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Top Spots for Dim Sum

Singapore, 1 Day

Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

Singapore Snapshot 8

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Dim Sum is the Chinese locals' favourite way to enjoy a leisurely lunch with family and friends. This perennial Cantonese favourite consists of several traditional snack-type dishes, including steamed or fried dumplings, buns and pastries, all served in small bamboo steamers or plates. Each serving is small, just three or four pieces, and so ideally a selection of dishes are shared amongst friends. Dim Sum is traditionally washed down with copious amounts of Chinese tea, hence the alternative name for eating Dim Sum "yum cha" (literally "drink tea"). Here is a selection of top restaurants to enjoy a dim sum feast in Singapore.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Singapore

Yum Cha
Traditional Dim Sum in a Lively Setting

Royal China at Raffles
Elegant chinese restaurant at world-famous Raffles Hotel

Crystal Jade Golden Palace
Classy chinese restaurant

Yan Ting
Elegant Cantonese Dining

Crystal Jade Dining IN
Good quality Chinese restaurant

Dim Joy
Good quality dim sum in a casual modern environment

Jiang-Nan Chun
Chinese-Cantonese In A Posh Setting

Hua Ting Restaurant
Well-Prepared, Classy Cantonese Food

Crystal Jade Palace Restaurant
Elegant Chinese restaurant

Red Star Restaurant
Nostalgic dim sum experience

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Day 1 - Singapore

QUICK NOTE

contact:
tel: 65/6372-1717
http://www.yumcha.com.sg/

location:
20 Trengganu St
Singapore

hours:
Daily 8am-10:30pm

1 Yum Cha

Marianne Rogerson

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Visit on a Saturday for trolley service for that even more authentic experience.

DESCRIPTION: Yum Cha is one of the best places in Singapore to experience dim sum in an authentic setting. Tucked away at the top of a hidden staircase in the middle of bustling Chinatown, this popular restaurant packs in local families and tourists alike, creating a buzzing and convivial atmosphere. Saturday lunchtime is obviously a busy time to visit but has the added attraction of trolley service, making Yum Cha one of the few places in Singapore still to practise this old tradition.
The menu includes a wide choice of Chinese and local Singaporean dishes, but the majority of people flock here at lunchtime to indulge in a dim sum feast. Perennial favourites such as Har Gao (prawn dumplings), Xiao Long Bao (steamed pork Shanghai dumplings) and Char Siu Bao (barbecue pork buns) are all available, and other standouts include the Prawn and Mango Rolls and the Pan Fried Pork Pancake. Get here early or be prepared to queue. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 6338 3363
http://www.raffles.com/EN_RA/Property/RHS/Restaurants_Bars/Royal_China_at_Raffles.htm

location:
Raffles Hotel, 328 North Bridge Road
Singapore

hours:
Mo-Sa 12p-3p, 6p-10.30p, Su 11a-2p, 6p-10.30p

2 Royal China at Raffles

Raffles Hotel

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Don't miss the lobster noodles

DESCRIPTION: This well established London-based Chinese restaurant chain has chosen world-famous Raffles Hotel for its Singapore base, providing a distinguished setting for an intimate meal. The duck-egg blue walls, high domed ceiling and crisp white linen table cloths let you know that you are in for a refined dining experience, while the well-executed Chinese dishes ensure your tastebuds are satisfied. Signature dishes include lobster noodles, crispy duck in pancake, roast suckling pig and traditional dim sum items. © NileGuide

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contact:
tel: 6734 6866
http://www.crystaljade.com/CrystalJadeGoldenPalace.htm

location:
Paragon SC, 290 Orchard Road
Singapore

hours:
Mo-Fr 11.30a-3p, 6p-11p, Sa 11a-3p, 6p-11p, Su 10.30a-3p, 6p-11p

3 Crystal Jade Golden Palace

DESCRIPTION: The Crystal Jade group of restaurants was established in Singapore in 1991 and now boasts multiple restaurants across Asia. Crystal Jade Golden Palace on the 5th floor of Paragon Shopping Centre is probably their most elegant restaurant, providing a sophisticated setting for a high-quality Cantonese meal. The red, black and gold decor oozes class, service is attentive and a lengthy wine list accompanies a comprehensive menu. A great choice for a business dinner, romantic meal or leisurely dim sum lunch.
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Crystal Jade

contact:
tel: +65 6506 6888
fax: +65 6506 6708
http://www.starwoodhotels.com/stregis/property/dining/attraction_detail.html

location:
29 Tanglin Road, St Regis Hotel
Singapore 247911

hours:
Daily 11:45a-3p & 6p-11p

4 Yan Ting

DESCRIPTION: Yan Ting is an elegant Chinese restaurant located at The St. Regis Singapore. Traditional and contemporary Chinese art provide a regal setting, while the menu presents authentic Cantonese cuisine, in a modern presentation. A la carte, dim sum and special set menus are offered at lunch, while innovative tasting menus with wine pairing headline dinnertime recommendations. An extensive wine list and selection of Chinese tea are available to accompany your meal.
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St Regis hotel

contact:
tel: 6278 5626
http://www.crystaljade.com/dining_in.htm

location:
Vivocity, 1 Harbour Front Walk
Singapore

hours:
Mo-Fr 11.30a-3p, 6p-10.30p, Sa 11a-4p, 6p-10.30p, Su 10.30a-4p, 6p-10.30p

5 Crystal Jade Dining IN

DESCRIPTION: The Crystal Jade group of restaurants was established in Singapore in 1991. Renowned for their reliable, good quality Cantonese fare, the group now boasts multiple restaurants across Asia. Crystal Jade Dining IN at Vivocity provides a sophisticated setting with views across the harbour to Resorts World Sentosa.
Floor to ceiling windows make for a bright and cheerful ambience at lunch time, while service is brisk and efficient. A great choice for a dim sum lunch, family gathering, or romantic meal.
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Crystal Jade

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contact:
tel: 6220 6986
http://www.dimjoy.com/

location:
80 Neil Road
Singapore

hours:
Mo, We-Fr 11a-3p, 6p-10p, Sa-Su 10a-3p, 5p-10p

6 Dim Joy

DESCRIPTION: Dim Joy, literally means "a place to gather" but is also a tongue-in-cheek reference to the dim sum they serve. Located in a corner shophouse on Neil Road in Chinatown, Dim Joy offers good quality dim sum in a casual modern environment. This is one of the few places in Singapore where you can sample dim sum from morning through to night time. Reference guides to chopstick, finger-tapping and teapot refill etiquette will keep the dim sum novice in check. A good selection of Chinese tea complements the menu and cool evenings allow for al fresco courtyard dining. Dim Joy is closed on Tuesdays.
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Dim Joy

contact:
tel: +65 6734 1110
fax: +65 6733 0682
http://www.fourseasons.com/singapore/dining/jiang_nan_chun.html

location:
190 Orchard Boulevard, Four Seasons Hotel
Singapore Singapore 248646

hours:
M-F 11:30a-2:30p & 6p-10:30p, Sa-Su 11:30a-2:30p & 6p-10:30p

7 Jiang-Nan Chun

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Don't miss their weekend brunch a la carte buffet.

DESCRIPTION: This classy Chinese-Cantonese restaurant is located in an equally classy hotel. Decor tends towards the serious, almost sombre side. Darker shades of brown wood paneling are decorated with modern art pieces. The chairs are smoothly covered in leather. Jiang-Nan Chun's menu is filled with classic Cantonese cuisine innovatively served. Shark's fin and fish dishes, as well as the utterly delicious roasted pigeon, are served here. Set lunches offer good value for money. The wine list is well thought out, comprising a commendable selection from France and America. © wcities.com

Four Seasons Hotel

contact:
tel: +65 6739 6666
fax: +65 6733 5482
http://www.millenniumhotels.com.sg/orchardhotelsingapore/restaurant/index.html

location:
442 Orchard Road, Orchard Hotel
Singapore 238879

hours:
Daily 11:30a-2:30p & 6:30p-10:30p

8 Hua Ting Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: This classy restaurant serves mainly new-age Cantonese fare. The unusual decor combines the elegance of steel and wood with the traditional flair of antiques from China, Burma and Vietnam. The menu changes seasonally, but what is especially recommended are the innovative abalone dishes, roast goose and fish dishes. Sautéed scallops with young coconut and bell pepper suggests a touch of East-West fusion. The range of set menus should please most palates. The wine list is rather limited, but thoughtfully selected. There are wines from both the Old and New World. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Hua Ting Restaurant

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contact:
tel: 6735 2388
http://www.crystaljade.com/CrystalJadePalaceRestaurant.htm

location:
391 Orchard Road
Singapore

hours:
Mo-Fr 11.30a-11p, Sa 11a-3p, 6p-11p, Su 10.30p-3p, 6p-11p

9 Crystal Jade Palace Restaurant

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Get here early for weekend dim sum or be prepared to queue.

DESCRIPTION: The Crystal Jade group of restaurants was established in Singapore in 1991 and now boasts multiple restaurants across Asia. Crystal Jade Palace on the 4th floor of Ngee Ann City Shopping Centre is their flagship store, providing an elegant setting for a high-quality Cantonese meal. Popular with families, business associates and couples alike. Extremely popular for weekend dim sum breakfast and lunch, so be prepared to queue.
© NileGuide

Crystal Jade

contact:
tel: 6532 5266

location:
54 Chin Swee Road
Singapore

hours:
Mo-Su 7a-3p, 7p-11p

A Red Star Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Red Star is where to go for an authentic dim sum experience. Located on the 7th floor of an HDB block close to Chinatown, this big, noisy, chaotic restaurant offers up a slice of nostalgia and is one of the few places you can still experience Dim Sum traditionally served from pushcarts wheeled through the restaurant. This means no menus, so be prepared to grab a trolley as it passes by and take your pick from the treasures within. Despite the long queues, the quality of food is not the best in the city, but it's worth a visit for the novelty factor. © NileGuide

Marianne Rogerson

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Singapore Snapshot

Local Info

Singapore is a truly multi-cultural city. Its predominantly Chinese population is mixed in with significant numbers of Malays and Indians, and smaller groups of Eurasians and other ethnic groups. Add into the recipe a growing number of expatriates(currently accounting for nearly a quarter of the population), and you have yourself a true cultural melting pot. The government's promotion of racial harmony – there are four official languages and four official religions – means that everyone happily lives side by side in overlapping communities.

From a tourist's point of view, this equates to a fascinating city to explore. It's not uncommon to find a Chinese Temple, a Mosque, a Church and a Hindu Temple all within spitting distance of each other; likewise within a 100m walk you will come across culinary delights from all corners of the globe; and despite the astonishing pace of change, there will nearly always be some sort of traditional festival or celebration taking place.

Singapore is one of the most popular stopover destinations in the world, attracting an estimated 9.7 million visitors in 2009, despite the global economic downturn. Its strategic location between East& West makes it the ideal stop-off for travellers heading on to the rest of Asia. The city is clean and safe, with an efficient public transport system, world-class hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions.

The city-state is constantly looking to the future and doing its best to shrug off its squeaky-clean chewing gum-forbidding image. The bars and nightclubs of Clarke Quay allow revellers to party all hours of the day; the recent launch of the integrated resorts sees the government now allowing gambling in their 24 hour casinos, and its hosting of the night time Formula 1 Grand Prix proves the city is fully enjoying its new-found position in the World spotlight.

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History

It all began in the third century AD when this pristine island, at the end of the Malay Peninsula, was used as a trading post by merchants sailing to China. The first settlers were the Malays, who came around the seventh century and called their newfound fishing settlement"Temasek" or"Sea Town".

It was known as Temasek for many centuries, until a Sumatran prince named Sri Tri Buana(popularly known as Sang Nila Utama) set foot on the island around 1299, sighted a lion, made the island his new kingdom and called it"Singapura" or"Lion City" in Sanskrit. The fifth king of Singapura, Parameswara, who was later overthrown by the Majapahit Empire of East Java, fled north and founded the Malacca Sultanate. Some Malays believe that it is his tomb that lies in Fort Canning Park today.

Centuries passed, then Singapore's modern history started when Sir Stamford Raffles stepped ashore in 1819—an event so significant the Raffles Statue was erected at the landing site on the banks of the Singapore River. An astute visionary, Raffles quickly struck a treaty with the local chieftains to set up a British trading post.

The Union Jack was raised and soon Singapore established itself as a free trading port. Exponential population growth then followed, with Malays, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and Europeans pouring onto the island, bringing with them an eclectic mix of cuisines, languages and cultures. A town plan was formulated and over the years took the form of the ethnic enclaves we see today—Chinatown, Arab Street and Little India. In 1823, the Johor-Riau Sultanate sold Singapore outright to the British for 60,000 Spanish dollars.

A proliferation of buildings then ensued —the Singapore Cricket Club opened in the 1850s as the whites-only recreational centre, the Singapore Town Hall(now Victoria Theatre) became the administrative building in 1862, and the Raffles Hotel opened for business in 1887. With the increasing occurrence of fires, the Central Fire Station at Hill Street was established in 1909, equipped with modern fire-fighting facilities.

Singapore's phenomenal progress took a downturn with the outbreak of World War II. The island fell into the hands of the Japanese during what Winston Churchill called"the worst disaster and the largest capitulation in British history." Hundreds were massacred at the Alexandra Hospital, thousands were gunned down at Changi Beach, prisoners of war were subjected to harsh military training at the Padang, and many other horrifying events marked the 3½ years of Japanese rule.

After the war the British returned to regain control, but by then the locals wanted a voice of their own and started fighting for independence. In 1959, Lee Kuan Yew, the first elected Prime Minister, announced the state's self-government on the steps of the City Hall. Under Lee's administration, Singapore was transformed from a third world trading port to a highly developed nation in a short span of 35 years.

After years of persistent urban development, however, much of the city's charming past has given way to stolid skyscrapers and shopping malls. It was only in 1980s that conservation and restoration plans were launched by the government, saving architectural goldmines such as the Peranakan(Straits Chinese) houses on Emerald Hill, godowns along Boat Quay and shophouses at Tanjong Pagar from the demolition ball.

Singapore today is the economic miracle of South-east Asia, with the world's best airport(Changi Airport), the world's busiest port, the world's third largest petroleum refinery and a world-class infrastructure. Beneath the modern veneer, however, lie timeless treasures of finely restored colonial buildings, charming Peranakan houses, quaint shop houses and enduring landmarks that will take you back into the city's past. It may be a concrete jungle to some extent, but with numerous national parks, nature reserves and abundant greenery all year round, Singapore is indeed a model city, striking an enviable balance between urbanization and

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conservation. Welcome to the Garden City of Asia!

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Hotel Insights

With a population of more than three million living in an area of 600 square kilometers, Singapore is one of the world's most densely populated cities. Housing is expensive due to the scarcity of land, and most Singaporeans today stay in high-rise apartments that cost as much as a bungalow in nearby Malaysia. This translates to expensive lodging.

Interestingly, however, the number of hotels has been snowballing and occupancy rates average more than 80 per cent. Visitors to the island can choose from a good range of accommodations. Hotels prove the popular choice, and they are concentrated in two main areas—the Colonial District and the Orchard Road shopping belt.

Colonial District—One would do well to find lodging in and around the colonial core, for this provides convenience in seeing the historical sights, the ethnic enclaves, and the restaurants and pubs along Boat Quay and Clarke Quay. Major convention centres are also within walking distance, while the Orchard Road shopping belt and the Central Business District(CBD) are just a short ride away.

If your budget allows, the more comfortable choices include the Ritz-Carlton in the Marina area(this six-star hotel boasts top-notch facilities in a central location and a view of the sea) and Conrad International(more of a business hotel but service here is excellent!). Of course, the Raffles Hotel deserves a separate mention. This hotel is legendary. In addition to wonderful service, shopping boutiques(Prada, Louis Vuitton, etc.) and good restaurants, Raffles Hotel provides visitors with an excellent tropical getaway in the city centre. Other hotels worth considering include the Marina Mandarin, Hotel InterContinental, Pan Pacific and Swissôtel The Stamford(one of the world's tallest hotels). These are brand-name hotels that provide quality service and have all the amenities associated with five-star hotels—swimming pool, gym, room service, restaurants, business centre and the like.

Those wanting something less extravagant can opt for the Allson or the Peninsula Excelsior, both of which have decent rooms, a small pool and limited business facilities. Though belonging to the same mid-range bracket, the Swissotel Merchant Court is refreshingly contemporary, with a free-form pool, an excellent fitness centre and a jacuzzi overlooking the Singapore River.

Orchard Road—Choice district to stay in if shopping is your thing. The largest concentration of hotels is found here—not surprising since the multitudes of shopping malls make it the main tourist belt. Few sightseeing opportunities are near, but with 2.5 kilometres of shopping extravaganza at your doorstep, why complain?

If money is no object, the top choices here are the Grand Hyatt(superbly landscaped, with excellent fitness facilities, popular with business professionals), Four Seasons(renowned for its unparalleled personal service) and Goodwood Park—an elegant, refurbished 1856 German recreation club built in the style of a Rhineland castle. Other luxury hotels worthy of mention include the Shangri-La, Meritus Mandarin Singapore and Sheraton Towers.

For those with a moderate budget, try the less expensive(three- and four-star) hotels such as Traders, Royal Plaza and Singapore Marriott(which is itself a landmark for its distinctive pagoda-style roof). These provide a pleasant stay and reasonably good service, with in-house restaurants and business centres. At the lower end, there are no-frills hotels like Lloyd's Inn and RELC International Hotel. However, facilities match the low price—they are basic and only sometimes comfortable.

City Fringe—Hotels around the city fringe provide good alternatives for the more budget conscious. Connection to the central areas is quick and easy—hop on a bus or train and you will be there within minutes. For those who want the comfort of an attached bath and regular no-frills lodging, get a room at Hotel Bencoolen. The chain of Hotel 81 outlets—mostly located in the slightly seedy, red-light district of Geylang—may be a little further out from the city, but they do provide comfortable, adequate lodging at a much lower price.

Budget Lodging—Backpackers are not so spoilt for choice. There are not any YHA-affiliated hostels, but there are a limited number of guesthouses, which offer dorm beds for below SGD25 a night. These include Why Not Homestay and Waffles Homestay just off the city centre, and YMCA International House—an all-time favourite for its central location between Orchard Road and the colonial district.
©

Restaurants Insights

Hawker Centres/Food Courts

The real heart of epicurean Singapore lies within the well-loved hawker centres, the city's version of street food. Low prices, strict standards of hygiene and a wealth of variety mean that eating out on a daily basis is the norm here. The multi-cultural makeup of the local population provides a veritable smorgasbord of dishes, and with Singaporeans boasting that eating is in fact a national pastime, their love of food almost borders on an obsession at times. The common greeting"Have you eaten?" in place of"How are you?" verifies this, and it is not uncommon to see office workers spending half their lunch hour travelling across town to go their favourite chicken rice or laksa stall. From gloopy bowls of fish porridge for breakfast, to a pile of chicken satays and smoky char kway teow for dinner, exploring the hawker centres of Singapore makes for a fascinating journey.

These open-air gathering places boast several(some times more than a hundred) stalls to choose from, with diners often sharing tables to chow down on their dish of choice. Each stall specialises in a particular cuisine – so take your time to wander around them all and take your pick from noodle soups, satays, curries, seafood and exotic desserts, for as little as$3 a dish. If in doubt, go for the stall with the

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longest queue. Good choices for visitors to Singapore includeLau Pa Sat in the central business district,Makansutra Gluttons Bay in the Marina Bay area, orMaxwell Road Food Centre in Chinatown.

If air-conditioning and bright lights are more your style and you find your stomach rumbling while you're hitting the shops, then head to a food court – the indoor equivalent of a hawker centre. These are located in the basement or top floor of most shopping malls. Particularly good food courts can be found in the basement ofION Orchard, the top floor ofWisma Atria and the top floor ofVivocity.

Restaurants

No matter what your craving, you should be able to satisfy it in Singapore. There are a staggering number of restaurants to choose from, generally of exceptional quality. As would be expected in the crossroads of Asia, Asian cuisine plays a strong role in the culinary scene here. Chinese restaurants are a-plenty and Japanese restaurants are a particular favourite, but you will also easily find Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Malaysian and Peranakan restaurants too.

With a large Indian population, it is not surprising that the Indian restaurants are also of a very high standard. For the best experience, head up toLittle India, where you will be spoilt for choice during a wander along Race Course Road, and will be able to eat your fill without burning a hole in your pocket.

The large number of expatriates and visitors to Singapore means that European restaurants are plentiful, and are of a standard to rival any other major city in the world. The recent opening of the Integrated Resorts has seen the city welcome new ventures from such gastronomic maestros as Joel Robuchon, Guy Savoy and Santi Santamaria, adding some clout to its culinary punch.

If you just can't make up your mind, and prefer to wander and window shop before you make a choice on your venue for the evening, thenBoat Quay,Clarke Quay,Robertson Quay and Club Street are good areas to head to, each offering a large choice of restaurants of various cuisine types. Failing that, head to any of the large hotels and you will find plenty of choice within.

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Nightlife Insights

NIGHTLIFE

Singapore's nightlife is thriving, with action to be found any night of the week and most hours of the day, night and early morning. Most of the action takes place along the Singapore River – at entertainment hubsBoat Quay,Clarke Quay andRobertson Quay.

Boat Quay boasts a strip of bars and restaurants in attractively restored shophouses, many of which offer happy hour discounts to co-incide with the end of the office day and the sunset. The more popular bars are at the Raffles Place end of the stretch(closest to the offices), and include English pubThe Penny Black andHarry's(made famous by bank-breaker Nick Leeson).BQ Bar is a popular spot for sundowners, due to its uninterrupted views of the river. As you approach the other end of the stretch, you will doubtless be harangued by restaurant touts promising free beer with your meal.

Clarke Quay received a dramatic$80 million makeover between 2004 and 2006 which saw the whole area turned into an eating and drinking emporium. This included the installation of a'climate control canopy' – a natural air-conditioning system which channels air along its canopy and funnels it into the interior spaces to provide a cooler atmosphere.

Clarke Quay buzzes every night of the week and you'll be spoiled for choice of restaurants if you're hungry – standouts includeRas(Indian),Coriander Leaf(Asian fusion),Indochine's Forbidden City(Asian fusion) andBayang(Balinese). For late night entertainment you'll find plenty of watering holes to wet your whistle – try China One for loud live music and dancing, thePump Room for home brew beers and live entertainment,Le Noir for al-fresco cocktails, while nightclubs such asAttica andZirca will have you dancing away until the small hours of the morning.

Robertson Quay is a more staid affair, with family restaurants and cosy winebars, attracting mainly residents from the surrounding condominiums and serviced apartments. Sporting enthusiasts should check outBoomarang for live rugby and Australian rules action, or the main square at Robertson Quay for large-screen English premiership football screenings. Robertson Quay is also home to long-running ever-popular nightclubZouk, which heads up Singapore's dance scene and often features international jet-setting DJs on its decks.

Away from the river, other entertainment enclaves are alive with activity also- Club Street is resplendent with intimate wine bars and restaurants, as well as popular roof barsThe Screening Room,The Club Skybar andBreeze. Nearby Far East Square is busy with the after-work crowd for some alfresco happy hour action. Orchard Road is home to the infamous Orchard Towers and its less than salubrious'four floors' of seedy bars and nightclubs, while nearby Emerald Hill is popular with the local expat crowd for its traditional shophouses converted into bars and restaurants.

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Things to Do Insights

You might have heard the complaint that'there's nothing to do in Singapore except shop and eat', but this couldn't be further from the truth. Yes, there are thousands of fabulous eating establishments to choose from, and it may be one of the most impressive shopping destinations in the world, but there is so much more to this dynamic and forward-thinking city-state than that!

The best way to explore any city is on foot, where you are immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of your destination, and Singapore is no exception. Conveniently divided into ethnic enclaves by Singapore's founding father, Sir Stamford Raffles, these compact areas such asChinatown,Little India and theArab Quarter make the perfect bases for self-guided urban walking tours, while ample sidewalks and pedestrian crossings mean a welcome lack of chaos compared to many other Asian cities.

It's not difficult to escape the urban sprawl either, with the city boasting a huge number of national parks and reserves. TheBotanic Gardens with its fabulousNational Orchid Garden is always a huge hit with visitors, but what is particularly unique, are the areas of preserved rainforest such asBukit Timah Nature Reserve, reservoirs such as theMacRitchie Reservoir Park and wetlands

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such asSungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, all of which have signposted trails and visitor facilities.

If walking isn't your thing, then try one of these unique ways of seeing the sights: hop aboard theSingapore Flyer or theCable Car for outstanding views, take abumboat along the river to admire the colonial architecture and soaring skyscrapers, see the skyline from the seaaboard a Chinese Junk, or enjoy the buzz of your surroundingson board a trishaw.

Culture Vultures will find plenty to keep their interest piqued. The multi-cultural make-up of the population equates to a fascinating melting-pot of ethnic cultures, meaning a wealth of Chinese Temples, Mosques, Churches and Hindu Temples to admire, and no shortage of traditional festivals to celebrate.

The standard of the museums in Singapore is extremely high, with modern technology such as interactive touch-screen stations and virtual presenters all employed to enhance visitor enjoyment. Museums can broadly be divided into two categories – those celebrating the origins of Singapore and the ancestors of the people who make up its multi-cultural population, such as theNational Museum of Singapore,Images of Singapore and theChinatown Heritage Centre; and those commemorating the efforts of soldiers during WWII, such as theChangi Museum,Fort Siloso, andReflections and Bukit Chandu.

If you're planning a visit with the kids, then you'll never worry about them getting bored in Singapore. Singapore is something of a giant playground for kids, with world-class visitor attractions, such asUniversal Studios, theSingapore Zoo, theJurong Bird Park and theNight Safari perfect for a family day of fun.

And yes, of course if you DID come to Singapore to eat and shop, then you won't leave disappointed either.Orchard Road has the biggest concentration of shopping malls in the world, so there's plenty of opportunity to shop'til you drop. Souvenir shopping is easy in the street stalls ofChinatown and the shophouses ofLittle India, while those looking for offbeat boutiques should check outHaji Lane in the Arab Quarter.

All of the hotels have several restaurants to choose from, the shopping malls are littered with mid-level eating establishments, while the hawker centres such asLau Pa Sat orMakansutra Gluttons Bay are the perfect places to sample local cuisine and see a slice of everyday local life. For livelier options, look no further thanBoat Quay to find the alfresco after-work drinks crowd, Robertson Quay for cozy wine bars and family restaurants, orClarke Quay for round-the-clock eating, drinking and partying.

Singapore is constantly re-inventing and re-building itself, so there will always be something new to see, do and explore. So enjoy the exploring and have fun!

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Travel Tips

Getting there by Air:

East meets west at this bustling Asian Pacific air hub roosting on the eastern fringe of the island. Singapore Changi Airport(SIN)(+65 6542 9792/ http://www.changi.airport.com.sg) is comprised of two terminals, with a third in the works due to open in 2006, and host to 60 airlines. The Skytrain monorail connects the terminals and runs about every two minutes. Besides the standard convenience amenities the airport features atypical diversions including a series of stress relieving nature walks through gardens, including a bamboo garden and a rooftop cactus garden. Many of the café/bars have live acoustic music for weary travelers. Families can opt for the arcade or play area. There is even an onsite movie theater and fitness center. Of course, it wouldn't be an airport without tons of retail outlets and restaurants ranging from local sushi joints to the ubiquitous Burger King and Starbucks. ATMs, business lounges and currency exchanges are also aplenty. Major airlines include:

Air Asia(+603 8660 4343/ http://www.airasia.com) Air France(+1 800 237 2747(US)/ +65 6737 6355(Singapore)/ http://www.airfrance.com) Air New Zealand(+1 800 262 1234(US)/ +65 6535 8266(Singapore)/ http://www.airnz.com) All Nippon Airways(+1 800 235 9262(US)/ +65 6323 4333(Singapore)/ http://www.fly-ana.com) Bangkok Airways(+1 866 226 4565(US)/ +65 65458481(Singapore)http://www.bangkokair.com) British Airways(+1 800 247 9297(US)/ +65 6589 7000(Singapore)/ http://www.britishairways.com) Cathy Pacific(+1 800 233 2742(US)/ +65 6533 1333(Singapore)/ http://www.cathaypacific.com) China Airlines(+65 6737 2211(Singapore)/ http://www.china-airlines.com) Continental(+1 800 523 3273(US)/ +65 6538 6860(Singapore)/ www.flycontinental.com) Japan Airlines(+1 800 525 3663(US)/ +65 6221 0522(Singapore)http://www.japanair.com) KLM(+1 800 447 4747(US)/ +65 6737 7622(Singapore)/ http://www.klm.com) Korean Air(+1 800 438 5000/ +65 6534 2111(Singapore)/ http://www.koreanair.com) Lufthansa(+1 800 645 3880/ +65 6245 5600(Singapore)/ http://cms.lufthansa.com) Malaysia Airlines(+1 800 552 9264(US)/ +65 6336 6777(Singapore)/ http://www.malaysiaairlines.com.my) Qantas(+1 800 227 4500/+65 6589 7000(Singapore)/ http://www.qantas.com) SAS Airlines(+1 800 221 2350(US)/ +65 6235 2488(Singapore)/ http://www.scandinavian.net) Singapore Air(+1 800 742 3333/ +65 6223 8888(Singapore)/ http://www.singaporeair.com) Thai Airways(+1 800 221 2500(US)/ +65 6224 9977(Singapore)/ http://www.thaiair.com) United Airlines(+1 800 241 6522(US)/ +65 6873 3533(Singapore/ http://www.ual.com)

Ground transportation:

Avis(+65(0)6542 8855/ +1 800 230 4898(US)/ https://www.avis.com) and Hertz(+1 800 654 3131(US)/ +1 800 654 3001(Intl)/ https://www.hertz.com) are onsite. Before hitting the road you will need to purchase an Electronic Road Pricing(ERP) card, which is used on expressways at peak hours and in the central business district from 7a-7p weekdays and 7a-2p Saturdays. Cards are available from the rental companies.

Taxi ranks are perched outside of each arrivals hall. A trip to downtown can get rather hefty(SGD25-SGD50) once all the surcharges(airport and ERP) are tacked on. Limousine taxis and MaxiCabs are also

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available and booked at counters in the arrivals hall. A flat rate of SD35 will get you downtown.

A frequent(every 15-30 minutes) airport shuttle jaunts to anywhere in the CBD and the majority of city hotels. Book at journey at the desk in the arrivals hall for SGD7.

Buses depart 6a until midnight from the basement of both terminals to most points around the city. SBS bus 36 will take you from the airport to Orchard road in downtown where most of the fancy hotels reside. Fares range from SGD.70 to SGD1.80 depending on whether the bus is air conditioned or not.

The quickest way into town, especially for those light on luggage, is by MRT train(+1800 336 8900/ http://www.smrtcorp.com.sg). The station resides in terminal two and is accessible from terminal one by Skytrain. A trip to downtown's City Hall station takes around 30 minutes. Trains operate from 5:30a until 11:18p.

Getting there by Bus:

Three bus stations handle international travel between Singapore and Malaysia, and Singapore and Thailand: Ban San Terminal at Arab and Queen Streets, Lanender Street Terminal off Kalang Bahru, and the Golden Mile Complex at Beach Road. Traveling by bus between countries is rather inexpensive and more than 25 routes are available including: Singapore-Johar Express(+65 6292 8151), Singapore-Malacca Express(+65 6293 5915), and Singapore-Kuala Lumpur Express(+65 6292 8254).

Getting there by Car:

The traffic ridden Woodlands Causeway extends across the Straits of Johor linking Singapore with Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The aptly named"Second Crossing" spans the straits into Malaysia at the western end of the island. Tolls apply at the crossings and there is the need for a Vehicle Entry Permit(VEP) and ERP card.

Getting there by Rail:

Malaysian Railways(KTMB)(+65 6222 5165/ http://www.ktmb.com.my) railway has three Intercity trains running between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and an overnight train, Express Timuran, chugging between Singapore and Tumpat. Trains arrive and depart from the Singapore Train Station, a classic art deco building on Keppel Road. The station has limited public transport options. Bus#97 exits Keppel road for the Tanjon Pagar MRT station, a 20 minute walk otherwise.

E&O Services operates the famous and exotic opulence-on-rails known as the Orient Express(+65 6392 3500/ http://www.orient-express.com) between Chiang Mai and Singapore via Bangkok. Trains depart once a month and journeys last anywhere from three to six days. The cruise train and its doting luxury does not come cheap though, with prices ranging from USD1540 to USD3110 per person.

Getting there by Water:

Singapore is king when it comes to calling cruise ships in Asia Pacific, with more than ten major lines docking year round. The main passenger port is the Singapore Cruise Center—a massive facility equipped three halls: regional, domestic, international. Ferries also depart from the Cruise Center for ports in Kukup, Tionman and Sebona, Malaysia. Daily ferry service is also available from the terminal at Tanah Merah to the Indonesian resort islands of Bintan and Batam in the Riau Archipelago. Service providers include: Bintan Resort ferries(+65 6542 4369/ http://www.brf.com.sg), Penguin Ferry Service(+65 6271 4866), Widi Express Ferries(+65 6275 2220), and Berlian Ferries(+65 6546 8830).

Getting Around:

Although public transport is less stressful and walking around the city center is quite pleasurable, many tourists choose to rent a car. Traffic on the major expressways(Pan Island, Ayer Rajah, Central) and major roads can be hectic and getting accustomed to the ERP and ALS(same as ERP but for the central busness district) cards and numerous road rules is time consuming, but the system moves efficiently most of the time(minus rush hours), the signs are all in abbreviated English, and parking is usually easy to come by. Beware of the infamous speed camera. They are all seeing and fines are strictly enforced. You need to obtain a Vehicle Entry Permit(VEP) if you are entering the country from Malaysia.

Singapore's transit system consists of three metro lines(MRT), two LRT(elevated monorails) lines and bus services. A multitude of companies manage the different facets of the system but fares are generally integrated, especially with the EZ-Link card(+1800 767 4333/ http://www.ezlink.com.sg)-a smart card that stores up to SGD10 at a time and can be refilled at General Ticket Machines(GTMs) in any station. Information for all lines is available through Transitlink(+1800 764 333/ http://www.transitlink.com.sg).

Singapore Mass Rapid Transit(SMRT) (+1800 336 8900/ http://www.smrtcorp.com.sg) operates two of the three MRT lines: East-West(EW) and North-South(NS). The EW line also spurs off to the Changi Airport. The system runs from around 5:30a until 1:30a, but actual times vary from station to station. Standard fares vary depending on distance traveled but the average cast is around SGD1. Singapore Light Rapid Transit(SLRT)(+65 6893 6455/ http://www.slrt.com.sg), a subsidiary of SMRT, manages the Bukit Panging LRT(BP), an elevated electric monorail with 14 stations that basically runs a circular route through Bukit Panjang New Town meshing with the MRT at Choa Chu Kang. Trains leave every 2 to 6 minutes from 5a-1a. Fares start at SGD1.

SBS Transit(+1800 287 2727/ http://www.sbstransit.com.sg) is the largest bus provider in town, but has recently expanded to control the North-East(NE) MTR line, which connects the Harbour Front with the CBD. The Sengkang LRT is also under the company's transit umbrella, with the new Punggoi LRT, due to open in 2004. Trans-Island Bus Services(TIBS)(+65 6482 3888/ http://www.tibs.com.sg) is the

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second largest bus company with 53 routes including 98 night buses(NightRiders) primarily focused in the north.

Singapore Explorer(+65 6339 6833/ http://www.singaporeexplorer.com.sg) runs the Singapore Trolley, a hop on/hop off motorized and air-conditioned turn-of-the-20th-century tram that plies the CBD with stops at Orchard Road, Singapore River, Chinatown, Raffles Hotel, Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Suntec City between 9.40a and 4.55p daily. Tickets can be purchased directly from the driver. Besides the trolley, the company offers river boat rides up the Singapore River and operates a fleet of"trishaws" or motorized rickshaws.

For the true form of tourist transport you can board a cable car(http://www.cablecar.com.sg) at the Mount Faber station head down the hill and across the harbour to the island of Sestona. Cars run daily from 8:30a-9p. Fares range from SGD8.50 to SGD15.

Taxi services in Singapore are reliable and comfortable, and the fact that there are some 15,000 cars roaming the streets looking for fares, hailing one is relatively hassle free, although during peak hours in certain parts of town they can be scarce. Three main taxi companies—Comfort Transportation(+65 6552 1111), TIBS Taxis(+65 6555 8888) and CityCab(+65 6552 2222)—operate round the clock. Taxi-stands are located outside major buildings and shopping centers. Alternatively, you can book one, by phone or fax, within a half-hour or in advance. Fares are metered and strictly regulated by the government's Land Transport Authority. So, commuters can sit back and enjoy their rides without fear of overcharging. Most of the companies also offer"limo" service, which is more like a town car rather than a jalopy picking you up.
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Fun Facts

1. Interesting Fact: Singapore measures just 41.8km by 22.5km and is home to nearly 5 million people – making it the second most densely populated country in the world, after Monaco.

2. Fun Fact: The National Orchid Garden houses the largest display of tropical orchids in the world, with over 1,000 species and 2,000 hybrids.

3. Random Fact: The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve contains more tree species in one hectare than in the whole of North America.

4. Interesting Fact: Singapore has four official languages(English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay) and four official religions(Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity).

5. Historical Fact: Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore first stepped ashore on 29th January 1819.

6. Fun Fact: More than 600 financial institutions operate in Singapore, and it is home to South East Asia's largest stock market, and the World's fifth largest foreign exchange centre.

7. Random Fact: Changi Airport received a total of 37.2 million passengers in 2009.

8. Weird Fact: Singapore is a very flat country – the highest point, Bukit Timah hill, peaks at just 163.63m.

9. Fun Fact: At 165m, the Singapore Flyer is the world's highest observation wheel, and is the height of 31 male giraffes stacked on top of one another.

10. Random Fact: The maximum height for buildings, as set by the Civil Aviation Authority, is 280m – only three buildings reach this height: the OUB Centre, the Republic Plaza and the UOB Plaza.

11. Historical Fact: Singapore was the focus of the greatest defeat in British military history, when General Percival surrendered to the Japanese on 15th February 1942. After 3 years of occupation, the Japanese surrendered on 12th September 1945.

12. Weird Fact: The Jurong Bird Park is home to the world's highest man-made waterfall(and over 8,000 birds).

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