Map p540; % 6837 3322; Level 1, Swissôtel the Stamford, 2 Stamford Rd; 1 11am-1am) Just off the hotel lobby, this is a loungey place to meet before zooming up to the New Asia Bar (below).

**New Asia Bar** (Map p540; % 6831 5681; cover Fri & Sat incl 1 drink S\$25; 1 3pm-late) Zip up 70 floors to where Singapore's most spectacular views join forces with a 20-degree tilting dance floor (you might regret that last martini).

**Paulaner Bräuhaus** (Map p540; % 6883 2572; 01-01 Times Square@Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd; 1 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 p540; % 6337 1886; 1 Beach Rd; 1 10am-late) Yeah, we know it's a cliché, but a visit to Singapore is practically incomplete without a drink at Raffles (p515). The Bar & Billiard Room has nightly live jazz and a veranda perfect for post-colonial 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. A frosty glass of the sweet, cherry-red intoxicator will set you back S\$20.

## CBD & THE QUAYS

**Post** (Map p540; % 6733 8388; Fullerton Hotel, 1 Fullerton Sq) After-workers schmooze beneath high ceilings, metallic Art Deco finishes and a wall of vodka – if only all post offices looked this snazzy! Things look even better after a few caipiroskas and a chubby David-off 'Short Perfector' from the humidior.

**Bar Opium** (Map p540; % 6339 2876; Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Pl) Opium's gleaming glass bar fuses industrial chic with polished floorboards, oversized chandeliers and big-ass couches (not that the skinny clientele command any respect in that department). Seductive river views extend from painted wicker chairs on the terrace.

**Clifford Beer Park** (Map pp542-3; % 6536 3422; G1/G2 Change Alley, 60 Collyer Quay) For a sniff of old Singapore, head to this seedy, bayside beer-nook where cheesy local bands bang out miniskirted girl-pop, cheap meals cluster on plastic tabletops and you can get a beer without haemorrhaging your wallet.

## Boat Quay & Circular Road

**Penny Black** (Map p540; % 6538 2300; 26/27 Boat Quay; 1 11am-1am Mon-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) Homesick Brits populate this trad English pub, doubling as the home of the Liverpool FC supporters club. Big-screen TVs, decent pub grub, live music on Fridays and happy hours from opening till 8pm – not a bad combo.

**Bedroom Bar** (Map p540; % 6535 0102; 68 Circular Rd; 1 5pm-7am) Yes, you read it right: this narrow Canadian-owned hole-in-the-wall stays open until 7am – a magnet for hard-core drinkers. Gloomily decorated with Chinese lanterns and a pink-lit fish tank, it has a certain dingy charm. Happy hours run from 5pm to 9pm.

**BQ Bar** (Map p540; % 6536 9722; 39 Boat Quay; 1 11am-1am Mon & Tue, 11am-3am Wed-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) This quayside box fills with phone-wielding businessmen having one-way conversations about selling photocopiers. The amazing concrete bar and lilted jazz give it the edge over its Boat Quay brethren. Marathon happy hours run from 11.30am to 8pm.

**Eski Bar** (Map p540; % 6536 3757; 46 Circular Rd; 1 2pm-1am Mon-Thu, 2pm-3am Fri & Sat, 4pm-1am Sun) Inside this oversized refrigerator, temperatures plummet to an invigorating -10°. They give you a ski jacket to wear, but frostbite is a genuine risk if you lean on the carved-ice bar. You might wish your wallet was frozen shut when you see the prices.

**Molly Malone's** (Map p540; % 6536 2029; 56 Circular Rd) Molly's statue looks like she's been wheeling her wheelbarrow a bit too long, and experienced drinkers will have seen her faux-Irish décor and the Genuine Irish Stew menu a hundred times before, but that doesn't make it any less appealing.

## Clarke Quay

**Brewerkz** (Map p540; % 6438 7438; 01-05 Riverside Point Centre, 30 Merchant Rd; 1 noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat) Under deep awnings across the river from Clarke Quay, this microbrewery 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\$10, jugs S\$12 to S\$24).

**Asylum** (Map p540; % 6337 1990; 01-02 Clarke Quay) In a town where everyone's working some kind of mad angle or gimmick, Asylum is refreshingly sane. It's a 'fold back the windows and watch the world go by' kinda joint, with casual dining on the deck.

## Robertson Quay & Mohamed Sultan Road

**Next Page** (Map pp538-9; % 6235 6967; 17 Mohamed Sultan Rd; 1 3pm-3am) This is where Hunter S Thompson would have hung out

if he'd been a journo in Singapore not San Juan. 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.

**En Bar & Lounge** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6732 6863; 01-59 UE Sq, Mohamed Sultan Rd) Japanese restaurant En has expanded into a bar. The glam ambience of the outdoor area, mirrored music room and a retro lounge lure a lethargically 'money' crowd, all cigarettes and winks.

**Sound Bar** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6333 8117; Gallery Hotel, 76 Robertson Quay; 11am-3am Tue-Sat) Choose between alfresco riverside cocktails and beery bar stools by the glowing fish tank. Ambient tunes, evening breezes and sexy clientele round out the mood. Migrate upstairs to the Liquid Room (p568) later on.

## CHINATOWN

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

**Bar Sá Vành** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6323 0503; 49 Club St) Gorgeous svelte things flit through Sá Vành's dusky candlelight as expats sink into sunken lounges and chilled tunes snake into the night.

**Aphrodisiac Bar** (☎ 6325 1045; 47 Club St) Next door, this place sports classical Greek statues, Chesterfields and a glowing green bar.

**W Winebar** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6223 3886; 11 Club St) Wine, whisky and cigars (\$S12 to \$S120) lure after-workers and regulars into W's fold. Comfy couches, soft lighting and Spanish tunes conjure up a chilled-out, casual vibe in front of a huge glass-fronted wine cooler.

**Union Bar** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6327 4990; 81 Club St) With big squishy corduroy couches, plenty of elbow room and views onto Club St's passing parade, Union is hard to beat for a relaxed late-afternoon beer. If you're flush with cash, most of the abstract art on the walls is for sale.

**Beaujolais Wine Bar** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 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, low-key jazz and the occasional cheese and wine night (\$S30). Street-front tables are the place to be.

**Barrio Chino** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6324 3245; 60 Club St) Across the street from Union, BC's is an unpretentious Spanish bar with just enough 'This is Barcelona' interior design. Cheese boards (\$S16) and dip platters (\$S12) are

best drowned with some peppery rioja or sangria.

**Bisous Bar** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6226 5505; 25 Church St, Capital Sq Three; 11.30am-1am) Bisous seems to have cut a deal with Heineken; familiar green awnings and frangipani trees shelter drinkers from whatever they're trying to forget. Big-screen TVs draw business types and sports fans, sipping lychee martinis and savouring snacks from a decent Mexican/Mediterranean menu.

**Mama Africa** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6532 9339; 01-01 Far East Sq, 92 Telok Ayer St; 11am-midnight) The thatched Disney-goes-Swahili décor here is a little hard to take, but there are plenty of beers on tap, infectious bongo rhythms and spicy African-styled bar snacks like lamb sausage and calamari.

**Fluid** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6438 2142; 45 Pekin St; 11am-1am) The deep, shady embrace of Fluid somehow seems more solid, but there's plenty of fluid in the beer taps. DJs blow the cobwebs out of the sound system on weekends, and there's a pool table upstairs.

## ORCHARD ROAD

**Alley Bar** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6738 8818; 2 Emerald Hill Rd) 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.

**Rouge** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6732 6966; 2 Emerald Hill Rd) When you've had enough of the Alley Bar, roam upstairs for a dance.

**No 5** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6732 0818; 5 Emerald Hill Rd; 11am-2am Mon-Sat, 5pm-2am Sun) 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 pp544-5; ☎ 6235 6626; 7 Emerald Hill Rd) Next door to No 5, this is a classy wine and tapas bar.

**Ice Cold Beer** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6735 9929; 9 Emerald Hill Rd) It's back to raucous international beer-swilling at this spot.

**Dubliners** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6735 2220; 165 Penang Rd; 11.30am-1am Sun-Thu, 11.30am-2am Fri & Sat) A cut above the Irish pub fray, Dubliners

gains kudos for its whitewashed plantation architecture and quality pub food. No sign of James Joyce, but toast his efforts with pint of the black stuff on the veranda.

**Brix** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6416 7292; B1, Grand Hyatt Singapore, 10 Scotts Rd; women/men Thu-Sat \$S25/35; 7pm-3am) If you make it past the goons at the door, you can spend the night lurching between the whisky bar (single malt heaven), wine bar (namesake brickwork and impressive wine list) and music room (bands, R&B/disco/soul DJs, and dancing).

**Muddy Murphy's** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6735 0400; B1-01/05 Orchard Hotel Shopping Arcade, 442 Orchard Rd; 11.30am-1am Sun-Thu, 11.30am-2am Fri & Sat) Set below street level, Muddy's is a snug retreat at the western end of Orchard Rd. Happy hour ends at a stingy 7.30pm, but there's live acoustic music most nights.

## HOLLAND VILLAGE

**Tangos** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6463 7364; 35 Lg Mambong) Tangos' red/white/black perspex-panelled interior is a stylish place to prop yourself for a few happy hours (3pm to 9pm). The daiquiris are reasonably affordable, and it also serves some tasty pasta.

**Baden** (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6468 5585; 42 Lg Mambong) If you're a German beer fan, there's more Grolsch, Heineken and Erdinger in this low-ceilinged beer-cranney than is probably wise. Finger food (\$S5 to \$S9) might keep you sober long enough to make it home to bed.

## 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.

Most nocturnal bar activity bubbles up around the Quays, Circular Rd, Mohamed Sultan Rd and Chinatown, while Chijmes is good for alfresco bars/eateries. Clubs generally close at 3am and are strictly drug-free; get your kicks instead from local acts and touring DJs who regularly 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 (how many times can you hear someone massacre Bryan Adams' *Heaven* in one week?).

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 TicketCharge (☎ 6296 2929; www.ticketcharge.com.sg). Check websites for the nearest outlets. For up-to-date listings see the *Strait Times* newspaper and *8 Days* magazine. For nightlife, pick up the free street mags *I-S Magazine* and *Juice* at cafés, hotels and music stores.

## CABARET & COMEDY

**Gold Dust** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6235 7170; www.thegolddustclub.com; 02-11 Orchard Towers (rear block), 1 Claymore Dr; admission \$S15-30; 10pm Mon-Sat) Never seen a drag queen in traditional Thai dress lip-sync to Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive*? Lose your cherry with veteran dragster Kumar who gyrates his way through everything from Canto-pop to Hindustani hits. Keep a low profile – things can get personal.

**1 Nite Stand Comedy Club** (Map p540; ☎ 6334 1954; www.the1nitenstand.com; 42 10-04 Block A Clarke Quay; shows around \$S50; 11pm-2am) 'I just flew in from LA, and boy are my arms tired!' The comedy at this big, carpeted bar is marginally more sophisticated, with mostly UK, US and Australian stand-ups hamming it up during the last week of every month. The rest of the time it's a regulation beer bar.

## CHINESE OPERA

**Chinese Theatre Circle** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6323 4862; www.ctcopera.com.sg; 5 Smith St; 11am-5pm Tue-Thu, noon-5pm & 7-9pm Fri & Sat, 2-10pm Sun) For a low-key introduction to Chinese opera, come to a teahouse evening organised by this nonprofit group. Every Friday and Saturday night at 8pm there's a brief talk (in English) about Chinese opera, followed by a short Cantonese opera excerpt performed by professional actors in full costume. Tea and cakes are included in the \$S20 price, the whole thing lasting around 45 minutes. Bookings recommended. For \$S35, turn up at 7pm and enjoy a full Chinese meal beforehand. Opera Karaoke also transpires (see p519).

## CINEMA

Movie-going is huge in Singapore, and at around S\$8.50 per ticket it's pretty good value too. Films are mainly Hollywood blockbusters and Chinese, Korean and Japanese crowd-pleasers, plus a few art-house hits from around the world. Non-English films are usually subtitled; admission prices vary according to session times. Weekend screenings sell out (even midnight sessions) so book ahead and be prepared to queue. Check the *Straits Times* for session details. Take along something warm to wear – Singaporean cinemas are notoriously chilly.

The Singapore International Film Festival ([www.filmfest.org.sg](http://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 Parco Bugis Junction, Shaw Towers on Beach Rd, Suntec City and Marina Sq (all on Map p540). Around Orchard Rd you'll find cinemas at Cathay Cineleisure Orchard and Plaza Singapura, and a Lido cinema at Shaw House (all on Map pp544–5).

**GV Gold Class** (Map pp538-9; % 1900-912 1234; [www.gv.com.sg](http://www.gv.com.sg); 1 Kim Seng Pde; tickets Mon-Fri S\$25, Sat & Sun S\$30; 10am-midnight) If you're really primed for a pampering, head for the 3rd floor of Great World City shopping mall. This swanky cinema features plush carpeting and single and double reclining seats complete with footrests, table service and a reasonable menu.

## CLUBS

Most clubs have cover charges of around S\$15 to S\$35, often including at least one drink; women usually pay less. Clubs are forever folding and revamping; check *I-S Magazine* and *Juice* for reviews. Keep a lookout for outdoor raves, usually held on Sentosa.

**Zouk** (Map pp538-9; % 6738 2988; [www.zoukclub.com.sg](http://www.zoukclub.com.sg); 17 Jiak Kim St; admission incl 2 drinks S\$35; 11pm-3am Wed, Fri & Sat, Velvet Underground 9pm-3.30am Tue-Sat, Wine Bar 6pm-3.30am daily) Ibiza-inspired Zouk 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. There's also the alfresco Zouk Wine Bar, old-school drum-and-bass at Phuture, and the Moroccan-inspired Velvet Underground

hung with Keith Haring and Andy Warhol originals. Be prepared to queue for a while.

**Liquid Room** (Map pp538-9; % 6333 8117; [www.liquidroom.com.sg](http://www.liquidroom.com.sg); Gallery Hotel, 76 Robertson Quay; admission incl 2 drinks S\$20; 11pm-3am Wed, Fri & Sat) Less liquid, more gunmetal, this intimate club's industrial vibe and top DJs set the scene for serious dancing. Inside there's progressive house, tech-house and trance. Toilets are rare as pills – you might find yourself squirming on the spot regardless of the music.

**Ministry of Sound** (Map p540; % 6333 9368; [www.ministryofsound.com.sg](http://www.ministryofsound.com.sg); 01-07 Block C Clarke Quay; admission men S\$15-25, women free-S\$20; 11pm-3am Wed-Sat) Those decadent Brits have finally made it to Singapore. The world's largest MOS proffers seven separate rooms, superb digital sound and light, a Travolta-esque chequered dance floor, and a 20ft water curtain. Queuing might take a chunk out of your dance time.

**dbl 0** (Map pp538-9; % 6735 2008; 01-24, 11 Unity St, Robertson Walk; admission men S\$10-20, women free-S\$10; 11pm-3am Wed-Sun, 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.

**RAV** (Map p540; % 6327 4900; [www.rav.com.sg](http://www.rav.com.sg); 69 Circular Rd; admission variable; 11pm-3am Sun-Fri, 6pm-4am Sat) Unrelentingly red with disco balls aplenty, RAV is Circular Rd's standout club, pumping out everything from acid jazz to Motown to under-30s. Big-name local DJ Illusion is a regular; gals are regular recipients of free-flow 'house-pours'.

**Babyface** (Map pp542-3; % 6236 5120; [stacy@onegroupsg.com](mailto:stacy@onegroupsg.com); 02-02 One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Rd; admission men/women \$20/18; 11pm-6am Tue-Sat, 9pm-11pm Mon & Sun) Three levels of harbourside decadence: chill-out bar, live band room and pumping disco. The house band's unsexy stage posturing is unforgivable, but baby-faced clubbers don't seem to mind.

## LIVE MUSIC

### Classical

**Singapore Symphony Orchestra** (% 6348 5555; [www.sso.org.sg](http://www.sso.org.sg)) The 1800-seater state-of-the-art concert hall at the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (p515) is home to this respected orchestra, which also graces the **Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall** (Map p540; % 6338 4401;

[www.vch.org.sg](http://www.vch.org.sg); 11 Empress Pl). It plays at least once weekly; check the website for details and book in advance. Student and senior (60-plus) discounts available; kids under six years old are unceremoniously banned.

**Singapore Chinese Orchestra** (Map pp542-3; % 6440 3839; [www.sco.com.sg](http://www.sco.com.sg); Singapore Conference Hall, 7 Shenton Way) Performs regular classical Chinese, Indian and Malay concerts throughout the year, featuring traditional instruments including the *liuqin*, *ruan* and *sanxian*. Free performances in parks and community centres also happen – check the website for details.

## Rock

**Crazy Elephant** (Map p540; % 6337 1990; [www.crazyelephant.com](http://www.crazyelephant.com); 01-07 Clarke Quay; admission free; 11pm-1am Sun-Thu, 3pm-2am Fri & Sat) Anywhere that bills itself as 'crazy' should set the alarm bells ringing, but you won't hear them once you're inside. Singapore's best rock bar is

beery, blokey, low, loud, graffiti-covered and testosterone-heavy – rock on!

**Prince of Wales** (Map p537; % 6299 0130; [www.pow.com.sg](http://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 weeknight acoustic rock, and original indie bands on weekends. Music is from 9pm most nights.

**Marco Anywhere** (Map pp544-5; % 9238 7976; 04-08/09 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd; admission free; 11pm-2am) This place has been around forever, and so has the house band that plays covers to loyal locals and expats – often 35-plus. Drinking horrendous quantities might help you cope with the pink and grey interior. No need to get dressed up.

## Jazz & Blues

**Jazz@Southbridge** (Map p540; % 6327 4671; [www.southbridgejazz.com.sg](http://www.southbridgejazz.com.sg); 82B Boat Quay; admission free, touring acts S\$15-20; 11pm-5.30pm-late) Above Boat

## GAY & LESBIAN SINGAPORE

Singapore's gay and lesbian scene revolves around Chinatown and the Tanjong Pagar area. Male homosexuality is illegal in Singapore; lesbianism doesn't officially exist! Crackdowns on venues are extremely rare, but they do happen. For more details see p577.

The balcony at **Backstage Bar** (Map pp542-3; % 6227 1712; 13A Trengganu St; admission free; 11pm-2am Sun-Thu, 7pm-3am Fri & Sat) is a great spot to chat, flirt with local lads and otherwise play Rappunzel. Most folks drop by here first before heading on to the clubs later. Don't be put off by the 'PLU Members Only' sign downstairs – friends of the rainbow flag have automatic membership. The entrance to this place is on Temple St.

Officialdom forbids kissing and taking your shirt off at **Happy** (Map pp542-3; % 6227 7400; 01-02/04, 21 Tanjong Pagar Rd; admission S\$20; 11pm-3am Mon-Sat), but that doesn't seem to stop anyone. It's mostly full of buff boys, but girls are welcome too. Indulge your inner 'Happysexual' (the signature cocktail).

More gay-friendly than overtly gay, **Mox Bar & Café** (Map pp542-3; % 6323 9438; 04-01, 21 Tanjong Pagar Rd; 11pm-midnight Tue-Thu, 7pm-2am Fri & Sat) is a cool place to squeeze in a few heart-starters before wiggling downstairs to Happy (above). The rooftop views are almost as interesting as the furniture donated by people's grandmas.

It wasn't long ago that the concept of a regulation Singapore gay bar was too taboo to imagine, but that's exactly what **Exposé** (Map pp542-3; % 6323 2466; 208 South Bridge Rd; admission free; 11pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 6pm-1am Thu & Sun, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat) is. Karaoke-phobes should stay away until after midnight when the mic shuts down, or run the gauntlet for the excellent Thai/Vietnamese dinner served here.

Why not plant yourself on a podium at **Why Not?** (Map pp542-3; % 6323 3010; 58 Tras St; admission free; 11pm-3am Mon-Thu, 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) and carve it up? One of Singapore's most popular backstreet G&L hang-outs boasts nonstop house and crowd-pleaser anthems.

Gay-friendly **Actors** (Map p540; % 6533 2436; 02-13 South Bridge Rd; admission free; 11pm-2am Mon-Sat) is more like an effeminate version of *Cheers* than an out-and-out gay bar; bartenders mete out vodka shooters and sympathy to queers and straights as required. Expect a relaxed vibe, a 25-to-35 crowd, impromptu musical jams and the odd game of pool.

Also check out the drag cabaret at Gold Dust (p567).



Quay, this intimate jazz bar sets plush sofas in front of a small stage. With the exception of a rather indulgent pianist, the house band is excellent, with famous internationals often taking to the stage. Sets kick off around 9.30pm.

**Blue Note** (Map p540; % 6438 2282; www.blue-note.com.sg; 48 Circular Rd; admission free; 11am-late) Yep, management sure thought long and hard about naming this jazz bar, but Blue Note does rain some classy musical atmospheria on Circular Rd's bleary, karaoke-strained parade. Good for an afternoon brew too.

**Harry's Bar** (Map p540; % 6538 3029; 28 Boat Quay; 11am-late) One-time hang-out of Barings Bank-breaker Nick Leeson, Harry's jazzy blues mingles well with night-time river views, but somehow seems to miss the whole 'My woman left me, and my dog ate my money' point of it all. Still, it's not a bad spot for an ale. Music starts at 10pm. It has another venue across the river at the Esplanade.

## SPECTATOR SPORTS

**Singapore Cricket Club** (Map p540; % 6471 9955; www.scc.org.sg; Connaught Dr) Ringed by imposing colonial façades, there are few more obvious symbols of British imperialism than The Padang's manicured lawns. Defying the tropical heat, the SCC struts its stuff to choruses of 'Cracking shot old bean!' from the members' pavilion. Cricket season is from February to September; rugby, bowls and soccer get an airing during the off season.

**Singapore Indoor Stadium** (Map pp538-9; % 6348 5555; www.sis.gov.sg; 2 Stadium Walk; 11am-late) Most of Singapore's big-ticket sports and entertainment events – from international soccer to celebrity wrestling – are played out here; check the website, the *Straits Times* or www.singaporeports.com.sg for details. To get here take bus 11 from Kallang MRT.

**Singapore Polo Club** (Map pp534-5; % 6854 3999; www.singaporepoloclub.org; 80 Mt Pleasant Rd; 11am-late) Established in 1886, the SPC refuses to temper its 'Tally-ho old chap, into the fray!' approach to post-colonial life. Thank God (...oh, and the Queen!) Spectators are welcome at practice 'chukkas' through the week; international fixtures happen in May, September and October. Buses 54, 130, 162, 167, 980 will deliver you here.

**Singapore Turf Club** (Map pp534-5; % 6879 1000; www.turfclub.com.sg; 1 Turf Club Ave; 11am-late) The tourist spiel claims 'It's more exciting with horses!'. We're not sure what 'it' entails, but the horse 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; 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 pp538-9; % 6733 8166; www.srt.com.sg; DBS Drama Centre, 20 Merbau Rd) The bigwig of Singapore's theatre scene, producing standards like *The Glass Menagerie*, *Hamlet* and *Death of a Salesman*.

**Nrityalaya Aesthetics Society** (Map p540; % 6336 6537; www.nas.org.sg; 155 Waterloo St) For classical Indian dance and vocal and instrumental music check out this company. It also stages an annual drama festival.

**Singapore Dance Theatre** (Map p540; % 6338 0611; www.singaporedanceandtheatre.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\$19).

Apart from the Esplanade (p515), other venues include the following:

**Black Box** (Map p540; % 6837 8400; Level 3, National Library, 100 Victoria St)

**DBS Drama Centre** (Map pp538-9; % 6733 8166; 20 Merbau Rd)

**Drama Centre** (Map p540; % 6837 8400; Level 3, National Library, 100 Victoria St)

**Jubilee Hall** (Map p540; % 6331 1732; 3rd fl, Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Rd)

**Kallang Theatre** (Map pp538-9; % 6345 8488; www.nac.gov.sg; 1 Stadium Rd)

**Guinness Theatre** (Map p540; % 6337 7535; www.substation.org; Substation, 45 Armenian St)

**Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall** (Map p540; % 6338 4401; 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. Fuelled by a raging pyre of slick advertising, frenzied crowds throng through the doors of department stores and enormous malls across the city. This 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. If you do have to haggle, stay good humoured and don't get petty – this causes everyone to lose face. And don't start bargaining if you have no real interest in buying! Most shops open at 10am or 11am and close around 9pm or 10pm.

The STB-endorsed **Great Singapore Sale** (www.greatsingaporeale.com.sg) storms through June and July every year – two months of discount shopping coinciding with various arts and food festivals.

## GST

Most goods and services incur a 5% goods and services tax (GST). See p579 for information on the GST Tourist Refund Scheme.

### 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 player, 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** (p581) or the **Small Claims Tribunal** (Map p540; % 6435 5994; www.smallclaims.gov.sg; Subordinate Courts, 1 Havelock Sq; 11am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat). Tourist complaints are usually heard within two or three days.

## 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. 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 p540; 30 Victoria St) is a serene place to sniff around for crafts. **Mai Thai Gallery** (Map p540; % 6837 0040; 01-10) stocks Southeast Asian timber bowls, ceramic kitchenware, baskets and jewellery. **Olathe** (Map p540; % 6339 6880; 01-05) sells a commercial range of batik clothing, bags, urns, ceramics and a selection of gifts.

**Tomlinson Antique House** (Map p540; % 6334 0242; 02-35/36 Raffles Hotel Arcade, 328 North Bridge Rd) sells Indian, Burmese and Chinese artefacts dating back to the Tang dynasty. Prices hit the many thousands (look but don't touch!).

The rainbow-shuttered colonial **MICA Building** (Map p540; 140 Hill St) houses a clutch of quality galleries, including **Art-2 Gallery** (Map p540; % 6338 8719), **Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery** (Map p540; % 6733 3822), **Gajah Gallery** (Map p540; % 6737 4202) and **Soobin Art Gallery** (Map p540; % 6837 2777), which showcases the best of China's vibrant avant-garde scene.

## Chinatown

The classy **Lajeunesse Asian Art** (Map pp542-3; % 6224 7975; 58 Club St) has art, artefacts and bejewellments from throughout Southeast Asia. Similarly upmarket is the **Red Peach Gallery** (Map pp542-3; % 6222 2215; 68 Pagoda St) with lots of glitzy homeware. **Shing's Antique Gallery** (Map pp542-3; % 6224 4332; 24A-26 Pagoda St) stocks beautiful wooden screens, lamps, sculptures and antique window grills.

The **Zhen Lacquer Gallery** (Map pp542-3; % 6222 2718; 1/1A/1B Trengganu St) is generally kitsch but sometimes stylish, selling shiny lacquered stuff like hand-painted jewellery boxes, place-mats, utensils, plates and photo albums.

**Art Seasons** (Map pp542-3; % 6221 1800; The Box, 5 Gemmill Lane) sells quirky contemporary work (mainly paintings) by Singaporean, Chinese, Burmese, Korean and Japanese artists.

The diminutive, pony-tailed Mr Yong sells masterful calligraphic works, Chinese-chequers sets and jade carvings at **Yong Gallery** (Map pp542-3; % 6226 1718; 260 South Bridge Rd).

In an enclave of gorgeous shophouses at the bottom of Chinatown, **Em Gallery** (Map pp538-9; % 6475 6941; 5 Blair Rd) sells richly coloured hand-made Cambodian and Laotian silk, textiles, ceramics, basketry and furniture.

## Little India

**Plastique Kinetic Worms** (Map p537; % 6292 7783; 61 Kerbau Rd) is Singapore's only artist-run, non-profit gallery promoting off-the-wall works by young and contemporary visual artists.

Pick your way through a staggering display of subcontinental knick-knacks at **Celebration of Arts** (Map p537; % 6296 0769; 2/2A Dalhousie Lane) – everything from statues and carved wooden screens to cashmere scarves,

saris, bedspreads and lampshades. It has another outlet on Campbell Lane.

**Bhaskar's Art Gallery** (Map p537; % 6396 4523; 19 Kerbau Rd) is the gallery division of a performing arts company, exhibiting the (sometimes dubious) works by Indian artists from Singapore, India and Malaysia.

## Orchard Road

Level two of the **Tanglin Shopping Centre** (Map pp544-5; 19 Tanglin Rd) is Singapore's one-stop-shop for antiques, arts and crafts. Treasure-hunt your way through the centre's **Aspara** (Map pp544-5; % 9436 2886; 02-30), **Kwan Hua Art Gallery** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 5663; 02-61/60), **HaKaren** (Map pp544-5; % 9877 8088; 02-43/45) and **Akemi** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 6315; 02-06).

Mildly offbeat **Boon's Pottery** (Map pp544-5; % 6836 3978; 01-30 Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd) sells a broad range of beautiful ceramics made with local clays.

**Polar Arts of Asia** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 2311; 02-16 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd) is a bizarre conglomeration of artefacts, skulls and tribal jewellery among golf shops. Owner Chuan Siang Boon makes a habit of donating works to bigwigs like Bill Gates.

Along **Dempsey Road**, a creepily abandoned former British Army barracks is now a shopping precinct specialising in Kashmiri carpets, teak furniture and antiques.

## Holland Village

**Lim's** (Map pp534-5; % 6467 1300; 02-01 Holland Rd Shopping Centre, 211 Holland Ave) is a composed place to rummage for Asian vases, teak furniture, cushions and glasswear of all heights and girths. It has another branch at 46 Smith St in Chinatown (Map pp542-3).

## FLEA MARKETS

Looking for a real bargain or a quirky souvenir? Scratch the malls and head to a flea market:

**Clarke Quay** (Map p540; Clarke Quay, 3 River Valley Rd; 9.30am-6pm Sun) Not as busy as it used to be, but worth a look for old clothes and knick-knackery.

**Far East Square** (Map pp542-3; 76 Telok Ayer St; 11am-10pm Sat) Old folk hawking retro watches, medals, semiprecious stones, curios and trinkets.

**China Square Central Flea Market** (Map pp542-3; Levels 1 & 2, China Sq Central; 9am-7pm Sun) Hocks similar gear, next door to Far East Sq.

**Lime Flea Market** (Map pp544-5; 113 Somerset Rd; 1-7pm every 2nd Sat) Vintage clothes, CDs, handmade designer accessories.

**Thieves Market** (Map p537; Pitt St; 11am-6pm Sun) Anyone and everyone comes here to offload their crappy old stuff (sandshoes, blenders, cassette tapes, broken watches, rollerskates etc).

## CAMERAS & ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

In Singapore you buy electronics on one basis only – price. Hi-tech goods are just the same as you'd get back home, so quality doesn't enter into it. 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, p571. Lucky Plaza (p575), Sim Lim Square, Sim Lim Tower and the Mustafa Centre (p574) are good places to start.

If bargaining isn't your bag, decent discount prices can be had at **Best Denki** (Map pp544-5; % 6835 2855; 05-01/05 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd) and **Harvey Norman** (Map p540; % 6332 3461; 02-001 Suntec City Mall, 3 Temasek Blvd).

Hardwire yourself into six floors of big-brand computers at **Funan Digital Life Mall** (Map p540; % 6336 8327; 109 North Bridge Rd) or the legendary **Sim Lim Square** (Map p537; % 6338 3859; 1 Rochor Canal Rd). For Macintosh equipment head to the **Apple Centre** (Map pp544-5; % 6238 9378; 02-07/08 Wheelock Place; 501 Orchard Rd).

## CHINESE MEDICINE

The venerable **Eu Yan Sang** (Map pp542-3; % 6223 6333; 269 South Bridge Rd) has been revamped to look like a Western chemist – but check out the traditional remedies on the shelves! A consultation with the herbalist costs S\$12; most remedies come with English instructions. Neighbouring **Teck Soon Medical Hall** (Map pp542-3; % 6227 6179; 281 South Bridge Rd) trades in similar miracles.

## FASHION

For up-to-the-nanosecond clubbing gear, head to the **Edge** (Map p540; % 6557 6557; 03 Parco Bugis Junction, 200 Victoria St; 11am-9pm), levels four and five of the **Heeren** (Map pp544-5; % 6733 4725; 260 Orchard Rd; 10.30am-10pm), or **Level One** (Map pp544-5; % 6235 2411; 01 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; 10am-10pm).

**M)phosis** (Map pp544-5; % 6737 6539; B1-09/10 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd) carries the wispy, slinky designs of Singaporean Colin Koh. There's also a branch at Parco Bugis Junction, where you'll find flashy streetware shop **POA People of Asia** (Map p540; % 6333 4582; 02-10 Parco Bugis Junction, 200 Victoria St).

**Projectshop** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 0071; 03-41/44 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd) stocks summery gear – tank tops, cutesy T-shirts and sun dresses for girls; cargo pants for boys – plus bags,

belts and wallets. It's also at Raffles City (Map p540).

For men's designer threads, **Blackjack** (Map pp544-5; % 6735 0975; 01-10 Forum, 583 Orchard Rd) is a fashion ace up your sleeve. Other local labels to look out for include **Perfect In Black** (www.perfectinblack.com), **Daniel Yam** (www.danielyam.com), **Womb** (www.w-o-m-b.com), and **Beno La Mode** (www.benolamode.com).

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 p537; % 6299 8676; 32 Buffalo Rd) can cost anything from S\$200 to S\$1000.

## MUSIC

Mainstream chains dominate Singapore's music shopping scene: **HMV** (Map pp544-5; % 6733 1822; The Heeren, 260 Orchard Rd), **Tower Records** (Map p540; % 6338 0758; 02-63/67 Suntec City) or **Borders** (Map pp544-5; % 6235 7146; 01-00 Wheelock Pl, 501 Orchard Rd; 9am-11pm).

If you want to save some cash, try **Sembawang Music Centre** (Map pp544-5; % 6738 7727; 03-01 Cineleisure Orchard, 8 Grange Rd), **Gramophone** (Map pp544-5; % 6235 2011; B1-27 Scotts Shopping Centre, 6 Scotts Rd) or **That CD Shop** (Map pp544-5; % 6238 6720; 01-01/02 Pacific Plaza, 9 Scotts Rd).

As well as Indian music CDs, the **Indian Classical Music Centre** (Map p537; % 6291 0187; 26 Clive St) sells sitars, tabla, bells – everything the aspiring Sergeant Pepper requires. **Jothi Music Centre** (Map p537; % 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 p540; 252 North Bridge Rd) has a cavernous atrium and range of upmarket shops, including Robinsons department store, and a shimmering food court. It's linked to the enormous **Suntec City** (Map p540; 3 Temasek Blvd) by the eerily lit 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 p540; 9 Raffles Blvd), full of classy jewellers and boutiques under a series of wacky pyramid roofs. There's also an underground link to the **Esplanade Mall** (Map p540; 8 Raffles Ave), mainly a dining

destination with a slew of interesting shops like Frank Brothers Violins (for all your cello requirements), and the Tatami Shop (Japanese home furnishings).

Attached to the Raffles Hotel is the swish **Raffles Hotel Arcade** (Map p540; 328 North Bridge Rd), which, as you'd expect, is firmly highbrow – designer clothes, galleries, gift shops and beauty salons.

### Chinatown

Mobile phones, watches, jewellery and cameras line the shelves at the **People's Park Complex** (Map pp542-3; 1 Park Rd). On the next corner **People's Park Centre** (Map pp542-3; 110 Upper Cross St) has four levels of luggage shops, travel agents and budget fashion boutiques selling loud Chinese shirts.

**Chinatown Point** (Map pp542-3; 133 New Bridge Rd) has handicrafts, jewellery and health and beauty outlets beneath a spiralling Guggenheim-esque void. The chaotic, claustrophobic **Pearl's Centre** (Map pp542-3; 100 Eu Tong Sen St) is brimming with electronics stalls, Chinese medicine shops and a cinema showing saucy Chinese flicks.

### Little India, Bugis & Kampong Glam

**Parco Bugis Junction** (Map p540; 200 Victoria St) comprises the large Seiyu department store, the Hotel Inter-Continental and shophouse recreations covered by an atrium.

**Sim Lim Square** (Map p537; 1 Rochor Canal Rd) is renowned for computers and electronics. **Sim Lim Tower** (Map p537; 10 Jln Besar) across the

road has everything from capacitors to car stereos. The bustling **Mustafa Centre** (Map p537; 145 Syed Alwi Rd) 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 trawlers in the known universe.

Head up Orchard Rd to 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 **Centrepunt** (3; 176 Orchard Rd) you can get measured for a shirt at Robinsons, or pick up sundry home furnishings.

Give Orchard Emerald a miss, but duck into **Midpoint Orchard** (4; 220 Orchard Rd) for some

camera haggling and reflexology. The **Heeren** (5; 260 Orchard Rd) is teen heaven, with a massive HMV and two levels of cutting-edge microboutiques.

**Paragon** (6; 290 Orchard Rd) is sassiness defined, with Salvatore Ferragamo, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Gucci, Versace and YSL, among others. Entirely more downmarket is **Lucky Plaza** (7; 304 Orchard Rd), teeming with cheap clothing, luggage, perfume and electronics outlets. Next door is department store stalwart **Tangs** (8; 320 Orchard Rd).

Around the corner is funky **Far East Plaza** (9; 14 Scotts Rd) – get a suit, a second-hand book or a tattoo. Level One downstairs has 80-plus local fashion outlets. Take the overhead bridge to **DFS Galleria Scottswalk** (10; 25 Scotts Rd), brimming with swanky cosmetics and bag shops: Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Gucci, Salvatore Ferragamo, Burberry, Dior, Prada...

**Pacific Plaza** (11; 9 Scotts Rd) is the place for street/surf wear; the **Shaw House** (12; 350 Orchard Rd) enshrouds a huge Isetan department store and the Lido cinema.

Further along, **Palais Renaissance** (13; 390 Orchard Rd) is cool, serene and unpeopled, with DKNY and Prada.

Cross Orchard Rd to the **Tanglin Shopping Centre** (14; 19 Tanglin Rd) – Singapore's best selection of Asian arts outlets. Continue down Tanglin Rd to **Tanglin Mall** (15; 163 Tanglin Rd) for homeware and expat mums, or head back down Orchard Rd to the **Forum** (16; 583 Orchard Rd) for Toys 'R' Us and a snappy range of designer kids' gear.

Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Bvlgari and Cartier huddle together, like-minded, in the **Hilton Shopping Gallery** (17; 581 Orchard Rd). Next door is the **Far East Shopping Centre** (18; 545 Orchard Rd), a poky, outmoded mall with nine (!) golf shops.

**Wheelock Place** (19; 501 Orchard Rd) is next – a classy, cone-domed number with Borders, Nike, Apple and Birkenstock. **Wisma Atria** (20; 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** (21; 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.

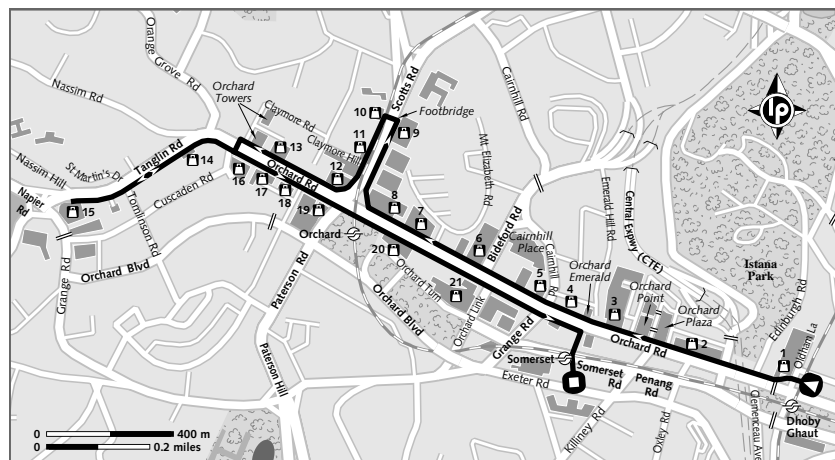
#### WALK FACTS

Start Dhoby Ghaut MRT

Finish Somerset MRT

Distance 3km

Duration 2½ hours



## DIRECTORY

### ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation classifications are based on the following: budget is up to S\$60 per person per night; midrange is from S\$60 to S\$200; while top end is more than S\$200. In major hotels, a goods and services tax (GST), government tax and service charge are added to your bill – this is the 'plus-plus-plus' that follows the quoted price (eg S\$150+++), amounting to a tidy 16% on top of the room cost. Prices quoted are nett prices ('nett' includes tax and a 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** (☎ 6391 4488; www.nparks.gov.sg; 18-01/08 Gateway West, 150 Beach Rd) administers several free camp sites around the island (see the boxed text, p549).

### BOOKSHOPS

**Borders** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6235 7146; 01-00 Wheelock Pl, 501 Orchard Rd; 11 9am-11pm)

**Kinokuniya** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6737 5021; 03-09/15 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; 11 10.30am-9.30pm Sun-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat)

**MPH Bookstores** (Map p540; ☎ 6835 7637; B1-26A CityLink Mall; 11 10am-9.30pm)

**Select Books** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 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 pp544-5; ☎ 6733 1583; 03-58/59 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; 11 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-7pm Sun) For second-hand books.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Restaurants serve lunch 11.30am to 2.30pm, often closing until dinner, which is 6pm to 10.30pm. Breakfast hours are generally 10am until noon. Shops stay open late (10pm or 11pm), and night time is the right time for eating – hawker centres kick on until the wee 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 p580; for banks, p579.



## 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 &amp; Magazines

Singapore's broadsheet is the state-run *Straits Times*; tabloids *New Paper* and *Today* are popular. International English-language publications like *Time* and *Newsweek* are readily available. For entertainment see *8 Days*, *I-S* and *Juice* magazines. Lifestyle magazines include *Her World* and the stylish *Men's Folio*. *Expat* is suited to long-term visitors. Gourmands should check out Tatler's *Singapore's Best Restaurants*, *Wine & Dine*, or *Makansutra* for hawker stalls.

## 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. Most radio stations have web streaming if you want to get a taste before you come. See [www.podcast.net](http://www.podcast.net) for private broadcaster listings.

## Television

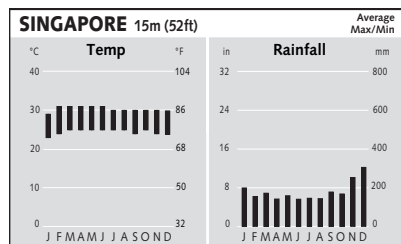
Singapore has seven free-to-air channels: Channel 5 (English); Channel 8 (Mandarin); Suria (Malay-language programmes); Central (the arts channel in English, plus children's and Indian-language broadcasts); Channel News Asia (news and information channel); Channel i (general entertainment, movies and news); and Channel U, a Mandarin-language channel.

## Weights &amp; Measures

Singapore uses the metric system.

## CLIMATE

To paraphrase Robin Williams in *Good Morning Vietnam*, Singapore is 'HOT and WET'. That's nice if you're with a lady, but ain't no good if you're in the jungle...'. 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, but it rarely rains all day. 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 (but not imitation jewellery), footwear, toys, arts and crafts are not dutiable; the usual duty-free concessions for personal effects, such as clothes, applies. Singapore does not allow duty-free concessions for cigarettes and tobacco. Take a letter from your doctor if you carry prescription medication.

Visitors can bring in 1L of duty-free wine, beer or 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 &amp; 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). In the words of Nancy Reagan, 'Just say NO!'.

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. Ouch.

## DISABLED TRAVELLERS

If you're wheelchair-bound, travelling around Singapore will be a mixed bag. Orchard Rd and the Colonial District should present few problems, but areas like Chinatown and Little India will be a chore. Check out *Access Singapore*, a useful guidebook for the disabled produced by the Singapore Council of Social Services. It's available from Singapore Tourism Board offices, or contact the National Council of Social Services (96 6210 2500; [www.ncss.org.sg](http://www.ncss.org.sg)) or the Disabled People's Association (96 6899 1220; [www.dpa.org.sg](http://www.dpa.org.sg)).

Three travel-information sources for the mobility-impaired:

**Global Access Disability Travel Network** ([www.globalaccessnews.com](http://www.globalaccessnews.com))

**Holiday Care Service** ([www.holidaycare.org.uk](http://www.holidaycare.org.uk))

**Mobility International USA** ([www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org))

## 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.

## EMBASSIES &amp; CONSULATES

## Singaporean Embassies &amp; Consulates

For a list of Singaporean missions abroad check out [www.visitsingapore.com](http://www.visitsingapore.com), where you'll also find a full list of foreign embassies and consulates in Singapore.

**Australia** (96 02-6273 3944; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

**Brunei** (96 02-262741/2/3; 8 Simpang 74, Jl Subok, Bandar Seri Begawan)

**France** (96 01-4500 3361; 12 Square de l'Ave Foch, Paris 75116)

**Germany** (96 030-226 3430; Friedrichstrasse 200, 10117 Berlin)

**Indonesia** (96 021-520 1489; Block X/4 Kav No 2, Jl HR Rasuna Said, Kuningan, Jakarta 12950)

**Malaysia** (96 03-2161 6277; 209 JI Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur 50400)

**New Zealand** (96 04-470 0850; 17 Kabul St, Khandallah, PO Box 13-140, Wellington)

**Thailand** (96 02-286 2111; 9th & 18th fl, Rajanakam Bldg, 183 South Sathorn Rd, Bangkok)

**UK** (96 020-7235 8315; 9 Wilton Cres, Belgravia, London)

**US** (96 202-537 3100; 3501 International Place, NW, Washington DC 20008)

## Embassies &amp; Consulates in Singapore

**Australia** (Map pp544-5; 96 836 4100; [www.australia.org.sg](http://www.australia.org.sg); 25 Napier Rd)

**Canada** (Map pp542-3; 96 6854 5900; [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/asia/singapore](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/asia/singapore); 11-01 One George St)

**France** (Map pp538-9; 96 6880 7800; [www.france.org.sg](http://www.france.org.sg); 101-103 Cluny Park Rd)

**Germany** (Map pp542-3; 96 6533 6002; [www.singapur.diplo.de](http://www.singapur.diplo.de); 12-00 Singapore Land Tower, 50 Raffles Pl)

**Indonesia** (Map pp544-5; 96 6737 7422; [www.kbrisingapura.com](http://www.kbrisingapura.com); 7 Chatsworth Rd)

**Ireland** (Map pp544-5; 96 6238 7616; [www.ireland.org.sg](http://www.ireland.org.sg); 08-00 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd)

**Malaysia** (Map p540; 96 6235 0111; [mwspore@mbox3.singnet.com.sg](mailto:mwspore@mbox3.singnet.com.sg); 02-01 30 Hill St)

**Netherlands** (Map pp544-5; 96 6737 1155; [www.mfa.nl/sin](http://www.mfa.nl/sin); 13-01 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Rd)

**New Zealand** (Map pp544-5; 96 6235 9966; [www.nzembassy.com/Singapore](http://www.nzembassy.com/Singapore); 15-06/10 Ngee Ann City, 391A Orchard Rd)

**South Africa** (Map p540; 96 6339 3319; [www.dfa.gov.za/webmissions](http://www.dfa.gov.za/webmissions); 15-01/06 Odeon Towers, 331 North Bridge Rd)

**Thailand** (Map pp544-5; 96 6235 4175; 370 Orchard Rd)

**UK** (Map pp544-5; 96 6424 4200; [www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk](http://www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk); 100 Tanglin Rd)

**USA** (Map pp544-5; 96 6476 9100; <http://singapore.usembassy.gov>; 27 Napier Rd)

## EMERGENCY

Some contact numbers for emergencies:

**Fire/Ambulance** (96 995)

**Police** (96 999)

**SOS Helpline** (96 1800-774 5935)

## GAY &amp; LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality is illegal in Singapore – penalties range from 10 years to life for engaging in homosexual sex – but authorities generally turn a blind eye to the queer scene. See p569 for venues, and check out

www.utopia-asia.com, www.fridae.com and www.sgboy.com. 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.

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** late January/early February (two days)

**Good Friday** April (variable)

**Labour Day** 1 May

**Vesak Day** May (variable)

**National Day** 9 August

**Deepavali** November (variable)

**Hari Raya Puasa** October–November (variable)

**Hari Raya Haji** December (variable)

**Christmas Day** 25 December

### School Holidays

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

## INTERNET ACCESS

In this chapter the internet symbol is used where hotels have business centres or dedicated computers for guest use.

### Internet Cafés

Most internet cafés in Singapore aren't cafés as such: plenty of computers, but no coffee. Many places are gaming centres, so things can get raucous. 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 p540; ☎ 6883 1016; 01-07 Stamford House, 39 Stamford Rd; 11 9.30am-midnight)

**Eminent** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6732 0508; 02-21 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Rd; 11 9am-10pm)

**i-surf** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6734 3225; 02-14 Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Rd; 11 11am-11pm)

**E-Games** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6820 3333; 03-08 Cathay Cineleisure Orchard, 8 Grange Rd; 11 noon-midnight)

**Mega Cybernet** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6227 0887; 04-16 Pearl Centre, 100 Eu Tong Sen St; 11 11am-11.30pm)

### Internet Service Providers

Major internet service providers like **CompuServe** (www.compuserve.com), **AOL** (www.aol.com) and **AT&T** (www.attbusiness.net) have dial-up nodes in Singapore. **SingTel** (www.singtel.com.sg) and **StarHub** (www.starhub.com) are the two biggest local providers.

Singapore has a network of more than 500 wireless hotspots. Check www.wi-fi-hotspotsdirectory.com for details.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

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

**Changi Airport** (www.changi.airport.com.sg) A detailed guide to Singapore's world-beating airport.

**Happening.com** (www.happening.com.sg) Offbeat listings, articles, reviews and 'what's on' information.

**Singapore Government** (www.gov.sg) Official info on the island state.

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

**Unorthodox Singapore** (www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7222) Quirky Singapore with useful info and links.

## LAUNDRY

Singapore gets sweaty, but there are plenty of laundries to help travellers cope. Laundries are found listed in the *Yellow Pages*; most midrange and top-end hotels do laundry, or you could try **Tanglin Mall Laundry Queen** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6737 8433; B1-07 Tanglin Mall, 163 Tanglin Rd; 11 10am-9pm). You generally have to wait a couple of days for your stuff to come back washed and pressed. Expect to pay around S\$5 to have a skirt, blouse or a pair of trousers washed, S\$7 for a dress, S\$10 for a suit.

## 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. There are big fines for smoking in all public places, jaywalking, eating on the MRT and littering.

## COMING OF AGE IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore, for the record:

- The voting age is 21
- You can drive legally at 16
- You can legally have heterosexual sex at 16; homosexual sex is illegal
- To buy alcohol you need to be 18

## MAPS

Various free maps are available in Singapore, including *The Official Map of Singapore*, from the Singapore Tourism Board (p581), as well as from many hotels. Of the commercial maps, Nelles and Periplus maps are good. You'll need the *Singapore Street Directory* if you're driving. Also check out Lonely Planet's *Singapore City Map*, a durable, full-colour, laminated fold-out map with a full index of streets and sights.

## MEDIA

The press is theoretically free to assert its opinions, but government crackdowns happen and self-censorship is the norm. See the boxed text on p576 for newspaper and magazine listings.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Gleneagles Hospital** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6470 5688; www.gleneagles.com.sg; 6A Napier Rd; 11 24hr)

**International Medical Clinic** (www.imc-healthcare.com) Tanglin Clinic (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6733 4440; 04-20 Tanglin Shopping Centre, 19 Tanglin Rd; 11 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Jelita Clinic (Map pp534-5; ☎ 6465 4440; 02-08 Jelita Cold Storage, 293 Holland Rd; 11 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Mount Elizabeth Hospital** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6731 2218; www.mountelizabeth.com.sg; 3 Mt Elizabeth Rd; 11 24hr)

**National Dental Centre** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6324 8910; www.ndc.com.sg; 5 Second Hospital Ave; 11 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Raffles Hospital** (Map p537; ☎ 6311 1111; www.raffleshospital.com; 585 North Bridge Rd; 11 24hr)

**Singapore General Hospital** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6321 4113; www.sgh.com.sg; Level 2, Block 1, Outram Rd; 11 24hr)

## MONEY

The major banks line their coffers in the CBD and along Orchard Rd. Opening hours are 9.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to noon 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** (☎ 6538 4833)

**Diners Club** (☎ 6294 4222)

**MasterCard** (☎ 6533 2888)

**Visa** (☎ 6437 5800)

## 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. There's also a S\$10,000 note (not that we've ever seen one).

## Taxes & Refunds

A 5% goods and services tax (GST) is applied to all goods and services. 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.

See p575 for the tax and service charges that apply to room rates.

## Travellers Cheques & Cash

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; use a licenced operator.

## POST

Singapore's postal system is predictably efficient, with plenty of outlets. Call % 1605 for the closest branch or see [www.signpost.com.sg](http://www.signpost.com.sg). Generally, post office hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and 8.30am to 1pm Saturday. Airmail postcards to anywhere in the world cost S\$1; letters cost from S\$1.50 to S\$2.50. Handy outlets include the following:

**Changi Airport** (Map pp534-5; % public 6542 7899, transit 6543 0048; 𠄎 24hr) At Terminal 2.

**Killiney Road** (Map pp544-5; % 6734 7899; 1 Killiney Rd; 𠄎 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

**Takashimaya** (Map pp544-5; % 6738 6899; 04-15 Ngee Ann City, 391 Orchard Rd; 𠄎 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat)

Letters addressed to 'Poste Restante' will end up at the **Singapore Post Centre** (Map pp534-5; % 6841 2000; 10 Eunos Rd; 𠄎 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun), next to Paya Lebar MRT.

## Post Codes

There's a six-digit post code system for addressing mail to and within Singapore. Ask for the *Postal Code Directory* at any post office, call the **Postal Code Helpline** (% 1800-842 7678) or visit [www.signpost.com.sg](http://www.signpost.com.sg) to find a particular code.

## TELEPHONE & FAX

You can make local and international calls from public phone booths. Most phone booths take phonecards, and some take credit cards, while old-school coin booths are rare. For inquiries see [www.singtel.com](http://www.singtel.com).

## Credit-Card Phones

Singapore has credit-card phones – just swipe your Amex, Diners Club, MasterCard or Visa card through the slot. Some SingTel centres are Home Country Direct phones – press a button designated to a particular country to speak to that country's operator and reverse charges, or have the call charged to an international telephone card. Home Country Direct codes are listed in the front pages of the phone book.

## Fax

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

## International Calls

To call Singapore from overseas, dial your country's international access number and then % 65 (Singapore's country code), before entering the eight-digit telephone number. To call overseas from Singapore dial 001.

## Local Calls

From public phones, local calls cost 10¢ for three minutes. There are no area codes within Singapore; telephone numbers are eight digits unless you're calling toll-free (1800).

## Mobile Phones

Singaporean mobile phone numbers start with a % 9. If you have global roaming facilities with your home provider, your GSM digital phone will automatically tune into one of Singapore's two digital networks (MI-GSM or ST-GSM). 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 MI) for around S\$20.

## Phonecards

Local phonecards are widely available from 7-Eleven stores, post offices, SingTel centres, stationers and bookshops, and come in denominations of S\$2, S\$5, S\$10, S\$20 and S\$50.

## Useful Numbers

Some helpful telephone numbers include the following:

**International directory inquiries** (% 104)

**International operator** (% 1635)

**Local directory inquiries** (% 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). See the World Map (pp658–9) for international time zones.

## TIPPING

Tipping is prohibited in the airport and discouraged 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](http://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 visitor centres at the following locations:

**Changi Airport** (Map pp534-5; 𠄎 6am-2am) Terminals 1 and 2.

**HarbourFront** (Map pp534-5; 01-31D HarbourFront Centre; 𠄎 10am-6pm)

**Liang Court** (Map p540; Level 1, Liang Court Shopping Centre, 177 River Valley Rd; 𠄎 10.30am-9.30pm)

**Orchard Road** (Map pp544-5; cnr Cairnhill & Orchard Rds; 𠄎 9.30am-10.30pm)

**Suntec City** (Map p540; Level 1, Suntec City, 3 Temasek Blvd; 𠄎 10am-6pm) An unmanned info desk.

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

Travel agencies abound in Singapore, including international operators such as STA Travel. The *Yellow Pages* phone directory has listings.

**Ananda Travel** (Map pp542-3; % 6435 8435; [www.ananda.com.sg](http://www.ananda.com.sg); 37-00 OUB Centre, 1 Raffles Pl)

**Harharah Travel** (Map p537; % 6337 2633;

[harharah@singnet.com.sg](http://harharah@singnet.com.sg); 171A Bencoolen St)

**STA Travel** (Map pp544-5; % 6737 7188; [www.statravel.com.sg](http://www.statravel.com.sg); 07-02 Orchard Towers, 400 Orchard Rd)

## VISAS

Visitors must have a valid passport or internationally recognised travel document valid for at least six months beyond the date of entry into Singapore. Travellers from the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and most European countries

automatically receive a 30-day tourist visa on entry if arriving by air, or a 14-day visa if arriving by land or sea. You may be asked to produce a return/onwards plane ticket and evidence of a healthy bank account. For visa extensions, the **Immigration & Checkpoints Authority** (Map p537; % 6391 6100; 10 Kallang Rd) bamboozles you with forms, queues, red tape and bureaucracy. Applications take at least a day to process.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Singaporean women enjoy a high degree of autonomy and respect, and the city is one of the safest destinations in Southeast Asia. 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. The vacancies pages of the *Straits Times* are often crammed with job notices, mostly for domestic servants and unskilled labourers.

If you're looking for work, business experience, economic training and easily

## 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.



marketable job skills are a bonus – do the rounds of companies that might be interested. It's become fashionable for restaurants serving Western food to employ Westerners – some travellers have picked up temporary work as waiters. **Contact Singapore** ([www.contact.singapore.org.sg](http://www.contact.singapore.org.sg)) has job postings.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

For general border crossing details see p502.

#### Air

##### AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

Singapore's slick, squeaky-clean **Changi International Airport** (Map pp534-5; % 6541 2267; [www.changi.airport.com.sg](http://www.changi.airport.com.sg)) is about 20km east of the city centre. It has two terminals, with a third due for completion in 2008. Most airlines operate from Terminal 1, a handful (including Singapore Airlines) from Terminal 2. Changi's facilities include a 24-hour medical centre, post office, free showers, free internet access, free local phone calls, left luggage (between S\$3.15 and S\$8.40 per day depending on the item's size), children's playground and free city tours (see boxed text, p585) 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 pp542-3; % 6535 8266; [www.airnewzealand.com](http://www.airnewzealand.com); 24-07/08 Ocean Bldg, 10 Collyer Quay)

**Berjaya Air** (Map pp542-3; % 6227 3688; [www.berjaya-air.com](http://www.berjaya-air.com); 67 Tanjong Pagar Rd)

**Silk Air** (Map pp534-5; % 6223 8888; [www.silkair.com](http://www.silkair.com); 25-01 SIA Building, 77 Robinson Rd)

**British Airways** (Map pp544-5; % 6589 7000; [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com); 06-05 Cairnhill Place, 15 Cairnhill Rd)

**Cathay Pacific Airways** (Map pp542-3; % 6533 1333; [www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com); 16-01 Ocean Bldg, 10 Collyer Quay)

**Garuda Indonesia** (Map pp544-5; % 6250 5666; [www.garuda-indonesia.com](http://www.garuda-indonesia.com); 12-03 United Sq, 101 Thomson Rd)

**KLM Royal Dutch Airlines** (Map pp542-3; % 6737 7622; [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com); 06-01/02/03 79 Anson Rd)

**Lufthansa Airlines** (Map pp544-5; % 6835 5933; [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com); 05-01 Palais Renaissance, 390 Orchard Rd)

**Malaysia Airlines** (Map p540; % 6433 0220; [www.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com); 02-09 Singapore Shopping Centre, 190 Clemenceau Ave)

**Qantas** (Map pp544-5; % 6589 7000; [www.qantas.com](http://www.qantas.com); 06-05 Cairnhill Place, 15 Cairnhill Rd)

**Silk Air** (Map pp542-3; % 6223 8888; [www.silkair.com](http://www.silkair.com); 25-01 SIA Building, 77 Robinson Rd)

**Singapore Airlines** Map pp544-5; % 6223 8888; [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com); 02-38/39 Paragon Bldg, 290 Orchard Rd)

**Thai Airways** (Map pp542-3; % 6210 5000; [www.thair.com](http://www.thair.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 18 hours. Singapore is good for buying onward tickets from Malaysia, but if you're really budgeting, you'll probably do better in Bangkok.

For internet bookings: [www.cheapflights.com](http://www.cheapflights.com) No-frills website for discount flights.

[www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) TripPlanner for multistop trip bookings; Haystack for accommodation.

[www.onetravel.com](http://www.onetravel.com) Covers a broad range of destinations.

[www.travel.com.au](http://www.travel.com.au) Flights, car hire, cruises and hotels.

[www.travelbag.co.uk](http://www.travelbag.co.uk) Good for holiday bargains and speciality travel.

##### AUSTRALIA

Low-season Singapore flights from Melbourne or Sydney start at A\$800 return, rising to A\$1100 from December to February. Flying from Brisbane saves about A\$100; from Perth A\$200. Check Malaysian Airlines, Singapore Airlines and Qantas for deals. Weekend travel sections of the Melbourne *Age* and Sydney *Morning Herald* have listings.

Some reliable agents:

**Flight Centre** (% 133 133; [www.flightcentre.com.au](http://www.flightcentre.com.au)) Offices throughout Australia.

**STA Travel** (% 1300-733 035; [www.statravel.com.au](http://www.statravel.com.au)) Offices in all major cities.

##### CANADA

Flights from Vancouver to Singapore start at one way/return C\$1150/1450. Montreal prices are similar. The *Globe & Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Vancouver Sun* carry travel agency ads. A reliable

operator is Canada's student travel agency, **Travel CUTS** (% 1866-246 9762; [www.travelcuts.com](http://www.travelcuts.com)).

##### CONTINENTAL EUROPE

From Paris to Singapore costs as little as €750 return. **Nouvelles Frontières** (% 0825-000 747; [www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr](http://www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)) is a reliable agent.

##### HONG KONG

The cheapest one-way flights to Singapore cost around HK\$1000. The Tsim Sha Tsui area is Hong Kong's budget travel-agency centre. Try **Aero International** (% 2545 6669; [www.aerohkg.com](http://www.aerohkg.com)) for deals on flights to/from Hong Kong.

##### INDONESIA

From Java, the cheapest connections to Singapore are as little as US\$75/US\$125 one-way/return. From Bali to Singapore costs from US\$150/210 with **Bouraq Airlines** ([www.bouraq.com](http://www.bouraq.com)). It also has direct flights between Singapore and Medan and Surabaya.

##### JAPAN

Japan to Singapore return flights cost between ¥50,000 and ¥70,000. One-way tickets are expensive (around ¥50,000). It's usually around ¥10,000 cheaper to fly to/from Tokyo, rather than Osaka.

Some reliable agents:

**No 1 Travel** (% 03-3205 6073; [www.no1-travel.com](http://www.no1-travel.com))

**STA Travel** (Tokyo % 03-5485 8380; Osaka % 06-262 7066; [www.statravel.co.jp](http://www.statravel.co.jp))

##### NEW ZEALAND

Low-season one-way/return Auckland-Singapore tickets start at NZ\$900/1400; add around NZ\$400 for high season. The *New Zealand Herald* travel section has fares.

The following agents are also worth a look:

**Flight Centre** (% 0800-243 544; [www.flightcentre.co.nz](http://www.flightcentre.co.nz)) Branches throughout the country.

**STA Travel** (% 0508-782 872; [www.statravel.co.nz](http://www.statravel.co.nz)) Offices in major towns and cities.

##### THAILAND

In Bangkok, for tickets to Singapore head to Khao San Rd. Agents deal in discounted tickets; rip-offs do occur occasionally, so take care. Flights from Bangkok to Singapore one way/return cost around 4800B/6500B.

#### UK

London has great Singapore flight deals, the cheapest carriers including Aeroflot, Pakistan International Airlines and Air Lanka. Low-season tickets start from one way/return UK£240/380. Lufthansa, Virgin Atlantic and Malaysia Airlines return fares start at UK£565, topping UK£600 between Christmas and New Year. Check travel ads in the Saturday *Independent*, the Sunday *Times* and street mags like *TNT*.

Some reliable agents:

**eBookers** (% 0800-082 3000; [www.ebookers.co.uk](http://www.ebookers.co.uk))

**STA Travel** (% 0870-163 0026; [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk))

**Trailfinders** (% 0845-058 5858; [www.trailfinders.co.uk](http://www.trailfinders.co.uk))

#### USA

Fares from the west coast to Singapore start at US\$900 return; check with Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Air China and Cathay Pacific. From New York, fares start at US\$1100; some include a Hong Kong stopover. Circle Pacific flights cost around US\$2000 from Los Angeles to Singapore via Tahiti, Auckland, Sydney, Bali and Hong Kong (among other destinations). The *San Francisco Examiner*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune* travel sections run travel agency ads, or check these out:

**Airtreks** (% 1877-2478 7357; [www.airtreks.com](http://www.airtreks.com))

**Priceline** ([www.priceline.com](http://www.priceline.com))

**STA Travel** (% 800-781 4040; [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com))

#### Boat

##### MALAYSIA FROM SINGAPORE

Regional cruise trips depart for Malaysia from the HarbourFront Ferry Terminal (Map pp534-5; % 6270 2228), next to HarbourFront MRT station; a host of agents here handle bookings.

Ferries depart the Changi Ferry Terminal (Map pp534-5; % 6546 8518) for Tanjung Belungkor, east of Johor Bahru (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 four services daily in each direction. From the Tanjung Belungkor jetty, buses operate to Desaru and Kota Tinggi. To get to Changi Ferry Terminal, take the MRT to Tanah Merah, then bus 2 to Changi Village and then a taxi (or just a taxi!).

Ferries also sail from the **Changi Point Ferry Terminal** (Map pp534-5; % 6542 7944) for

Pengerang (return SS14), 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 here, take the MRT to Tanah Merah, then bus 2 to Changi village.

#### 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 and Pulau Bintan in the Riau Archipelago. Ferries are modern, fast and air-conditioned.

#### Pulau Batam

Ferries depart for Pulau Batam, 20km away, from the HarbourFront Ferry Terminal (Map pp534-5; % 6270 2228), taking about 30 minutes to get to Sekupang, or 45 minutes to Batu Ampar. The main agents are Penguin (% 6271 4866), Dino Shipping (% 6270 2228) and Berlian (% 6272 2192), all with offices at HarbourFront. Between them they have 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

The same companies that operate ferries from Batam also have several ferries a day from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal (Map pp534-5; % 6542 4369) to Tanjung Pinang, the main city on Bintan, or Teluk Sebong on the island's north coast. The 45km journey takes about an hour and costs between S\$38 and S\$48 return, ferries departing from 9am to 8pm.

#### Bus

Buses run frequently from Singapore into Malaysia, some continuing to Thailand. The Causeway linking Johor Bahru 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 or from JB.

There's also a causeway 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 main Causeway.

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 Johor Bahru every 15 minutes between 6.30am and 11pm from the Queen Street Bus Terminal (Map p537; 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 160 (S\$1.10).

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. Buses stop at the Kotaraya II Terminal in JB. If at all possible, avoid crossing at weekends, when it gets infernally busy; Sunday evenings crossing from JB to Singapore, and Friday and Saturday evenings crossing from Singapore to JB are akin to a descent into hell.

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\$11, 4½ hours) and east coast Malaysian cities Kuantan (S\$27, seven hours) and Kuala Terengganu (S\$30, 10 hours) leave from and arrive at the Lavender Street Bus Terminal (Map p537; 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 p537; Beach Rd) for Kuala Lumpur (S\$27, five hours) and other northern Malaysian destinations including Ipoh, Butterworth and Penang. They also run to Phuket (S\$70, 22 hours) and Bangkok (S\$80, 25 hours) in Thailand. There's a string of bus agents and moneychangers along Beach Rd – shop around. Lavender MRT station is about 500m away.

#### Taxi

There are shared long-distance taxis to many places in Malaysia from Singapore's Queen Street Bus Terminal (Map p537); but it will be cheaper to take a bus to Johor Bahru and take a taxi from there to your ultimate destination. Share taxis to Johor Bahru are about S\$8 per person, with a maximum of four passengers per taxi.

#### 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 pp542-3; % 6222 5165; Keppel Rd) 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\$30 and S\$110. For a tricky immigration issue when travelling by train see p581.

The luxurious Eastern & Oriental Express (% 6392 3500; www.orient-express.com) departs Singapore on the 42-hour, 1943km journey to Bangkok. Don your linen suit, sip a gin and tonic and dig deep for the fare, which veers dramatically between S\$600 and S\$6000 depending on how far you're going and what kind of sleeper you opt for.

#### GETTING AROUND

Singapore has fantastic public transport, with a tangled web of bus and train (MRT) routes taking you to the doorsteps of most sights. The MRT is easy to navigate, but stops are sometimes far apart (walking in 35°C humidity is sweaty work!). The new Circle Line is due to open in 2008. Pick up a free MRT system map at any MRT station, and the *Bus Guide & Bus Stop Directory* from bookshops (S\$3.90). 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 (Mass Rapid Transit; MRT) are the best ways to reach the city. Trains depart Changi for the CBD from 5.30am to 11.18pm (S\$2.50, 30 minutes, every 12 minutes). Trains to Changi from City Hall

station run from 6am to midnight. In both directions you'll probably have to change trains at Tanah Merah station (nothing complex – just cross the platform).

The most convenient bus is the airport shuttle service (adult/child S\$7/5) – six-seater maxicabs that will take you to your hotel or anywhere in the CBD. Shuttles operate daily from the arrivals halls of both terminals every 30 minutes from 6am to 6pm and every 15 minutes from 6.05pm to midnight. Book and pay at arrival hall counters.

Public bus 36 leaves the airport for the city approximately every 10 minutes between 6am and midnight. You should have the right change (S\$2.50) when you board. It takes around 20 minutes 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 limousine taxi service (S\$35) available between 6am and 2am to any destination in Singapore. You can choose between a Mercedes and a London cab!

#### SELETAR AIRPORT

You might find yourself at the small, modern Seletar Airport (Map pp534–5) catching a Berjaya Air (% 6227 3688; 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 (around S\$11). Otherwise bus 39 from Khatib MRT station

#### SHORT-STAY TOURIST TRANSPORT

If you've only got a day in Singapore, pick up a free Transit Day Pass from the Singapore Visitors Centre in the Transit Hall at Changi Airport (after clearing immigration), which gives you 10 free rides on the MRT within 24 hours. If you've only got a few hours in transit (a minimum of five), take a **free city tour**, from the airport, which wheels you around the major tourist hotspots. For immigration and security reasons you have to stay glued to the tour group.

or bus 86 from Yio Chu Kang MRT will take you to gates of the Seletar Air Force base, from where you change to a local base bus to the airport terminal.

### Domestic Air Services

Malaysia Airlines and Singapore Airlines operate frequent flights between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore for one-way stand-by from S\$120 from Singapore; seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Malaysia Airlines also connects Singapore to various places on Peninsular Malaysia (like Langkawi and Penang), and Kuching and Kota Kinabalu in Malaysian Borneo.

**Silk Air** (☎ 6223 8888; www.silkair.com), Singapore Airlines' regional wing, has daily flights between Singapore and Langkawi from S\$245.

Going to Malaysia, you can often save some dollars if you fly from Johor Bahru rather than Singapore. Malaysia Airlines runs the **SPS Coach** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6250 3333) directly from the **Copthorne Orchid Hotel** (214 Dunearn Rd) to Johor Bahru's Senai airport (SS12, two hours).

With the considerable difference in the exchange rate it's much cheaper to buy tickets in Malaysia, so rather than buying a return fare to Kuala Lumpur from Singapore, buy a one-way ticket and then buy the return leg in Kuala Lumpur.

### Boat & Ferry

There are regular ferry services from Sentosa to other southern islands (p527), and from Changi Village to Pulau Ubin (p522). You can also take river cruises, or boat cruises around the harbour – for more information see **Tours** (p533).

### Bicycle

If you can handle the heat and frenetic traffic, cycling around Singapore isn't too crazy an idea. Cycling up to Changi Village and then taking the bike over to Pulau Ubin is an excellent adventure, and there's a great mountain-bike track circling Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (p523).

If you haven't brought your own, pick up some wheels at **Trekology Bikes 3** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 6732 7119; 01-02 Tanglin Pl, 91 Tanglin Rd; 24hr hire S\$35; 11am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-3pm Sun). Bikes can also be rented cheaply at several places along East Coast Park, on Sentosa Island and on Pulau Ubin.

### Bus

Singapore's bus service should be the envy of the world. You rarely have to wait more than a few minutes for a bus, and they'll take you almost anywhere. Some even have TVs!

Fares range from 60¢ to S\$1.50; 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 (see opposite). 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

**CityBuzz** (☎ 1800-225 5663; www.citybuzz.com.sg) runs double-decker buses on unlimited loops of the city every 10 to 15 minutes between 10am and 10pm, stopping at key attractions. Day passes (S\$5) are available from drivers, the Singapore Tourism Board and authorised agents.

Singapore Airlines runs the **SIA Hop-On** (☎ 9457 2965; www.asiatours.com.sg/sia.htm) tourist bus, 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 6pm. Tickets are available from the driver: S\$8 for a day pass; S\$3 with a Singapore Airlines or Silk-Air boarding pass or ticket.

The **Singapore Trolley** (☎ 6339 6833; www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg/trolley.htm), a bus not-so-cunningly disguised as an old-fashioned tram, circles the major tourist areas between 9.40am and 4.55pm. All-day tickets from the driver cost adult/child S\$9/7.

### TRISHAWS

Trishaws (Map p537) had their peak just after WWII when motorised transport was practically nonexistent and trishaw drivers could make a tidy income. Today there are only around 300 trishaws left in Singapore, mainly plying the tourist routes. Trishaws congregate around in the pedestrian mall at the junction of Waterloo and Albert Sts (Map p537). Always agree on the fare beforehand: we were quoted S\$60 for half an hour, but with a bit of haggling you could probably knock it down to S\$40.

### Car

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 the profusion of one-way streets and streets that change names (sometimes several times) can make things tricky. The *Singapore Street Directory* is essential for negotiating the city. See also below for zoning and parking issues.

### DRIVING LICENCE

A valid overseas licence is needed to rent a car. An International Driving Permit isn't usually required, but bring one just in case. Most rental companies also require that drivers are at least 23 years old.

### RENTAL

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\$170 a day, while collision-damage waiver will cost about S\$20 per day for a small car. Special deals may be available for longer-term rental.

The following companies have branches at Changi Airport and as listed below:

**Avis** (Map pp538-9; ☎ 6737 1668; www.avis.com.sg; 01-17 392 Havelock Rd)

**Budget** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 6532 3948; www.budget.com; 26-01A Clifford Centre, 24 Raffles Pl)

**Hertz** (Map pp544-5; ☎ 1800-734 46646; www.hertz.com.sg; 01-01 15 Scotts Rd)

### RESTRICTED ZONES & CAR PARKING

Between 7.30am and 6.30pm 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 surcharge. Vehicles are automatically tracked by sensors on overhanging gantries that prompt drivers to insert a cashcard into their in-vehicle unit, extracting the toll. 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 in Singapore is operated by a coupon system; buy a booklet at parking kiosks and post offices. Display coupons in your car window with holes punched out to indicate the time, day and date you parked.

### Hitching

You'll get some funny looks hitching in Singapore – but someone might eventually stop. Why bother, though, when the public transport system is so good and relatively inexpensive?

### 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.

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 underway on a central loop line that will link the city centre with Holland Village, Suntec City and the Singapore Indoor Stadium area in Kallang.

### FARES & FARECARDS

Single-trip tickets cost from 90¢ to S\$4, but you'll save money and find it more convenient to buy a S\$15 ez-link card from any 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\$7 worth of travel, a S\$5 non-refundable charge and a S\$3 refundable deposit redeemable when you return the card.

You can top-up cards at ATM-style machines at stations. Fares using an ez-link card range from 65¢ to S\$3.

### Taxi

There are 19,000 taxis in Singapore; most of the time they swarm like locusts except when changing shift between 4pm and 5pm, when it's raining and between



10pm and 11pm, when they can be impossible to find. If you order a cab by phone you'll be asked your name and destination; a message then tells you the licence plate of your cab.

**Taxi companies:**

**City Cab** (☎ cash bookings 6552 2222, credit card bookings 6553 8888)

**Comfort CabLink** (☎ 6552 1111)

**SMRT Cabs** (☎ 6555 8888)

Fares start at around S\$2.40 for the first kilometre, then 10¢ for each additional 220m. There are various surcharges to note:

- From 11.30pm to 6am, surcharge rises incrementally from 10% to 50% of the metered fare.
- Peak-hour surcharge of S\$1 between 7.30am and 9.30am, and 5pm and 8pm.
- S\$5 surcharge from 5pm to midnight Friday to Sunday; S\$3 all other times for journeys from the airport.
- S\$2.50 for off-peak telephone bookings; S\$4 for peak-hour bookings (less than an hour before needed). For advance bookings you'll pay S\$5 to S\$5.20.
- S\$1 on all trips from the CBD between 4.30pm and 7pm on weekdays and from 11.30am to 2pm Saturdays. You may also have to pay another surcharge if you take the taxi into the CBD during restricted hours (see Restricted Zone, p587).
- 10% on the fare for payments by credit card.

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