

Singapore Travel Guide

The best things to see and do



Table of Contents

<u>1. A World of Innovation: Why You Should Visit Singapore</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>2.1 Disclaimer</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>2.2 Copyright</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>3. General Information about Singapore</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>3.1 How much time do you need to visit Singapore?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>3.2 What is the best time to visit Singapore?</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>3.3 The highlights of the history of Singapore</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>3.4 Driving a car in Singapore</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>3.5 Public Transportation in Singapore</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>3.6 Money and Credit Cards in Singapore</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>3.7 Tap water in Singapore</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>3.8 Telephone in Singapore</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>3.9 In which Time Zone is Singapore</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>3.10 Visa requirements for Singapore</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>3.11 Languages spoken in Singapore</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>3.12 Religions in Singapore</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>3.13 Must-Try Food Guide</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>3.14 Essential Travel Apps in Singapore</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>3.15 Power & Connectivity in Singapore</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>4. Five-Day Itinerary for Your Singapore Trip</u>	<u>46</u>

5. Five Fabulous Days in Singapore	48
5.1 Day 1: Arriving in Singapore and Marina Bay Sands	48
5.1.1 Arriving at Changi International Airport	48
5.1.2 Where to stay in Singapore	51
5.1.2.1 Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium	54
5.1.3 Transfer to your hotel	57
5.1.4 Sightseeing on the first day	60
5.1.4.1 Singapore Flyer	61
5.1.4.2 Marina Bay Sands Shopping Mall (The Shoppes)	65
5.1.4.3 Spectra Light Show	70
5.1.4.4 Helix Bridge	74
5.1.4.5 Merlion Statue at Merlion Park	78
5.2 Day 2: Self-Guided Tour of Singapore	82
5.2.A National Museum of Singapore	86
5.2.B Fort Canning Tree Tunnel	92
5.2.C Central Fire Station & Civil Defense Heritage Gallery	96
5.2.D Old Hill Street Police Station	101
5.2.E Clarke Quay	105
5.2.F Singapore River Cruise	110
5.2.G Singapore Chinatown	114
5.2.H Sri Mariamman Temple	118
5.2.I Murals at Mohamed Ali Lane	123
5.2.J Buddha Tooth Relic Temple	126
5.2.K Chinatown Street Markets (Pagoda Street)	130
5.2.L Gardens by the Bay	134
5.2.M Garden Rhapsody Show	139

Singapore Travel Guide

<u>5.3 Day 3: Self-guided tour of Little India & Bugis</u>	144
<u>5.3.A Little India Heritage District</u>	148
<u>5.3.B House of Tan Teng Niah</u>	153
<u>5.3.C Traditional Trades of Little India Mural</u>	158
<u>5.3.D Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple</u>	161
<u>5.3.E Abdul Gaffoor Mosque</u>	165
<u>5.3.F Bugis</u>	169
<u>5.3.G Bugis Street and Bugis Junction Shopping Mall</u>	173
<u>5.3.H Sultan Mosque</u>	177
<u>5.3.I Arab Street</u>	182
<u>5.3.J Haji Lane</u>	186
<u>5.3.K Orchard Road Shopping Street</u>	191
<u>5.4 Day 4: Relaxing on Singapore's Sentosa Island</u>	196
<u>5.4.1 Harbourfront Mall and VivoCity Mall</u>	199
<u>5.4.2 Sentosa Island</u>	204
<u>5.4.3 Palawan Beach with Palawan Island</u>	209
<u>5.4.4 Tanjong Beach</u>	215
<u>5.4.5 Siloso Beach</u>	219
<u>5.4.6 Wings of Time Show on Sentosa Island</u>	224
<u>5.5 Day 5: Self-guided tour of Changi Airport & Jewel</u>	230
<u>5.5.1 Changi Airport: Shiseido Forest Valley (Jewel)</u>	232
<u>5.5.2 Changi Airport: Rain Vortex (Jewel)</u>	237
<u>5.5.3 Changi Airport: Canopy Park (Jewel)</u>	241
<u>5.5.4 Changi Airport: HSBC Light & Sound Show</u>	245

<u>5.6 Day 6: Flight Home</u>	251
<u>6. Closing Remarks</u>	252

1. A World of Innovation: Why You Should Visit Singapore

Are you looking to experience the pinnacle of modern urban planning and cultural diversity in a single, focused journey? Look no further than Singapore. This guide is designed for the traveler who appreciates a seamless blend of futuristic architecture, lush greenery, and world-class logistics. By focusing on the unique character of this city-state, you will witness a transformation of the urban landscape into a living, breathing sanctuary.



The Contrast: From Engineering Marvels to Urban Sanctuaries The beauty of Singapore lies in its dramatic commitment to green innovation. Your journey will take you through the heart of a global leader in sustainable urban design. You will witness the soaring Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay and the majestic Rain Vortex at Jewel Changi, the tallest indoor waterfall in the world. Beyond the glass and steel, you can explore climate-controlled conservatories and hidden urban trails that make you forget you are in one of the most densely populated cities on the planet.



A Culinary Journey of Discovery If you travel to eat, Singapore is a revelation. The city offers a spectacular entry point to Asian cuisine, where you can enjoy Michelin-recognized dishes in clean, reliable hawker centers. From the savory depths of Hainanese Chicken Rice to the spicy kick of Laksa, the food culture here is a testament to the harmonious blend of Chinese, Malay, and Indian heritages.

About This Singapore Purple Travel Guide

This is not a generic, high-level encyclopedia. We have intentionally focused on these three specific locations to ensure you spend less time on buses and more time making memories.

Our goal is to help you Make Memorable Moments. This guide is packed with **original photography** so that you can see exactly what you will experience. We provide the factual details you need to make an educated decision about your itinerary, helping you build a trip that is both relaxing and deeply rewarding.

Ready to start your adventure? Dive into the detailed sections of this guide to begin your self-guided discovery of Singapore.

Please also check out the other exciting destinations and travel guides on our **Backpack and Snorkel website**.

2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide we are doing our best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

2.2 Copyright

This website and its content are copyright of “Rudy at Backpack and Snorkel”. All rights reserved. Any redistribution or reproduction of part or all of the contents in any form is prohibited. The content on this site (including photos) may not be sold, reprinted, or used for commercial purposes without the written consent of “Rudy at Backpack and Snorkel”. You may not, except with our express written permission, distribute or commercially exploit the content. Nor may you transmit it or store it in any other website or other form of electronic retrieval system.

3. General Information about Singapore

3.1 How much time do you need to visit Singapore?

To fully appreciate Singapore's high-tech urbanism, a **five-day trip** is the ideal duration.

This is sufficient time to experience the iconic Marina Bay Sands, the Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay, and the cultural enclaves of Chinatown and Little India. A 5-day stay also allows for a dedicated relaxing day on Sentosa Island.

In this **Singapore Purple Travel Guide**, we present a meticulously planned **five-day itinerary** that balances high-energy city exploration with island relaxation. You can use this plan exactly as it is written or easily tailor the number of days in each location to suit your personal interests.

You can find the comprehensive day-by-day breakdown in [chapter 4](#).

3.3 The highlights of the history of Singapore

Classical Era: Temasek and the Kingdom of Singapura

- **300 AD:** Chinese records mention 'Pu-luo-chung' (Pulau Ujong), which is the earliest known name for the island of Singapore.
- **1025 AD:** Emperor Rajendra Chola I of India launches a naval raid, sacking several regional ports including the settlement of Temasek.
- **1225 AD:** Chinese official Chau Ju-Kua describes 'Ling-ya-mon' (Singapore) as a strategic trading outpost and a Srivijayan vassal.
- **1299:** According to legend, Sang Nila Utama arrives on the island of Temasek, sights a lion, and founds the Kingdom of Singapura.
- **1330:** Chinese traveler Wang Dayuan visits 'Temasek' and records a thriving, fortified trading settlement with a diverse population.

The Fall of Singapura and Colonial Beginnings

- **1398:** Parameswara, the last King of Singapura, is forced to flee the island following a major Majapahit invasion from Java.
- **1819:** Sir Stamford Raffles arrives and signs a treaty with Sultan Hussein Shah and the Temenggong to establish a British trading post.
- **1824:** The Treaty of London (Anglo-Dutch Treaty) officially places Singapore within the British sphere of influence.
- **1826:** Singapore, Melaka, and Penang unite to form the Straits Settlements, with Singapore eventually becoming the administrative capital.

- **1867:** The Straits Settlements become a Crown Colony, moving from the control of British India to direct rule from London.

Twentieth Century: War and the Path to Nationhood

- **1923:** The Johor-Singapore Causeway officially opens, providing the first permanent road and rail link to the mainland.
- **1942:** Following the Malayan Campaign, the British surrender Singapore to the Japanese on February 15. The island is renamed 'Syonan-to' (Light of the South).
- **1945:** Japan surrenders; the British Military Administration takes control of the island following the end of World War II.
- **1954:** The People's Action Party (PAP) is founded by Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues at the Victoria Memorial Hall.
- **1955:** David Marshall becomes the first Chief Minister of Singapore following the Rendel Constitution.
- **1959:** Singapore achieves full internal self-government; the PAP wins the general election and Lee Kuan Yew becomes the first Prime Minister.
- **1963:** Singapore joins the Federation of Malaysia on September 16 to gain independence from British colonial rule.
- **1965:** Following deep political and economic disagreements, Singapore separates from Malaysia on August 9 to become an independent and sovereign republic.

3.4 Driving a car in Singapore

The Basics: Left-Hand Traffic

Singapore follows the British system; vehicles drive on the **left side** of the road, and the steering wheel is on the right. If you are accustomed to driving on the right, you must exercise extra caution, especially at roundabouts and when turning at intersections.

Why You Should Avoid Driving in Singapore

In Singapore, the government actively discourages private car ownership and usage through a system of high costs and strict regulations. For the vast majority of tourists, a rental car is a liability rather than an asset.

- **Electronic Road Pricing (ERP):** Singapore uses a sophisticated 'pay-as-you-use' congestion charging system. Automated gantries located on expressways and in the city center charge your vehicle's 'In-Vehicle Unit' (IU) every time you pass under them during peak hours. If you are in a rental car without a properly topped-up stored-value card, you may face significant fines.
- **High Costs:** Between the high cost of fuel, the ERP charges, and the daily rental rates, driving is the most expensive way to see the city.
- **Parking Challenges:** Parking is heavily regulated and can be difficult to find in popular districts. In the city center, rates are high. In residential areas (HDB), you must use the '**Parking.sg**' mobile app to pay for your duration, as many car parks no longer accept paper coupons.

- **Efficiency of Public Transport:** Because the MRT (train) and bus systems are world-class, air-conditioned, and remarkably affordable, they almost always get you to your destination faster than a car would when you account for traffic and parking.

Our Recommendation: Stick to Public Transport and Grab

For a stress-free experience, we strongly recommend that you avoid renting a car while in Singapore.

- **Use the MRT and Buses:** They are exceptionally clean, fast, and cost-effective. You can pay for all public transport simply by tapping your contactless credit card or mobile wallet at the gantry.
- **Use the Grab App:** If you require door-to-door service or are traveling late at night, use the **Grab** app (Southeast Asia's equivalent to Uber). It provides transparent pricing and eliminates the need to navigate unfamiliar roads.
- **Between Cities:** For the journey from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, taking a luxury bus or a short flight is far more relaxing than navigating border traffic and highway tolls.
- By skipping the rental car, you avoid the stress of navigating complex traffic rules, the frustration of finding parking in the humidity, and the complexity of managing digital road tolls.

3.5 Public Transportation in Singapore

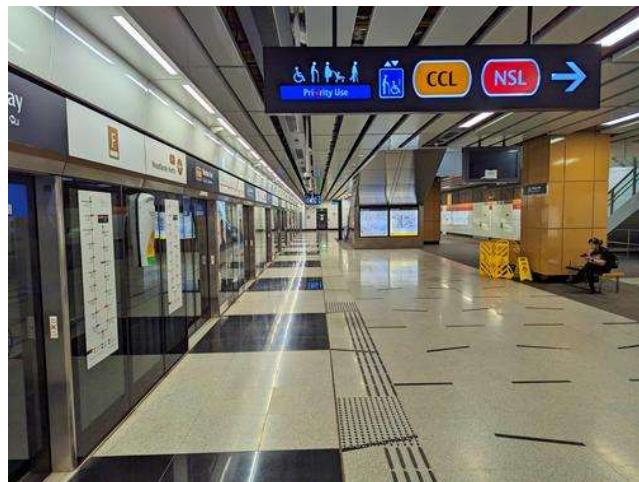
To navigate Singapore effectively, you must understand the 'Golden Rule' of tropical travel: the shortest walk can feel like a marathon in **90°F (32°C)** heat with **80% humidity**. Fortunately, Singapore possess world-class infrastructure designed to keep you moving in air-conditioned comfort.

1. Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) - The Gold Standard of Efficiency

Singapore's **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)** ([website](#), [network map](#)) is arguably the most user-friendly system in the world. It is clean, punctual, and covers almost every square inch of the island.

- **Payment is Seamless:** You do not need to buy a specific travel card. You can simply tap your **contactless Visa or Mastercard**, Apple Pay, or Google Pay at any fare gate.
- **The 'Sheltered Walkway' Network:** Singapore is designed with thousands of miles of covered walkways. You can often walk from an MRT station to a shopping mall or hotel without ever being exposed to rain or direct sun.
- **The Underground City:** In areas like Orchard Road or Marina Bay, the MRT stations connect to massive underground malls. You can travel for miles in a climate-controlled environment.
- **Accessibility:** Every single station has elevators and ramps. If you have luggage or a stroller, the MRT is entirely stress-free.

Singapore Travel Guide



2. Ride-Hailing in Singapore: Your ‘Heat Escape’ Strategy

While the trains are great, the ‘last mile’ (the walk from the station to your final door) is where the tropical weather hits hardest. This is where ride-hailing becomes essential.

Understanding the ‘Back-to-Back’ Wait Time

A critical detail for your planning is that Grab and other services utilize a **‘back-to-back’ booking system**.

- **How it Works:** A driver can accept your ride request while they are still finishing a journey for another passenger.
- **The Impact on You:** If your assigned driver is currently completing another trip, your waiting time will be longer. The app will usually show a status such as **‘Driver is finishing a trip nearby’** and provide an estimated time for them to drop off the current passenger before they head toward you.
- **Strategy:** You should check the app status immediately after booking. If the driver is still in the middle of another ride, you have a few extra minutes to stay inside the air-conditioning. However, do not wait too long; once they drop off the previous passenger, they may arrive at your location very quickly.

Grab (The Dominant App)

Grab is the 'Uber of Southeast Asia'. You should download this app before you arrive. It works seamlessly in both Singapore and Malaysia.

- **Convenience:** You can book a ride from inside an air-conditioned mall and only step outside when the app shows the driver is **1 minute** away.
- **Fixed Pricing:** You see the fare before you book. Even if the driver gets stuck in heavy Kuala Lumpur traffic or a sudden tropical downpour, the price does not change.
- **Safety:** The app tracks your GPS location, shows your driver's face and license plate, and allows you to share your ride status with friends.
- **Affordability:** In Singapore, Grab is cheaper than a rental car and far more convenient than hunting for a taxi in the rain.

Other Option

- **Gojek (Singapore only):** A strong competitor to Grab in Singapore, often offering slightly lower prices during off-peak hours.

3.7 Tap water in Singapore

Singapore: Drink with Confidence

Singapore's water system is a global marvel. Managed by the **Public Utilities Board (PUB)**, the water undergoes rigorous treatment and more than **500,000 tests annually** to ensure it exceeds WHO standards.

- **Safety:** 100% safe to drink directly from any tap (bathroom, kitchen, or public fountains).
- **The 'Old Building' Myth:** Some people worry about old pipes in older buildings. While the water leaving the treatment plant is perfect, very old plumbing can sometimes add a slight metallic taste. If you are in an old building, simply let the tap run for **10 seconds** to flush the system.
- **Cost & Sustainability:** Bottled water in Singapore is expensive (\$3–\$5 per bottle). Save money and reduce plastic waste by carrying a reusable bottle and refilling it at your hotel or public 'Water Points' found in malls and parks.

3.12 Religions in Singapore

Singapore: Managed Diversity & Harmony

Singapore is often cited as the most religiously diverse country in the world. Because it is a secular state, no single religion is given official preference, and the government strictly enforces 'religious harmony' to ensure all groups coexist peacefully.

- **The Breakdown (2025 Estimates):**
 - **Buddhism (~31%)**: The most practiced faith, primarily among the Chinese community. You will see grand Mahayana temples as well as Thai and Burmese Buddhist centers.
 - **Christianity (~19%)**: A growing group, split between Catholic and various Protestant denominations (Methodist, Anglican, and large Megachurches).
 - **No Religion (~20%)**: A significant and growing percentage of Singaporeans identify as secular or atheist.
 - **Islam (~16%)**: Practiced by nearly all Malays and a portion of the Indian community.
 - **Hinduism (~5%)**: Centered in the vibrant 'Little India' district, with stunning Dravidian-style temples.
- **Unique Feature: The Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCC)**. Every neighborhood has a local group that brings leaders from different faiths together to build ties, ensuring that a mosque, a church, and a temple can exist on the same street without conflict.

Visiting Etiquette: The ‘Must-Knows’

When visiting houses of worship, following these rules shows immense respect for local traditions:

- **The Footwear Rule: Always remove your shoes** before entering a mosque, Hindu temple, or many Buddhist temples. You will see a shoe rack or a designated area outside. It is perfectly fine to wear socks, though some Hindu temples may prefer bare feet.
- **Dress Modestly:**
 - **Mosques:** Women must cover their heads (scarves are usually provided at the entrance for tourists) and wear long sleeves and long pants/skirts. Men should wear long pants. Short-sleeved shirts are usually okay for men, but singlets (tank tops) are not.
 - **Temples:** Avoid short shorts or sleeveless tops. A light shawl is a great item to keep in your bag to quickly cover your shoulders.
- **The ‘Feet’ Taboo:** In both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the feet are considered the ‘lowest’ and dirtiest part of the body. **Never point the soles of your feet** toward an altar, a deity, or a priest. When sitting on the floor, tuck your legs beneath you or sit cross-legged.
- **Photography:** Always look for signs. Most places allow photos of the architecture, but taking photos of people *during* prayer is often considered intrusive. Never use a flash inside a prayer hall.

The Hawker Culture

Singapore's food scene revolves around **Hawker Centres**—large, open-air complexes with dozens of specialized stalls.

- **Chinatown (Maxwell Food Centre & Chinatown Complex):**
 - **Must-Try:** **Hainanese Chicken Rice** (look for the famous *Tian Tian* stall).
 - **The Experience:** This is the best place to try **Laksa** (spicy coconut noodle soup) and **Satay** (grilled skewers).
- **Little India (Tekka Centre):**
 - **Must-Try:** **Nasi Biryani** (spiced rice with mutton or chicken) and **Roti Prata** (flaky flatbread served with dhal).
 - **The Experience:** Wander the narrow streets to find **Murtabak**—a giant stuffed prata—at the legendary *Zam Zam* near the Sultan Mosque.
- **Katong/Joo Chiat:**
 - **Must-Try:** **Katong Laksa**. Traditionally eaten with only a spoon (the noodles are cut short).
 - **The Experience:** Explore the colorful Peranakan shophouses while snacking on **Otah** (spiced fish cake grilled in banana leaves).

Hawker Etiquette:

- **Choping:** If you see a packet of tissues on an empty table, it is 'reserved'. Find your own table and 'chope' it with a tissue pack before ordering.
- **Tray Return:** It is now mandatory in Singapore to return your tray and crockery to the designated stations.

4. Five-Day Itinerary for Your Singapore Trip

This itinerary is specifically designed to maximize your time in one of the most innovative cities in the world. By focusing your journey on the architectural wonders, diverse cultural enclaves, and lush urban gardens of Singapore, you will experience a deep dive into a destination where futuristic design meets traditional heritage.

Note on Route Selection: To ensure a smooth and efficient flow, this specific plan prioritizes the most iconic and accessible landmarks within the city-state. By focusing on a concentrated selection of world-class attractions, you avoid the fatigue of unnecessary transit and gain more time to immerse yourself in the local atmosphere.

You can use this itinerary exactly as it is presented or modify the individual days to fit your specific interests and travel style.

Weather Warning: Please be advised that it can rain at any point in Singapore. Tropical showers are usually brief but can be very intense. Because these downpours often pass within an hour, it is a good idea to maintain a flexible schedule. You may wish to add a buffer day if you are particularly interested in outdoor photography or coastal walks.

Singapore Travel Guide

	Daytime	Night
1	<u>Arrive at Singapore Airport</u> ; <u>transfer to hotel</u> ; <u>Singapore Flyer</u> ; <u>Marina Bay Sands shopping mall</u> ; <u>Spectra light show</u> ; <u>Helix Bridge</u> ; <u>Merlion Statue at Merlion Park</u>	<u>Singapore</u>
2	<u>National Museum of Singapore</u> ; <u>Fort Canning Tree Tunnel</u> ; <u>Central Fire Station</u> ; <u>Old Hill Street Police Station</u> ; <u>Clarke Quay</u> ; <u>Singapore River Cruise</u> ; <u>Chinatown</u> ; <u>Sri Mariamman Temple</u> ; <u>Murals at Mohamed Ali Lane</u> ; <u>Buddha Tooth Relic Temple</u> ; <u>Chinatown Street Markets</u> ; <u>Gardens by the Bay</u> with <u>Garden Rhapsody Show</u>	<u>Singapore</u>
3	<u>Little India</u> (<u>House of Tan Teng Niah</u> , <u>Traditional Trades of Little India</u> , <u>Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple</u> , <u>Abdul Gaffoor Mosque</u>); <u>Bugis</u> (<u>Bugis Street and Bugis Junction Shopping Mall</u> , <u>Sultan Mosque</u> , <u>Arab Street</u> , <u>Haji Lane</u>); <u>Orchard Road shopping street</u>	<u>Singapore</u>
4	<u>Sentosa Island</u> (<u>Palawan Beach with Palawan Island</u> , <u>Tanjong Beach</u> , <u>Siloso Beach</u> , evening: <u>Wings of Time show</u>)	<u>Singapore</u>
5	Things you missed in the last days; Changi Airport (<u>Shiseido Forest Valley</u> , <u>Rain Vortex</u> , <u>Canopy Park</u> , <u>HSBC Light & Sound Show</u>)	<u>Singapore</u>
6	Fly home	

5. Five Fabulous Days in Singapore

5.1 Day 1: Arriving in Singapore and Marina Bay Sands

5.1.1 What you need to know about arriving at Changi International Airport

Changi Airport is consistently ranked the best in the world, and arriving here is remarkably efficient. After clearing immigration and collecting your luggage, you will find yourself in one of the most connected transport hubs in Asia.

To head downtown, follow the signs for '**Train to City**'. The airport is connected to the **East-West Line (Green)** and in the future will be connected to the **Downtown Line (Blue)**:

East-West Line (Green): From Changi Airport station, take the train two stops to **Tanah Merah**. Step across the platform to board the westbound train towards **Tuas Link** to reach city center hubs like **City Hall** or **Raffles Place**.

Downtown Line (Blue): Alternatively, take the train one stop to **Expo** and transfer to the Blue line. This is the most direct route if you are staying in **Chinatown**, **Bugis**, or near **Bayfront**.

Here is a [link to the MRT map](#).

Alternatively, you can get a **Grab** to pick you up at Singapore Changi Airport. It is a very common and convenient way for travelers to get to their hotels.

However, unlike regular taxis that have their own designated stands, Grab and other ride-hailing cars (like Gojek or Tada) must pick you up at specific **designated arrival pick-up points**.

Where to Find Your Grab

Once you have cleared customs and collected your bags, follow the signs for '**Arrival Pick-up**' or '**Private Hire Cars**'. Do not go to the Taxi stand.

Terminal	Pick-up Location	Navigation Tip
Terminal 1	Basement 1	Take the lift or escalator down from the Arrival Hall (Level 1) to B1. Head to Door 3 .
Terminal 2	Level 1	Exit the Arrival Hall and follow signs to the driveway. Head to Door 6 .
Terminal 3	Basement 1	Take the escalator down from the Arrival Hall to B1. Head to Door 2 .
Terminal 4	Level 1	Head to the arrival driveway area outside the hall. Meet at Door 5 .

Key Tips for Using Grab at Changi

- **Book Only After Collecting Bags:** Grab drivers are generally not allowed to wait at the pick-up doors for long. Only book your ride once you have your luggage and are ready to walk out.
- **Check Your Door Number:** The Grab app will often ask you to select which specific 'Door' or 'Pillar' you are standing at. Make sure the number in the app matches the sign above the door you are exiting.

- **Price vs. Taxi:** Grab uses 'dynamic pricing'. During peak hours (rain, morning rush, or Sunday evenings), a Grab might actually be **more expensive** than a metered taxi. It is worth checking both the Grab app and the physical taxi queue to see which is faster/cheaper.
- **Family Travel Note:** If you are traveling with children under 1.35m, Grab drivers in private cars are legally required to use a child seat. If you do not have one, you should book **GrabFamily** (which includes a seat) or take a **standard Taxi**, as taxis are legally exempt from the child seat requirement in Singapore.

5.1.2.1 Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium

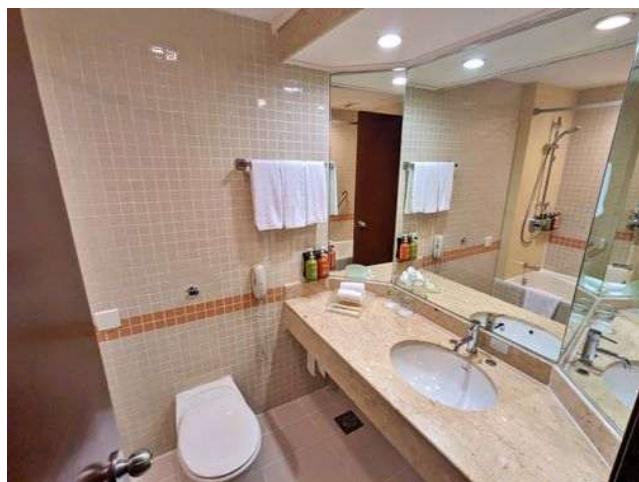
([map](#), [booking](#), [expedia](#), [agoda](#), [hotels](#), [kayak](#), [tripadvisor](#))

The Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium is located in very close proximity to the Havelock MRT Station and only short subway rides are needed to visit Singapore's attractions. While it might not be a gleaming glass skyscraper from the future, its location and room size make it a secret favorite among seasoned travelers who prioritize discovery over 'Instagram-chic' decor.

Why it Works for Self-Guided Discovery

The standout feature of this hotel is the **Havelock MRT station (Thomson-East Coast Line)**, which is practically built right next to the hotel's footprint. From the lobby, it is a mere **3-minute walk (Exit 5)** to the station. This line offers direct, no-transfer rides to **Gardens by the Bay, Orchard Road, and Maxwell (Chinatown)** in just a few stops.





The Room Experience

If you have ever stayed in a central Singapore ‘shoebox’ hotel, you will immediately appreciate the space here. The rooms are **surprisingly spacious** (starting at **30 sqm**), offering a rare amount of breathing room to spread out your gear.

- **The Vibe:** It has a ‘**classic charm**’ that feels nostalgic and cozy. You will not find high-tech lighting panels, but you will find plush bedding, a choice of soft or firm pillows, and a bathtub in every room—ideal for soaking your feet after 20,000 steps.
- **Modern Touches:** They have recently added **filtered water taps** in the rooms to reduce plastic waste, which is a lifesaver in the Singapore heat.

Evening at the Singapore River

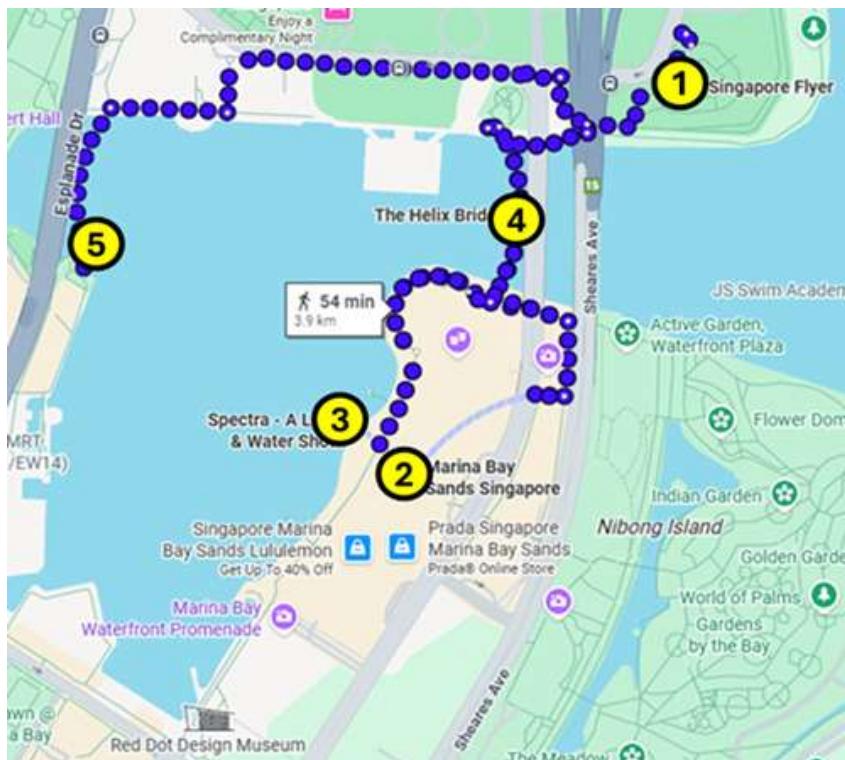
One of the best ways to decompress after a long flight is the **10-minute stroll** to the Singapore River. The hotel sits right at the edge of the **Robertson Quay** area. Unlike the loud, neon-soaked Clarke Quay, Robertson Quay is where the locals go for a relaxed waterfront dinner. You will find everything from upscale wine bars to cozy pasta spots tucked away in quiet courtyards along the water.

Breakfast and Beyond

The breakfast spread at the **Atrium Restaurant** is massive and **Halal-certified**. It is a vibrant mix of local delights like *Laksa* and *Roti Prata* alongside standard Western favorites. You will also love the **on-site self-service laundromat**, which lets you pack light and refresh your wardrobe throughout the trip.

5.1.4 Sightseeing on the first day

Your first day is designed to be a ‘highlights reel’ that is visually stunning but physically manageable after a long international flight. By focusing on the Marina Bay area, you get to experience Singapore’s futuristic skyline immediately. Walking the loop from the Merlion to the Helix Bridge and finishing at the Marina Bay Sands allows you to stay outdoors in the fresh air—the best cure for jet lag. The evening Spectra Light Show is a perfect, low-effort finale where you can simply sit by the water and soak in the atmosphere of the city.



- 1 = [Singapore Flyer](#)
- 2 = [Marina Bay Sands](#)
- 3 = [Spectra Light Show](#)
- 4 = [Helix Bridge](#)
- 5 = [Merlion Park with Merlion Statue](#)

5.1.4.2 Marina Bay Sands Shopping Mall (The Shoppes) ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands is the largest luxury shopping destination in Singapore, forming a critical part of the iconic Marina Bay Sands integrated resort. Spanning nearly **800,000 square feet (74,322 square meters)**, this mall is a striking architectural achievement designed by the world-renowned architect **Moshe Safdie**. It goes far beyond traditional retail by offering a combination of high-end fashion, immersive attractions, and fine dining under one massive roof.





Why You Should Visit

Even if high-end luxury shopping is not your primary goal, visiting The Shoppes is essential for witnessing the integrated design of the Marina Bay district. The mall serves as a central hub that connects the **Bayfront MRT station**, the **ArtScience Museum**, and the three massive hotel towers. The entire interior is bathed in natural sunlight through a soaring glass ceiling, creating an open, airy atmosphere that feels more like an indoor city street than a typical shopping center.

5.1.4.3 Spectra Light Show

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Spectra is a breathtaking, free nightly light, water, and music spectacle presented at the Event Plaza along the promenade outside Marina Bay Sands. This 15-minute multi-sensory performance uses state-of-the-art lasers, fountain jets, and visual projection technology to tell a four-act narrative about the transformation of Singapore from its humble origins to a vibrant global metropolis.





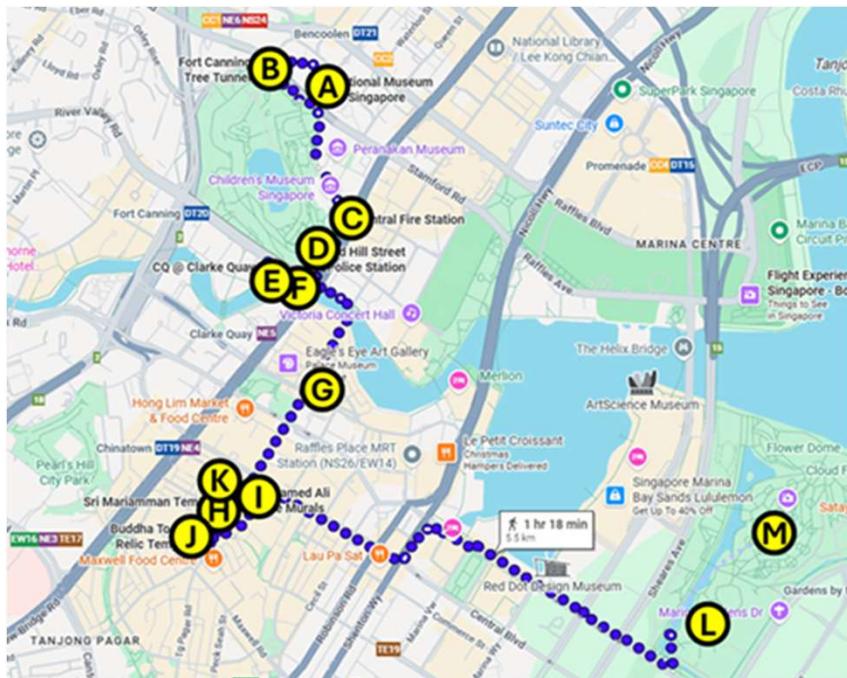
Why You Should Visit

This is one of the most engaging and accessible free attractions in the city. Watching plumes of water dance in perfect synchronization with a powerful orchestral soundtrack and vivid light beams is a quintessential Singaporean evening experience. Because the show takes place outdoors with the entire central business district skyline as a backdrop, it offers a perfect, cost-free way to capture the energy and modern spirit of the city.

What is Special About It?

- **The Prism Heartbeat:** At the center of the performance is a bespoke, **39-foot (12-meter)** tall glass and stainless-steel prism. It serves as the 'heartbeat' of the show, pulsing with light and reflecting the lasers that beam down from the three towers of the Marina Bay Sands hotel.
- **Water-Screen Technology:** The production utilizes three enormous water screens that span a total area of approximately **21,527 square feet (2,000 square meters)**. These 'liquid walls' serve as high-definition canvases for the colorful projections.

Singapore Travel Guide



A = [National Museum of Singapore](#)

B = [Fort Canning Tree Tunnel](#)

C = [Central Fire Station](#)

D = [Old Hill Street Police Station](#)

E = [Clarke Quay](#)

F = [Singapore River Cruise](#)

G = [Chinatown](#)

H = [Sri Mariamman Temple](#)

I = [Murals at Mohamed Ali Lane](#)

J = [Buddha Tooth Relic Temple](#)

K = [Chinatown Street Markets \(Pagoda Street\)](#)

L = [Gardens by the Bay](#)

M = [Garden Rhapsody Show](#)

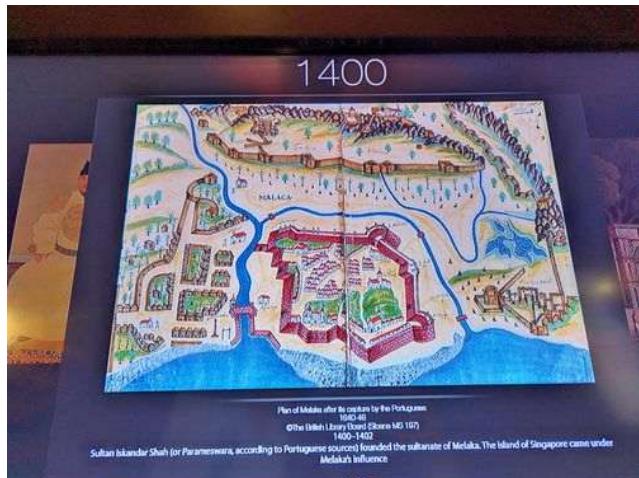
5.2.A National Museum of Singapore

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The National Museum of Singapore is the oldest museum in the country, with roots dating back to its establishment in 1849 as the Raffles Library and Museum. Housed in a magnificent colonial-era building that was completed in 1887, the museum serves as the primary repository for the cultural and historical heritage of the nation. It offers a deep and compelling exploration of the identity of Singapore, blending 19th-century elegance with state-of-the-art museum technology.



Singapore Travel Guide



5.2.B Fort Canning Tree Tunnel

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The Fort Canning Tree Tunnel is a highly popular and photogenic architectural feature located on the edge of the historic Fort Canning Park. It consists of a subterranean spiral staircase that leads from the street level up into the park grounds. When you look upward from the base of the stairs, the opening is framed perfectly by a massive, ancient Yellow Flame tree and lush overhanging foliage, creating a magnificent circular 'window' to the sky.



5.2.G Singapore Chinatown ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Singapore Chinatown is one of the most vibrant and historically significant neighborhoods in the city-state. It represents the ancestral heart of the early Chinese immigrant community of the country. This district is a stunning blend of traditional culture, restored 19th-century shophouses, and bustling street markets. It serves as a living museum where ancient traditions and modern lifestyle coexist within a dense urban landscape.

Our proposal is to walk there via **S Bridge Road** ([map](#)).



5.2.H Sri Mariamman Temple

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Located in the heart of Chinatown, the **Sri Mariamman Temple** is Singapore's oldest Hindu temple and a National Monument. Originally established in 1827, it serves as a powerful symbol of the city's multicultural roots. While its surroundings are filled with Chinese shophouses, this South Indian Dravidian-style masterpiece remains the spiritual home for Singapore's Hindu community and a major landmark on South Bridge Road.





Why You Should Visit

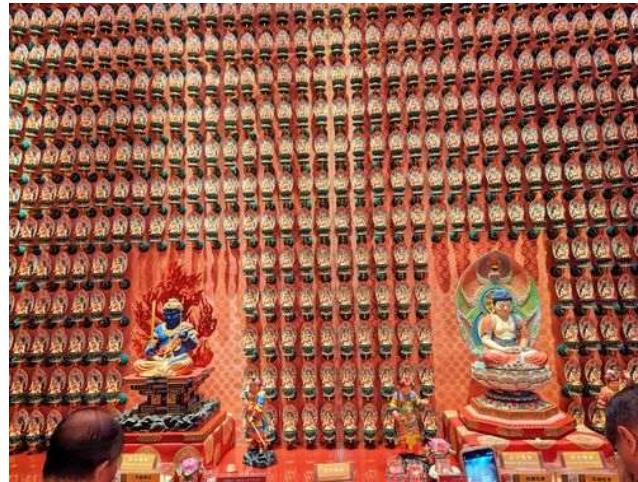
Visiting this temple offers a profound look into the religious diversity that defines Singapore. It is not just a relic of the past but a bustling center of worship where you can witness vibrant rituals, intricate South Indian artistry, and the living traditions of the Tamil community. Its stunning entrance tower is one of the most photographed icons in the country.

5.2.J Buddha Tooth Relic Temple

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The **Buddha Tooth Relic Temple** is a magnificent four-story religious and cultural complex that dominates the skyline of Chinatown. Built in the Tang Dynasty architectural style, its deep red walls and gold accents house what is believed to be the sacred tooth relic of the historical Buddha. It serves as both a vibrant place of worship and a world-class museum dedicated to Buddhist art and history.





Why You Should Visit

This temple is an essential stop for travelers who want to experience the grandeur of Buddhist architecture and philosophy in a modern setting. It offers a peaceful, air-conditioned retreat from the tropical heat where you can explore intricate religious artifacts and witness traditional ceremonies. The level of detail in the craftsmanship, from the ceiling mandalas to the thousands of tiny Buddha statues, is truly breathtaking.

What is Special About It?

- **The Sacred Light Hall:** On the fourth floor, the sacred tooth relic is housed in a massive stupa made from 320kg of solid gold, donated by devotees.
- **The Hundred Dragons Hall:** The main prayer hall on the ground floor features high ceilings and a stunning display of Buddhist iconography that creates an immediate sense of awe.
- **Rooftop Zen Garden:** A hidden gem at the very top of the building, featuring a large Vairocana Buddha Prayer Wheel surrounded by a tranquil garden of orchids.
- **Eminent Relics Museum:** The third floor contains a vast collection of artifacts from various Buddhist traditions across Asia, providing a deep look into the evolution of the faith.

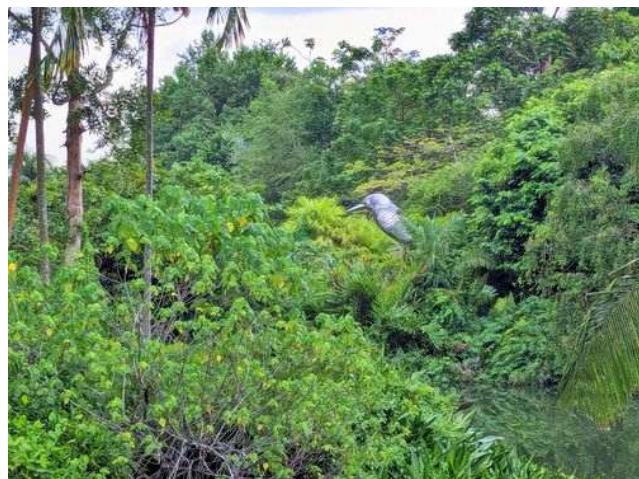
History and Facts

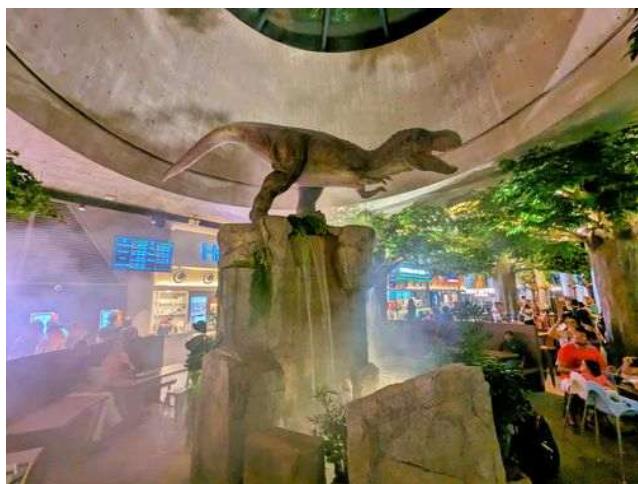
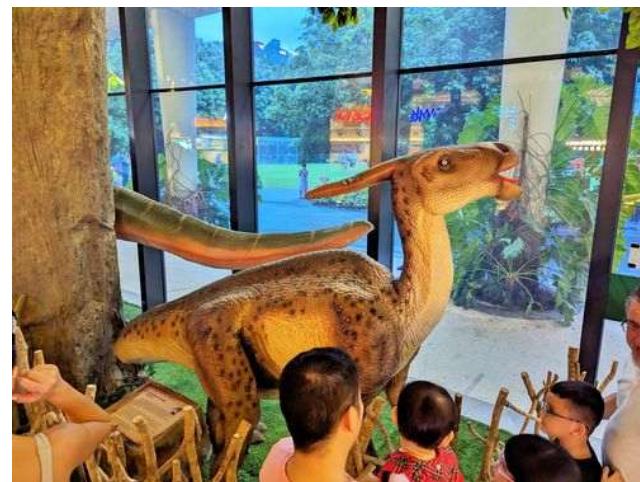
- **A Modern Landmark:** Despite its ancient appearance, the temple was only completed in 2007, designed to adhere strictly to the aesthetics of the Tang Dynasty.
- **The Relic Discovery:** The tooth relic was reportedly discovered in 1980 in a collapsed stupa in Myanmar before being brought to Singapore for the creation of this temple.
- **Cultural Hub:** The basement of the temple often hosts a vegetarian dining hall where devotees and visitors can enjoy simple, traditional meals together.
- **Architectural Harmony:** The design was carefully chosen to complement the heritage shophouses of Chinatown while introducing a grander scale of religious architecture.

5.2.L Gardens by the Bay

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [gardens map](#))

Gardens by the Bay is a monumental **250-acre (101-hectare)** nature park that has redefined urban gardening and ecological innovation on a global scale. Famous for its towering Supertrees and massive,





Why You Should Visit

This is a non-negotiable stop for any traveler. The Gardens offer a spectacular blend of nature, architecture, and sustainable technology. You can explore the **Flower Dome**, which holds the Guinness World Record for the largest glass greenhouse, and the **Cloud Forest**, which features a massive indoor mountain. Together, these conservatories allow you to experience diverse botanical landscapes from five different continents without ever leaving the city.

Here you can find the [map of the Gardens by the Bay](#).

5.2.M Garden Rhapsody Show

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [gardens map](#))

The Garden Rhapsody Show is a free, mesmerizing nightly light and music spectacle centered around the iconic Supertree Grove at Gardens by the Bay. This 15-minute performance transforms the 18 towering Supertrees into a dazzling display of color and light. Each show is meticulously choreographed to a diverse musical soundtrack, creating an immersive atmosphere that blends nature, art, and cutting-edge technology.





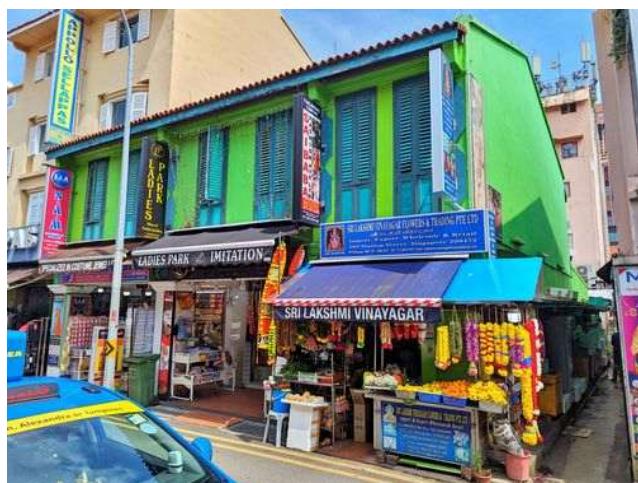
Why You Should Visit

This is arguably the most spectacular free show in Singapore and a highlight for any independent traveler. It provides a magical experience as you find yourself surrounded by the glowing, mechanical forest. Because the themes and musical scores are updated regularly—often changing every month or for special festive seasons—the show offers a sense of discovery even for those who have visited before. It is a perfect way to end an evening after exploring the nearby conservatories.

5.3.A Little India Heritage District

[\(map, reviews\)](#)

Little India is one of Singapore's most vibrant and authentic historical enclaves. Located east of the Singapore River and north of Kampong Gelam, this district is a sensory explosion of colorful shophouses, fragrant spice markets, and intricate temples. Unlike the ultra-modern skyscrapers of the Central Business District, Little India retains a gritty, soulful charm that reflects the traditions of Singapore's Indian community. It is a place where old-world trades like garland making and fortune-telling still exist alongside trendy street art and bustling modern shopping malls.



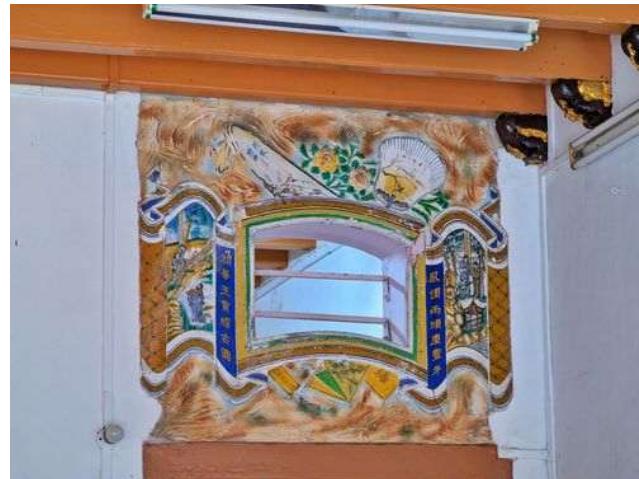
Singapore Travel Guide



5.3.B House of Tan Teng Niah

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The House of Tan Teng Niah is a vividly painted villa located in the heart of Little India. Built in 1900, this two-story building is the last surviving traditional Chinese villa in a district that is now predominantly Indian. It is famous for its intricate architecture and its stunning, multicolored facade, which has made it one of the most photographed and 'Instagrammed' landmarks in Singapore.





Why You Should Visit

Visiting this house offers a unique look at the multicultural history of Singapore. It serves as a visual reminder of a time when Chinese and Indian communities lived and worked side-by-side in the Serangoon area. The brightly painted exterior—a riot of pastel pinks, vibrant yellows, and deep blues—contrasts beautifully with the surrounding spice shops and flower garland vendors of Little India. It is a perfect, quick stop for photography enthusiasts and history buffs alike.

What is Special About It?

- **The Last of Its Kind:** While Little India was once an industrial zone home to many Chinese-owned villas, urban redevelopment in the 20th century saw almost all of them demolished. This house is the sole remaining example of a 'towkay' (wealthy businessman) residence from that era.
- **The Psychedelic Palette:** Interestingly, the house was originally painted a plain white. The 'technicolor' restoration occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. While some historians debate the accuracy of the colors, the vibrant paintwork was intended to reflect the 'candy trade' that the owner was involved in and the lively spirit of the Little India neighborhood.
- **Intricate Symbolism:** Above the entrance, you can see a gilded nameplate with the calligraphic inscription 'Siew Song' (meaning 'Elegant Pine'), which represents longevity and resilience.

Architecture and History

- **The Rubber King:** Tan Teng Niah was a prominent Chinese businessman who owned several confectionery and rubber factories in the neighborhood. Legend has it that he built this eight-room villa specifically for his wife.
- **A Hybrid Style:** The architecture is a 'Straits Eclectic' mix. It features traditional Southern Chinese design elements, such as a **bamboo-tiled roof** and decorative timber eaves, blended with European colonial influences like the swinging 'pintu pagar' (half-doors) and the ornate, tall windows.
- **Conservation Success:** In 1991, the restoration of the house was awarded an **Honourable Mention** by the Singapore Institute of Architects. Today, the building is protected under landmark status by the National Heritage Board.
- **The Five-Foot Way:** The second story of the house overhangs the first, creating a **5-foot (1.5-meter)** wide covered pedestrian walkway that provides shade and shelter, a classic feature of Singaporean heritage architecture.

5.3.F Bugis

[\(map\)](#)

Bugis is a colorful and eclectic neighborhood that offers a compelling blend of high-energy street shopping, historical shophouses, and important cultural landmarks. It serves as a bridge between the historic districts of the city and its modern retail landscape. Once a notorious seafaring port and later a world-famous nightlife hub, Bugis has transformed into one of the most popular lifestyle and shopping precincts for locals and tourists alike.



5.3.G Bugis Street and Bugis Junction Shopping Mall ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Located directly across from one another, Bugis Street and Bugis Junction represent the two distinct faces of Singapore's retail culture. While the former is a sprawling, energetic labyrinth of traditional street stalls, the latter is a sophisticated, modern mall that integrates historic architecture with contemporary luxury. Together, they form a massive shopping precinct that caters to every budget, from \$1 fruit juices to high-end fashion labels.



5.3.H Sultan Mosque ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The Sultan Mosque is the focal point of the historic Kampong Gelam precinct and is widely considered the national mosque of Singapore. With its massive golden domes and grand prayer hall, it is a premier landmark for the Malay-Muslim community. The building is a masterpiece of Indo-Saracenic architecture, blending traditional Persian, Moorish, and Turkish influences to create a structure that is both imposing and deeply elegant.





Why You Should Visit

Visiting this mosque is essential for understanding the royal history of Singapore. It sits at the end of Bussorah Street, framed perfectly by palm trees and restored shophouses, offering one of the most iconic views in the city. It is a place where you can experience the intersection of faith, history, and community in an environment that is remarkably peaceful despite being in a busy tourist district.

5.3.1 Arab Street

[\(map, reviews\)](#)

Arab Street is the artistic and soulful centerpiece of the Kampong Gelam district. Known for its eclectic mix of traditional heritage and trendy modernity, this street is a destination where the old-world charm of textile merchants and perfumers meets the contemporary energy of boutique cafes and street art. It serves as a vibrant gateway to Singapore's Malay-Muslim heritage and is widely considered one of the most picturesque streets in the city.



5.3.J Haji Lane

[\(map, reviews\)](#)

Haji Lane is famous for being one of the narrowest and most vibrant streets in Singapore. Tucked away in the Kampong Gelam precinct, this hidden gem has evolved from a quiet residential alley into a world-renowned destination for street art, independent boutiques, and eclectic nightlife. It is the creative heart of the district, offering a stark but harmonious contrast to the traditional religious sites located just a few blocks away.





Why You Should Visit

Visiting Haji Lane is essential for anyone who wants to see the 'hipster' side of Singapore. It is a place where you can escape the uniform look of large shopping malls and discover one-of-a-kind items made by local designers. The lane is an outdoor art gallery, with massive, floor-to-ceiling murals covering almost every available wall. It is the perfect spot to spend an hour wandering, taking photos, and enjoying the relaxed, artistic energy that defines the neighborhood.

5.3.K Orchard Road Shopping Street

Orchard Road is the iconic **1.4-mile (2.2-kilometer)** shopping and entertainment boulevard of Singapore. It is recognized globally as one of the premier retail streets in Asia. Lined with massive international malls, luxury flagship stores, and high-end hotels, this bustling thoroughfare represents the epitome of the consumer culture and economic prosperity of Singapore.



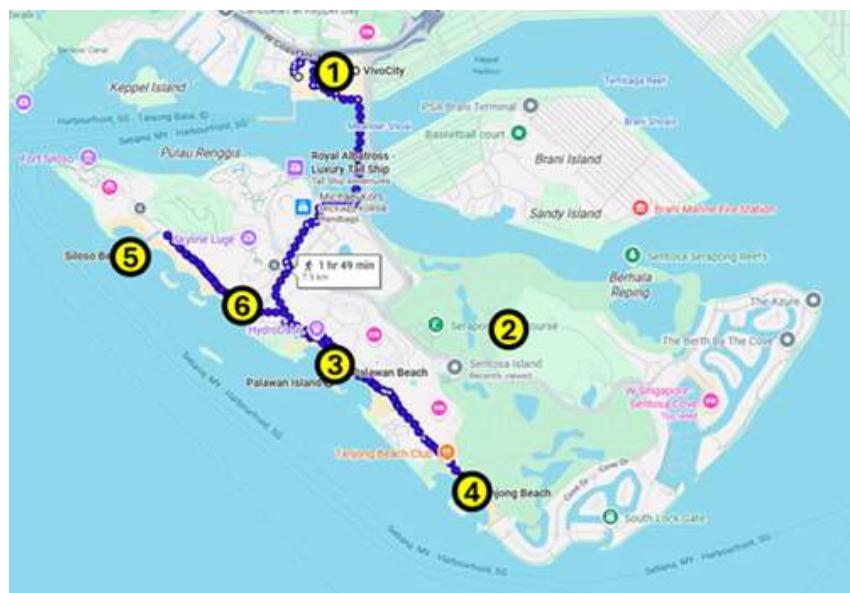


Why You Should Visit

Even if you do not intend to shop, walking the length of Orchard Road is essential to experience the high-fashion and high-energy side of the city. The architecture of the malls is a spectacle in itself; for example, **ION Orchard** features a futuristic glass facade that glows with shifting colors at night. If you visit between November and early January, you will witness the 'Christmas on A Great Street' light-up, where the entire boulevard is transformed into a world-class display of festive decorations and massive light installations.

Quick Navigation Table for Day 4

From	To	Method	Time
VivoCity	Sentosa Island	Monorail / Boardwalk	5–15 mins
Beach Station	Palawan Beach	Free Beach Shuttle	5 mins



- 1 = [HarbourFront Centre and VivoCity Mall](#)
- 2 = [Sentosa Island](#)
- 3 = [Palawan Beach and Palawan Island](#)
- 4 = [Tanjong Beach](#)
- 5 = [Siloso Beach](#)
- 6 = [Wings of Time show](#)

5.4.3 Palawan Beach with Palawan Island ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Palawan Beach is often called the 'family-friendly' heart of Sentosa's coastline. Flanked by Siloso Beach to the west and Tanjong Beach to the east, it is famous for its calm, turquoise lagoons, and soft white sand. The highlight of this area is a small offshore islet known as Palawan Island, which is linked to the main beach by a picturesque suspension bridge and holds the title of the **Southernmost Point of Continental Asia**, even though technically this is not correct.

You can either walk here from Beach Station, or take the free Sentosa Beach Shuttle.



A = Palawan Beach

B = Palawan Island

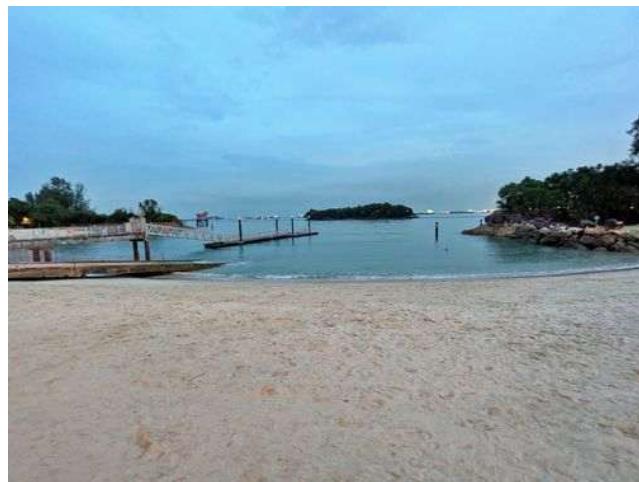
Singapore Travel Guide





Why You Should Visit

This is the best spot on the island for a mix of relaxation and a 'geographic' milestone. While Siloso is for parties and Tanjong is for seclusion, Palawan offers the most balanced atmosphere. Crossing the swaying suspension bridge is a quintessential Sentosa experience, leading you to a tranquil islet where you can stand at the edge of the continent (symbolically) and look out at the endless horizon of the South China Sea.



Why You Should Visit

You should visit Siloso Beach if you want to experience the active side of island life. It is the best place to find people playing beach volleyball, trying out water sports, or enjoying a cocktail at a themed beach bar. Because it is located right next to the Beach Station, it is also the most convenient beach to visit if you have limited time before the evening shows or if you want to be close to major thrill-seeking attractions.



5.5.1 Changi Airport: Shiseido Forest Valley (Jewel) ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The Shiseido Forest Valley is a magnificent, terraced indoor garden spanning five stories within the Jewel Changi Airport complex. Designed as a 360-degree indoor rainforest, the valley encircles the world-famous Rain Vortex, creating a lush, peaceful sanctuary. This **236,800 square-foot (22,000 square-meter)** garden defines the experience of modern air travel, proving that a transit hub can also serve as a world-class nature retreat.

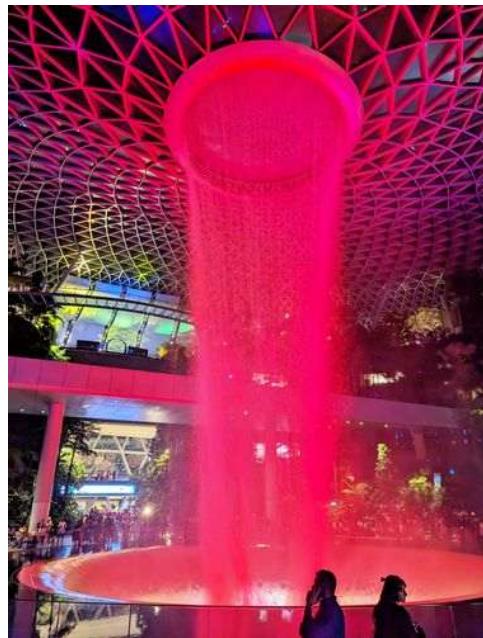
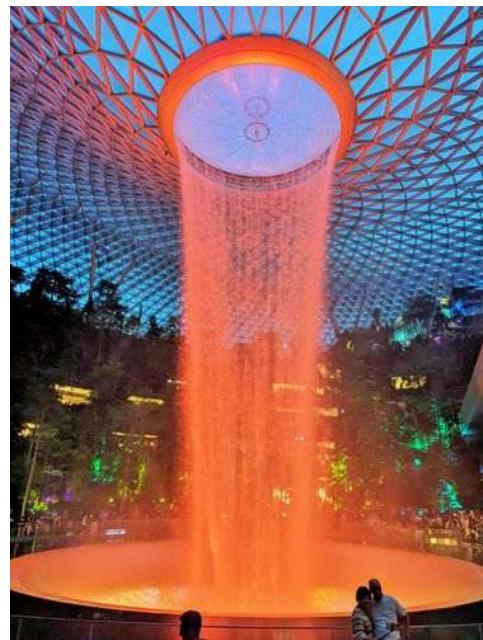


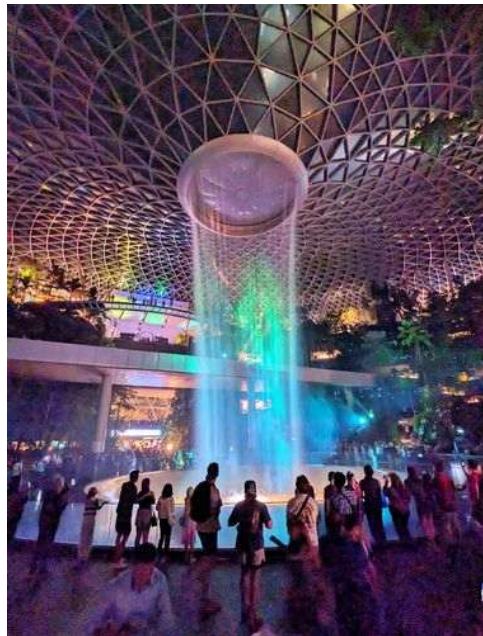
5.5.4 Changi Airport: HSBC Light & Sound Show (Rain Vortex)

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The HSBC Light & Sound Show is a free nightly spectacle performed directly on the Rain Vortex, the world's tallest indoor waterfall, within Jewel Changi Airport. This five-minute choreographed performance uses a sophisticated array of projectors and surround-sound audio to turn the cascading water into a dazzling, three-dimensional screen of color and movement. It is widely considered one of the most technologically advanced light shows in an airport setting globally.









Why You Should Visit

It is a magnificent and unexpected experience that is easily accessible without a ticket, making it a spectacular way to start or finish your journey in Singapore. The combination of the colossal **131-foot (40-meter)** waterfall and the intense light projection creates a cinematic atmosphere that feels both futuristic and organic. Because the show changes seasonally—featuring special themes for events like National Day or the year-end holidays—it offers a fresh discovery for every visit.



Backpack & Snorkel

Making Memorable Moments

6. Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



Backpack & Snorkel

Making Memorable Moments

MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music.

Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



Backpack & Snorkel

Making Memorable Moments

PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see our [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.