



# LIFESTYLE+TRAVEL

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SINGAPORE

CITY

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BEHAW

# City BREAK

• singapore at a glance • by Jaswinder Kaur Gill



## WHY SINGAPORE?

Mention Singapore a decade ago and the very name would have conjured up images of a city rigid and efficient, if not a tad clinical. Fast-forward to the 21st century and Singapore has catapulted itself into a truly global centre. It is still super efficient, but it's rapidly shedding its staid image. This city is abuzz with change and transformation and is shaping itself into a hip, vibrant and exciting playground. With the world's only F1 race held at night coming to town in September 2008, Singapore is where the jet set will be. An energetic city of 4 million, this tiny island is big on action. There is so much to do, from shopping and dining to clubbing and cultural pursuits. For the active traveller, activities ranging from waterskiing to trekking in the nature reserves are on offer. There is something for just about everyone.

*Right:* Singapore's durian-shaped Esplanade.

*Far right:* The city's iconic Merlion

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From a small fishing village founded some 180 years ago by Stamford Raffles, Singapore has transformed itself into an economic powerhouse and a leading financial and maritime centre. With land reclamation, the island is growing each year with a new downtown area at Marina Bay taking shape. More than 25 construction cranes are looming large here and by 2012, this area will be home to one of two integrated resorts featuring casinos, luxury hotels and mega gardens including a glass enclosed temperate garden. A new marina and cruise centre is in the offing as well. Orchard Road, the premier shopping strip is undergoing a major revamp with new malls like Orchard Central and ION Orchard opening towards the end of the year.

A good place to start is where it all began at the Singapore River. Hop on a river taxi to ride up this 3km waterway, and take in the sights as you pass by the various quays: Boat, Clarke and Robertson. Once the commercial artery of this island, the river and the many godowns and shophouses lining the quays have now been transformed into an entertainment stretch. **The Asian Civilisations Museum** at Empress Place offers a fascinating opportunity to explore the cultures of Asia while the **Arts House** within the Old Parliament House offers interesting insights into Singapore's parliamentary history.

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## MY Singapore

### **Tan Pin Pin, Independent Filmmaker**

The director of *Singapore GaGa* (2006) and *Invisible City* (2007), Tan Pin Pin is one of Singapore's leading young filmmakers. Her works have been screened at various museums worldwide including New York's prestigious MOMA. Indeed, her first documentary *Moving House* landed her a Student Academy Award in 2002.

### **Shop**

I don't shop much but one place I would recommend is the Thieves' Market along Sungei Road because of the unexpected finds here. You can get anything from say a poster for *Forever Fever*, a Singapore movie, to a book of comics that you never expected to see. My office and home is near this market so I am there on weekends. It's vibrant, there are no stalls: everyone lays their stuff on the ground.

### **Eat**

I liked the Dempsey Road area before it became too crowded, back when PS Café opened. Morning brunch there is nice. Another place is Stiff Chilli restaurant at Jalan Besar. For local food, I usually go to Tekka Market food centre, as it's near where I live. The Indian rojak is particularly good. Pu-Tien Restaurant at Kitchener Road is another good choice for local food.

### **Sleep**

The hotels along Bencoolen Street are interesting and for the more adventurous. They have character. Hangout@Mount Emily is located within an interesting neighbourhood where theatre schools have established themselves. Another recommendation is the New Majestic Hotel along Chinatown's Bukit Pasoh Road, which is small and personal and has character and all the amenities you would expect of a normal hotel.

### **A Day In Singapore**

If I am free enough, I would go shopping and cook for friends. Shopping would take place at Tekka Market. I would also spend my time at East Coast Park and Changi Village, just hanging out and enjoying the sea breeze. The stretch of restaurants near Komala Villas is a prime spot for enjoying the sea breeze. At Changi Village, we pack the famous *nasi lemak* (if the queue's not too long). The *ayam penyet* is popular too. Changi Village has a totally different vibe from other parts of Singapore. It's a nice day out. For New Year's Eve, my friends and I took bus service number 2 from town all the way to their bus terminal at Changi Village.

**PS Café**, Harding Rd (+65 6479 3343), **Stiff Chilli**, Jalan Besar (+65 6297 5509), **Tekka Market**, Serangoon Road, Pu Tien, Kitchener Road, (+65 6295 6358), **Hangout@Mount Emily**, Upper Wilkie Road, (+65 6438 5588), **New Majestic Hotel**, Bukit Pasoh Road, (+65 6511 4700).



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For a glimpse into the immigrant culture of this multi-racial country, the ethnic quarters of **Chinatown**, **Kampong Gelam** and **Little India** with their traditional shophouses and traditional trades warrant an early morning or evening stroll. Areas that were once being rapidly obliterated by the wrecking ball are now being conserved as heritage committees giving dilapidated old buildings a new lease of life.

The city's social calendar is packed. Major golf tournaments and the annual Singapore Airlines International Cup at Kranji racecourse are highlights on the sporting front. Then there are the arts and music festivals; Mosaic, M1 Fringe Festival, Singapore Arts Festival and the inaugural Singapore Biennale held in 2007.

While Singapore is still neurotic about cleanliness (the only place one can litter legally is at **Raffles Hotel's Long Bar**, home of the famous Singapore sling, where throwing of peanut shells on the wooden floor is *de rigueur*) rules are easing with the creation of 24-hour entertainment districts and bar top dancing.

The nightlife and entertainment scene here is exciting and varied. With bars and clubs having themed nights on weekdays, you don't need to wait for the weekend to party here. As Singapore becomes more cosmopolitan, its arts scene is becoming more eclectic. The arts scene here is thriving with the mushrooming of independent galleries and theatre groups. Major productions run alongside quirky ones. Its iconic Esplanade Theatre on the Bay, called the the durian by locals because of its spiky façade, has hosted many a world-class performance and a new National Gallery is coming up at the old City Hall. The Singapore Tyler Print institute at Robertson Quay showcases print works and lithographs of visiting artists.

An efficient transport network of trains, busses and taxis connects all parts of the island and major attractions like Sentosa, Singapore Zoo and the Night Safari.

Some nine million travellers visited Singapore last year and with hotel occupancy at 90%, it is highly recommended that you book well in advance. Several new hotels are being built and one of them, the ultra luxurious Capella Singapore will be opening end of this year on Sentosa island.

Shopping is a national pastime here, along with eating. There are many shopping malls and districts to choose and these cater to all budgets. Orchard Road and Millenia Walk are where you'll find all the luxury brands from Prada to Gucci. Sim Lim Square and Funan Centre are the places for the technophile whereas the likes of Dempsey Hill and Tanglin Village attract antique lovers. Recently, small and quirky boutiques helmed by local designers have sprung up along the shophouses on Ann Siang Hill and Haji Lane. And then there is the 24-hour shopping at Mustafa's along Serangoon Road. A local institution where you can buy anything from gold to guavas!

The food capital of Asia, all manner of cuisine and dining experiences can be savoured here. From USD 4.50 meals at hawker centre serving humble fare to USD 450 meals at top end restaurants serving haute cuisine, there is something to suit everyone's palate and budget.

A couple of areas offer exciting dining experiences and these include Dempsey Hill, One Rochester, the East Coast Parkway and Holland Village.

**The Singapore Flyer**, opened in March, is the world's tallest observation wheel at 42 stories high. A 30-minute ride on this giant wheel gives you a bird's eye view of this dynamic isle.

**Top left:** Colonial architecture adorns the streets of Little India.  
**Bottom right:** The city's waterways are used by both locals and tourists.



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• restaurants • by Jenny Tan



It will be an understatement to label Singapore's cuisine as 'mish-mash', a cursory term that outsiders to the intricacies of the country's food culture are prone to use. The integration of the many races in this island has lent a multitude of influences to the country's cuisine, transforming it into a melting pot with layers of complexity that cannot be surmised in one word.

Eating has always been a Singaporean passion, and under the wings of globalisation that's honed more well-travelled palates, dining (from street food to fine restaurants) is now officially a Singaporean obsession.

While Singapore has yet to have her own Michelin star guide, it doesn't mean you cannot have a proper haute dining experience here. Start by making reservations at **Les Amis** (+65 6733 2225). The French fine-dining restaurant has recently gone through a major S\$2 million overhaul: think Rococo chandeliers flown in from London auction houses and imported hand-stitched napkins. The food: brilliant French cuisine with deft improvisations by a

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restaurant that offers regional dishes instead of the usual 'North' and 'South' categories. For great value, the weekday buffet lunch is a must. The USD 1,475,000 revamp of glossy **Shang Palace** (+65 6213 4473) has reinforced its institutional position for power-entertaining, and the return of opening chef Peter Tsang has seen an updated menu of mainly Cantonese classics, including duck stew with puff pastry and steamed scallop and radish knotted with string beans.

If you have some time to spare, move away from the central areas try exploring the various dining enclaves that have organically sprouted up of late. Keong Saik Street – a former red-light district – has evolved into a gastronomic ground, and establishments such as **25 Degree Celsius** (+65 6327 8389), a charming cookbook café that brings in specialist titles and features dishes from a selected cookbook from its test kitchen weekly, has already become a favourite hangout for chefs, F&B professionals and wannabe food bloggers. Right next door is French restaurant **Nicolas Le Restaurant** (+65 6224 2404), a showcase of French dishes with touches of Asian ingredients, while reservations at award-winning modern-European restaurant **Ember** (+65 6347 1928), which is down the street, are recommended. For a taste of local flavours, swing by **Fong Kee Coffeeshop** (6, Keong Saik Road) for a plate of wanton noodles –served

**Opposite page:** Despite the prevalence of top-notch eateries, hawker fare is still widely available.

**Above:** Ever-popular ginseng piled in Chinatown.

**Below:** Little Merlbourne: Graze Restaurant.

talented chef, such as chilled Alaskan crab with green apple sorbet and oscietra caviar. Over at the rapidly-developing Sentosa (the latest gastronomic hotbed), **Il Lido Italian Dining and Lounge Bar** (+65 6866 1977) scores high for its well-heeled Italian chic – Philippe Starck designer furniture, modern Italian cuisine by a Michelin-starred Italian chef and spectacular views of the golf course and seas.

Yet fine dining here is not just restricted to European cuisine. Asian cuisine has risen up the ranks from casual to fine, such as **Song Of India** (+65 6836 0055), a plush Indian restaurant with European flair (a full-fledged wine cellar, a Champagne brunch, and an open-kitchen). Housed in a historic colonial bungalow, this is probably the only Indian

## Beyond Newton: Think Maxwell

Any Singaporean foodie worth their salt will be as adept at telling you where the *char kway teow* is as they are at pointing out which chef serves the best foie gras dish. Newton Hawker Centre has been the default and much-publicised hawker centre for local fare, but any Singaporean with a decent palate will tell you there's more, if you'd just scratch the surface a little. For starters, there's a plethora of choices at **Maxwell Road Hawker Centre**: Arrive early or risk having to join the snaking queue at **Tian Tian Chicken Rice**, fry-your-own *hum jin peng* (deep-fried flat dough with filling and five-spice powder) at **Hum Jin Peng**, have century-egg porridge at around-the-clock **Hoe Kee Porridge**, or snack on savoury Fuzhou oyster cake (deep-fried batter filled with oyster, coriander and meat) at Maxwell Fuzhou Oyster Cake.



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with generous yummy plump slices of *char siew* – at only S\$3.

Dempsey Road – the hippest gastronomic address at the moment – has gone from dilapidated army barracks to dining haven in just two years. A pilgrimage here is a must, if not to just soak in the buzz. **Jones the Grocer** (+65 6476 1512) has transported a slice of Australian lifestyle over here, and its signature cheese room – stocked with over 120 different types of cheese flown in weekly – has buoyed the cheese sampling culture locally. For winos who'd like a glass of wine to sip in the afternoon, **Culina Enoteca** (+65 6474 7338), one of Singapore's foremost gourmet shops, has included a tasting room and café concept together with its gourmet emporium here. This means Laurent Perrier Champagne and premium wines at

prices much lower than those you'd expect at a bar– and the tasting list changes weekly. The **Prime Society** (+65 6474 7427), albeit a mediocre steakhouse, is ideal for entertaining and a romantic date because of its charming New-York steakhouse mix of Old World and New World charm: a combination of dramatic historical architecture fitted with contemporary glamour. Although the young and stylish swarm to Dempsey, it's also an area suitable for families, with places such as **Ben & Jerry's** (+65 6473 3231), a rustic All-American ranch-home that advocates the Californian lifestyle, with a thoughtful playroom for kids. Other than the full range of Ben & Jerry's ice cream, there are also wholesome sandwiches and snacks served at the deli, as well as a Californian wine list. If food is what you have trudged here for, then **Au Petit Salut** (+65 6475 1976) is your answer. It's fine French dining minus the stiff service, with an excellent wine list. Be warned though, that reservations may need to be made one month in advance during popular periods.

Dining in restored black and white colonial houses seems to be the recipe for success these days, which may explain the emergence of Rochester Park – a cluster of five restaurants and bars with luscious greenery. The stars

**Above left:** My cup of tea, a stewed duck pastry puff.

**Below:** Sunset sea views at Il Lido.

Dining by the riverside used to be associated only with Boat Quay, but these days, it's really its neighbours – Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay – that have risen in the limelight. A stroll down Clarke Quay, with its signature bluebell canopies, will reveal new rows of restaurant and bar clusters, suitable not just for the youngsters, but the family too. While there are certain hits and misses, tried-and-tested choices include **The Steakhouse** (+65 6332 1010) – a contemporary steakhouse with an open grill; Persian flavours at **Shiraz** (+65 6334 2282); and haute Indian dishes at **Ivory Indian Kitchen** (+65 6333 4664). Just across Clarke Quay lies Robertson Quay, a more discreet, laid-back development where yuppies gulp their Belgian beer over pots of mussels and unlimited fries at **Brussels Sprouts** (+65 68874344). Chomp on freshly-made pizza in hole-in-the-wall **da Mario Pizzeria** (+65 6235 7623). Ladies catch up over black forest chocolate cake and pastries at **Laurent's Café & Chocolate Bar** (+65 6235 9007).



here: **Graze** (+65 6775 9000) – which features casual, hearty Australian-style fare such as bbq and seafood dishes courtesy of Melbourne chef Matthew Lawdorn, also stocks home-made products, such as infused oils, at a gourmet counter. The other address to add to the gourmet's little black book is **Min Jiang @ One-North** (+65 6774 0122), whose claim to fame is the crisp Peking duck, served with traditional condiments and roasted to perfection in the only Peking duck oven in Singapore.

The other stalwart of restored charm is the **National Museum of Singapore**, which touts itself as 'the oldest national museum in Singapore with the youngest and most innovative soul'. That spirit is reflected in the eclectic mix of restaurants: there's the sleek modern-European **Novus Restaurant and Bar** (+65 6337 9000), the perfect spot to have a chi chi a la carte Sunday brunch by the long colonial windows, before taking a walk through the exhibitions. For something a little more casual, there's **MUSE** (+65 6337 9000), which conjures up an art-deco New York interior, and serves up French bistro cuisine with a twist, such as angel hair pasta with miso and scallops. The latest kid on the historic block is also perhaps the most awaited – one of Singapore's favourite Cantonese chefs, Chef Chan Chen Hei, has re-opened his eponymous restaurant, **Chef Chan's Restaurant** (+65 6333 0073) in this new location, with a menu that still includes his signature crispy roast chicken. This private 46-seater displays the chef's million-dollar personal collection of Chinese antiques, while guests are pampered like royalty – don't be surprised when your soups are served to you in 24-Carat gold-plated soup tureens.



**Christopher Tan, food writer and consultant, [www.foodfella.com](http://www.foodfella.com)**

"Singaporean food" is hard to characterise because of its breadth. It includes many cultures and many dishes. However, the Singaporean eating manifesto is easier to describe: no occasion too small, no distance too far, no variation not worth trying, nothing too small to obsess about.

I love to walk around Singapore's neighbourhoods - there is always a new little restaurant, hawker stall or shop that I've never been to. Little India has fascinating spice shops and groceries, Geylang Serai has an excellent wet market and hawker centre with lots of Malay food and produce, and Chinatown - despite all its gentrification - remains a fascinating mixed bag of attractions.

There's a tiny cafe called Moomba Tuckshop in the business district that I like to escape to for a coffee or one of their superb sandwiches, if I have a break between meetings or errands.

Sometimes when life gets too much, the only answer for stress and strain is a huge amount of dim sum. Pampering myself with a brunch at Cherry Garden at the Mandarin Oriental can only be an occasional affair for the good of my waistline or lack thereof, but it's worth it.

I find it very hard to pass Chop Hean Kuan at People's Park Food Centre without buying some sort of steamed bun. And by 'some sort' I mean the large pork bun, nine times out of ten anyway.

**Cherry Garden**, Mandarin Oriental Singapore, 5 Raffles Avenue, Marina Square, Tel: +65 6885 3538

**The Moomba Tuckshop**, 4 Battery Road, #B1-01, Bank of China Building, Tel: +65 6536 5235

**Chop Hean Kuan**, Blk 32 New Market Road, People's Park Food Centre, #01-1016



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• nightlife • By Jaswinder Kaur Gill



**Clockwise from above:** Saturday night fever: Zouk; Stark grandeur at Attica; Magical Mystery Tour: the Majestic Bar.

Singapore's nightlife scene is constantly changing and offers just about any type of (legal) nocturnal entertainment. From the granddaddy of the club scene Zouk to newer stomping grounds like Prive and Majestic Bar, the choices are varied and many for the clubbers, lounge lizards and vinophiles. The venues are spread out across the island from Orchard Road to the downtown business district centred around Raffles Place, to the ethnic enclaves of Chinatown and Kampong Gelam. Further afield, the Harbourfront and Sentosa areas also offer exciting choices.

Popular with professionals and travellers, the quays along the Singapore River with their string of clubs and bars are a good place to start. Along Clarke Quay's 24-hour entertainment strip is **Ministry of Sound** (+65 6235 2292). The iconic London club's Singapore outpost pumps out its signature MOS sound and hosts regular sessions by international DJs. **Pure**, bathed in pinks and purples with its soulful music and comfortable daybeds and aperitifs makes for a perfect backdrop for lounging. Along the same stretch is **Ice Palace at Bar CoCoon** (+65 6557 6268). Get away from the stifling tropical heat, don specially designed fur coats and gloves and head through the doors of Singapore's coldest bar. This place is literally made of ice, from the tables and vodka glasses to the hand-sculpted bar. A constant temperature of -15 °C makes it a very cool place to enjoy a really cold vodka. **Attica** (+ 65 6333 9973) a hugely popular nightspot along Clarke Quay is where the

bold and beautiful are often seen. This New York-styled club offers an eclectic mix of music from hip-hop to latino and jazz to Top 40s and resident DJ sets. Its tiny dance floor is packed with funky and sexy party people. Overhanging the river, its alfresco bar **Lilypad** is the perfect place to unwind and people watch. If you'd prefer a lie in under the stars, then the Balinese-inspired courtyard surrounded by lush greenery and massive opium beds is for you.

Further up the river is the iconic **Zouk** (+65 6738 2988). Ensnconced within an old warehouse this is the place the cool crowd flock to. With the likes of international DJs Paul Oakenfold and Norman Cook performing, this superclub is firmly planted on the global clubbing scene. Walking through the luminescent tunnel leads you into a cavern of dancing bodies and dazzling lights.

Eclectic bars with unique bar menus inspired by the likes of London and Melbourne have recently sprung up. In Chinatown, the **Majestic Bar** (+65 6534 8800) takes inspiration from Enid Blyton's *The Magic Faraway Tree*. Décor in this bar is spread over three forest-like levels. A green and amber hand painted stained glass ceiling takes centre stage on the first floor while the second level is alfresco. The top floor, together with a cosy private loft area, are evocative of a starry night. The dining menu features exotic Asian cuisine while its drinks menu is one-of-a-kind.

**Quaich Bar** (+65 6732 3452) is run by a husband and wife team who simply love their whisky This comfy 60-seater bar offers over 100 types of whiskies including single malts.



The bar menu includes finger food and an assortment of beers. Their cigar room is popular with professionals.

**New Asia Bar** (+65 6837 3322) is an uber-chic bar atop Southeast Asia's tallest hotel and attracts the cool crowd on weekends and business types on weekdays. You'd be forgiven for thinking you've downed one too many when hitting the dance floor. Yes, it is inclined at a 20-degree angle and, no, you are not losing your balance. Two-storey high glass panels provide unobstructed views of the city and harbour from the 71st storey.

**Post Bar** (+65 6733 8388) is the Fullerton Hotel's famous bar and offers a variety of tipples from cocktails to wine and whisky. The bar has a strip of ice to keep your drinks and beer cool. There's even a drinks library for regular guests to store their wine, whisky and vodka bottles. Popular with the business set from nearby Raffles Place. Further afield along the Harbour front is **St James Powerhouse** (+65 6270 7676). Located within a former power station, this redbrick venue is big on the action. The largest club in town with nine different venues is a smorgasbord of music genres offering just about any type of music from techno, hip-hop, jazz, Top 40s and world music.

**Privé Bar** (+65 6776 0777) lives up to its name as Singapore's newest offering: it is situated on an islet, Keppel Island. The large outdoor gastrobar with its mosaic-tiled bar, is festooned with comfortable sofas and lounges and fringed by leafy palms and ferns.

Located on Sentosa's Siloso beach is **Café Del Mar** (+65 6235 1296). The only outlet of Ibiza's famous Café Del Mar, this bar captures languid island life and is popular with local celebrities. The sprawling club with a blue and white theme conjures images of the Mediterranean. Daybeds and cabanas dot the beach while the main bungalow houses private rooms.

**Harry's@The Esplanade** (+65 6334 0132) play wonderful live jazz. Located within The Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and popular with the pre and post-theatre crowd, Harry's intimate and cosy setting is perfect for enjoying great live jazz. Over at Boat Quay is Singapore's premier jazz club **Jazz@Southbridge** (+65 6327 4671) that has played host to international artists from Katrine Madsen to Dale Barlow. Nightly live jazz performances and screening of football and rugby matches makes this lively bar a popular hangout for professionals and sports fans.



## **Song, guitarist and drummer with The Great Spy Experiment**

We normally hang out at the Kampong Glam area as that is where the band's recording and jamming studio is located. Kampong Glam has an interesting alternative vibe, nothing like Singapore, it has a character of its own. Kampong Glam's many streets like Haji Lane, Arab Street and Bali Lane have interesting places to chill out at. **Blu Jazz Café** along Bali Lane (+65 6292 3800) plays good jazz music on weekends.

As a band and individually, we regularly check out gigs and go where the action is. It can be anything from seeing friends play at places like **Jazz@Southbridge** along Boat Quay (+ 65 6327 4671) or catching international DJs in town at **Zouk**, Jiak Kim Street (+65 6738 2988) or special Zouk events like Ready Set Glo. As for watching live bands, there are a couple of good places here in Singapore. **Wala Wala** along Lorong Mambong, Holland Village (+65 6462 4288) is one such place to catch locals bands like Shirlyn and the UnXpected. And there's **Timbre@Substation** (+65 6338 8277) and **The Arts House** (+65 6336 3386) helmed by local favourites The Goodfellas. Get into the action and jam on stage at **The Actor's Bar** along South Bridge Road (+65 6533 2436) which sees a regular crowd of locals from all walks of life picking up the guitars and jamming together.

**St James Powerhouse** (+65 6270 7676) at the Harbourfront is an all-in-one venue that caters to different crowds. The cluster of clubs at **The Cannery** is a good starting point for travellers. Travellers should explore far flung places like **The Altivo Bar** (+65 6377 9688) atop Mount Faber that is a nice place to chill and has good view of the Singapore skyline, and upcoming areas like Dempsey/Tanglin Village. **Camp@House** (+65 6475 7787) in leafy Dempsey Hill area with its wine lounge atmosphere is good for chilling out.

# City BREAK

• shopping • by Lim Sio Hui



If you've heard anything about Singapore at all, you must have heard about the buzz on Orchard Road, the best known and loved shopping heart of the city. All the major department stores can be found here, flanked by a plethora of retail spaces, top supermarkets, cinemas, arcades and other entertainment outlets. The biggest shopping complex on the strip is **Ngee Ann City**, where you can find the flagship department store Takashimaya: a concentration of luxury brands like Hermès and Louis Vuitton, as well as high-street boutiques such as local casual wear label M)phosis. The mall is a must-stop for the serious fashionista – don't miss **On Pedder** (+65 6835 1307), a multi-label accessories store of the hottest

designers of the moment. (Tip: drop by Takashimaya's excellent food hall when you need a pick-me-up.)

Going to the mall in Singapore is almost a way of life – many people revolve their daily activities around the air-conditioned complexes when the heat and humidity gets too hard to bear. Get an insight into this national phenomena at the biggest mall in town – Japanese architect Toyo Ito's beautifully sinuous, one million square foot **Vivocity** (+65 6377 6860), where children run amok in the large playground or splash on wading pools, couples wine and dine, catch a movie and then take a sunset stroll on the rooftop terrace, while families participate in the host of ongoing bazaars or exhibitions,



*Right:* Singapore's streets are a haven for high-end retailers.

*Far right:* One of the city's many designer décor boutiques.

and of course, everyone shops 'til they drop.

You may never need to leave the mammoth uber-malls, but for something that's off the beaten track, great shopping districts to explore include the quirky **Haji Lane** or **Holland Village**, known as the city's bohemian quarter for its concentration of artist quarters and where you can find a wide variety of antiques, art, clothing, music, gift shops and a lively pub strip, Lorong Mambong.

## TO MARKET, TO MARKET

The haggling might not be *de rigueur* anymore, but if you want to do this city right, do as the locals do and get to down the market, bargain hunting whilst soaking in the lively atmosphere. You'll find markets to satisfy all sorts of shoppers throughout the year – check out the "What's on" section of Time Out magazine (also online at [www.timeout.com/sg](http://www.timeout.com/sg)), as well as [singapore.angloinfo.com](http://singapore.angloinfo.com).

Even if you're not hunting for second hand goods, don't miss the flea markets for a feel of the locals indulging in their favourite pastime. A must-see is the **Thieves Market** at Sungei Road (daily, 11am-7pm), where a rag-and-bone collection of discarded antiques or electronic spare parts is scattered on the street in an unregulated jumble. At the famous **Zouk** nightclub, the city's hipsters pick out fashionable throw-aways at **Flea n Easy** (quarterly on Sundays 2-7pm), while a youthful crowd spend their allowance at the **Lime Flea Market** held at \*scape Youth Park every second and forth Saturday of the month (1- 8pm).

The best bazaars are during the holiday season: **Chinatown**, for one, comes to life during the period leading up to Chinese New Year when temporary stalls mushroom with New Year food and decorative goodies. Outside of the festive period, a great time to tackle the bargain-filled (albeit touristy) district is on Sundays when the **Smith Street Collectibles Market** is in on, when stamps and other cultural artifacts on sale make for an eye-opening and educational stroll.

At the Red Dot Museum nearby, **MAAD or Market of Artists and Designers** showcase local design talent in an exuberant, fun atmosphere on the first weekend of every month (11am-7pm +65 6534 7209). Designers such as White Dog Bobby craft all manner of objects in its trademark tongue-in-cheek style sporting the much loved comic dog. Besides browsing the racks of ready-(hand) made fashion and gift products, you even get to witness your work of art in the making: get your portrait drawn by the bevy at **OIC** (Organisation of Illustrators Council), and take home your favourite out of the lot, or get a customised poem written up on the spot.

For upmarket shoppers, the few-monthly affairs at hotel events such as **Fancy Faire** ([www.fancyfaire.com](http://www.fancyfaire.com)) and **The Fair** ([www.fairsandbazaars.com](http://www.fairsandbazaars.com)) showcase exquisite fine art, furnishings, apparel and handicrafts from around the world for an expatriate target audience. On a smaller scale, **Boutiques at Fort Canning** showcase more contemporary designer collections amid the lush setting of the historic Fort Canning Park, while **The Shophouse Fair** focuses on home and lifestyle products in the teak furniture shop's bungalow in Lock Road.

If jet-lag is keeping you up at night, don't miss the unique experience of shopping while the city sleeps at the institutional 24-hour department store: **Mustafa Centre** (+65 6295 5855), packed wall-to-wall with almost every conceivable consumable product, from gold, electronics, groceries, to even hotel rooms and cars, all at bargain prices.

In the daytime, masses of spice and flower-garland shops scent the pulsing streets in Mustafa's surrounding **Little India** district – a word of advice: avoid the overcrowded streets on Sundays, but area is great for leisurely strolls, especially in the late afternoon. In between visiting the colourful temples in the popular area, you can get a henna



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• shopping • by Lim Sio Hui

tattoo or your fortunes told by roadside parrot astrologers, buy handicrafts and sweets from **Little India Arcade**, and leaf through the myriad of gold and textile boutiques on and off Serangoon Road (don't miss **Haniffa** (+65 639 27855), a household name for clothing).

If you're interested in the city's homegrown fashion designers, you'll love boutiques at Stamford House, home to local favourites **Baylene** (+65 6336 9619), **Nicholas** (+65 6339 0223), and **Swirl** (+65 6338 5020). Another big name is **alldressedup** (+65 6836 3238), which just opened a new boutique in Paragon shopping centre.

Speaking of all things local, you shouldn't miss design collective **Designed in Singapore**, whose distinctive goods can be found in two retail outlets: the furniture showroom resides at 25 Mohammed Sultan Road (+65 6733 9954) and lifestyle and fashion selections are found at Arts institute NAFA's **Curiosity Gallery** (+65 6334 6022).

For the design-addict, don't miss the selection of graphic design books and highly conceptual products at **Asylum**, which also stocks experimental music from around the world, as well as its own in-house label.

Another renowned local design house is furnishing studio **Air's** flagship store in the new design enclave of Mount Sophia (+65 6336 0662). Nearby, the **Cityspace** (#01-15 11-A Mount Sophia, +65 6226 3533) showroom features top Filipino designers and their tropical furniture work. Other local designers such as Artichoke Studio's Han Kiang Siew showcase their work at **Urban Foundry** (18 Purvis Street, +65 6339 6381).

Singapore may be known for its conservative image, but sensual books, garments and sex-related products from around the world found at **Oohtique!** (50A Circular Road, +65 6557 0469) offers a glimpse of the city's lesser-known side. Similarly, music store **Straits Records** ([www.straitsrecords.com](http://www.straitsrecords.com)) shows the tougher side: offering



## Jo Soh, fashion designer of Hansel

Clothing wise, I mostly wear items from my own label paired with basics and quirky one-off finds. **Felt** (+65 6837 3393) is Hansel's exclusive stockist – it has a rich and lush interior and is also a good place to go for special occasion frocks from other exclusive designers from the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

My friend Lynette runs **L'Artichaut** (+65 6252 9155), situated in a residential area by Novena. It has a superb jewellery selection: I especially love the Tatty Devine pieces. The showroom resembles a fairytale castle with an outlandish wooden tree branch display showcase and a striking black and white checkered floor.

For shoes, I always check out **Topshop** (+65 6238 0689) at Wisma Atria. They are affordable, stylish and suitable for my wide feet! At Peninsula Shopping Centre, you can find vintage clothing at **Granny's Day Out** (+65 6336 9774), as well as many shops specialising in cameras as well as sportswear sneakers. **Surrender** (+65 733 2130) on Devonshire Road is also worth a visit, for their cult T-shirts and streetwear.

If friends from overseas wanted to check out local fashion shops, I would bring them to the Ann Siang Road and Club Street area in Chinatown. **Asylum** (+65 6324 8264) sells Hansel's first furniture collection, and they have a very unusual selection of products ranging from magazines to interior products to fashion: you can find cutting-edge, thought-provoking conceptual items here. Asylum started off as a graphic design firm – in fact, their offices are located in the basement below the shop. **Front Row** has a café downstairs and a boutique upstairs that stocks Singaporean designer label Woods & Woods, as well as Eley Kishimoto, one of my favourite brands. I am a big fan of the preppy style and also like **Fred Perry Laurel** (+65 6325 3018) and **Style Nordic** (+65 6423 9114) – especially their second floor which has eye-catching, bold printed furnishing fabrics.

Another good district for design is **Old School** on Mount Sophia – it has a cinema, cafes, shops and offices to lots of creative companies, including my friend Wykidd Song, a well-known fashion designer.

I am an absolute design nerd and spend hours checking out design books and magazines from **Basheer Graphic Books** (+65 6336 0810) at Bras Basah Complex. After that, I pop over to **Menotti** (+65 6333 9366), a cafe at Raffles City Shopping Centre and sit down to my favourite Soffiato warm chocolate cake and espresso as I go through my purchases from cover to cover.

## Shopping spotlight: Bali and Haji Lane

Once an overlooked alley with tiny, unimpressive boutiques by the bustling Arab quarter, Haji and Bali Lane have blossomed into the most interesting shopping enclaves in town, pulling in its own crowd in the past three years with its inimitable blend of creative flair and funky styling.

It's a fantastic area to stroll and explore; immersing yourself in the traditional shophouse architecture whilst shopping for unique finds in the nooks and crannies of the character-filled streets. You'll get a hint of the enclave's creative spirit from shops such as the newly relocated and quirky eco-themed **Maki Squarepatch** ([www.makisquarepatch.com](http://www.makisquarepatch.com)), renowned for adorable soft toys, clothing and other products made with recycled fabrics.

Vintage enthusiasts will adore the great selections here, where you can get your blast from the past trawling through the crammed racks of Japanese imported flea market treasures at **House of Japan** (+65 6396 6657) or picking out vintage-inspired dresses from **2** (+65 6297 7470), before completing your outfit with old-fashioned handbags from **Dulcetfig** (+65 6396 5648).

There's no lack of contemporary clothing too: from everyday T-shirts, frocks and accessories from **COL: LAGE** (+65 6297 9886) to statement-making local fashion from **White Room** (+65 6297 1280).

When you're hankering for a break, feast on the Singaporean flavours in the homemade sundaes as well as the eye-candy of unique gift and home ware at **Pluck** (+65 6396 4048). Two doors down, **Salad** (+65 6299 5808) is a treasure trove of stylish contemporary Asian home accessories.

Haji and Bali lane may be all hip now, but of course, there are more traditional buys to be found in the historic mercantile district: check out long-time residents **Anil Brothers'** (+65 6298 3395) lace textiles and shaggy carpets, or **Hamzah Lucky Store's** (+65 6293 5351) great selection of affordably-priced Arabic *abaya* robes and Indonesian batik garments.

And of course, if you still can't find what you're looking for, get something specially tailored from neighbouring Arab Street, the city's hub for fine silk and all types of textiles, or wander nearby Bussorah street, an atmospheric, souvenir hunting ground.

hardcore punk music from all over the world as well as a few of their own local releases.

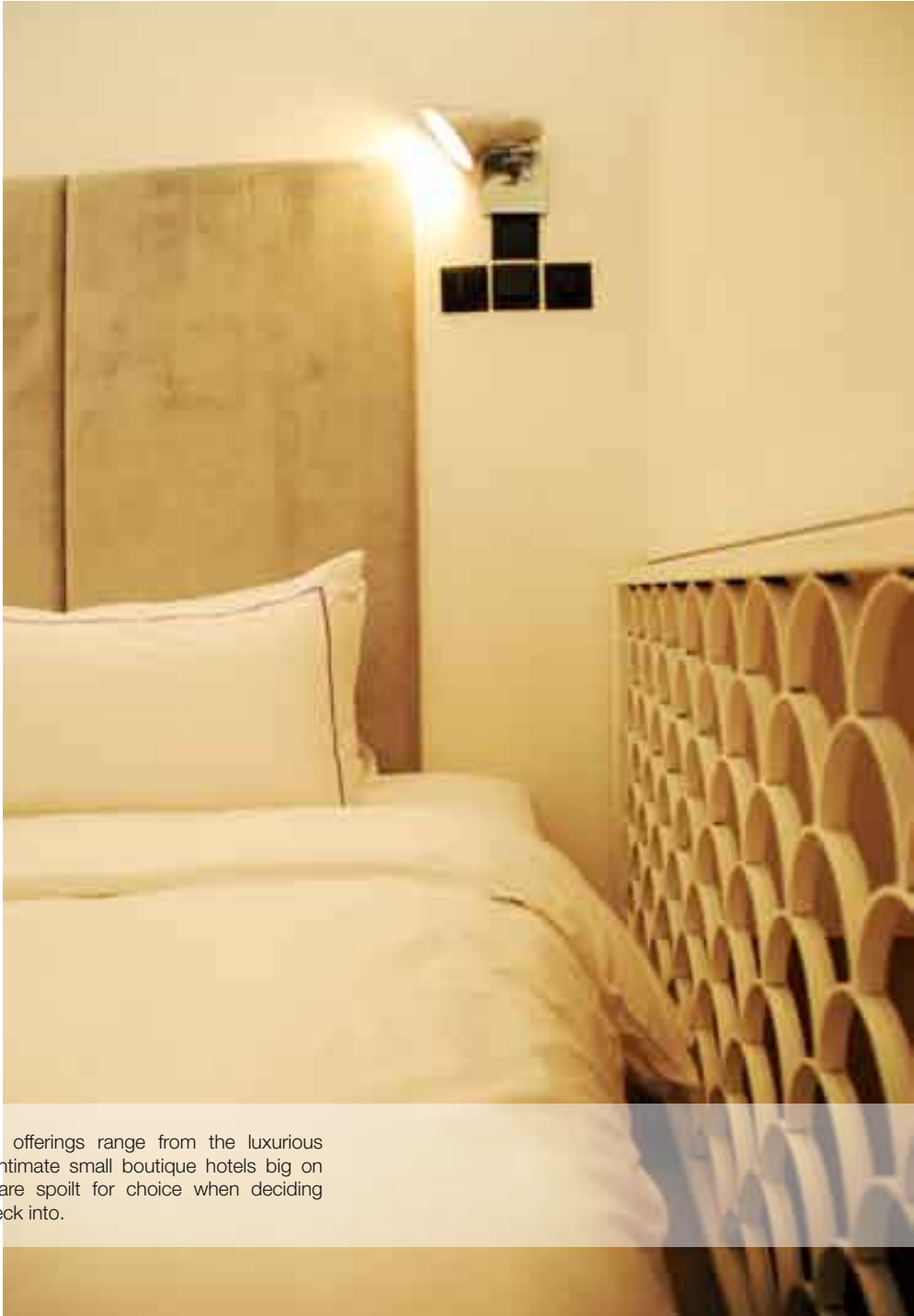
For the serious shopper, the **Great Singapore Sale** ([www.greatsingaporesale.com.sg](http://www.greatsingaporesale.com.sg)) is a discount-filled event held from mid-May to July, when even major retailers slash their prices. And with the long hours held by most shops here – malls open daily from 10am to 10pm, but boutiques keep slightly shorter hours, usually from 11am to 8 or 9pm – you'll literally find yourself shopping until you drop!

**Top right:** Little India's Thieves Market is a haven for those looking for something unusual.  
**Bottom right:** Suit you sir: one of the many tailoring shops that line the streets of the city.



# City BREAK

• hotels • By Jaswinder Kaur Gill



Singapore's hotel offerings range from the luxurious grand hotels to intimate small boutique hotels big on personality. You are spoilt for choice when deciding which hotel to check into.

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**Raffles Hotel:** Established in 1887, this grand dame has hosted many an illustrious guest from royalty to celebrities and famous writers. Set amid lush greenery, this national monument is an oasis of old-world charm. Décor in its spacious 103 suites with 14 feet high ceilings is distinctly 19th century colonial. The hotel has all the modern amenities and facilities travellers need, ranging from a rooftop pool to an in-house spa. And there is the Raffles Museum in which you can peruse the history of this legendary hotel.

[www.singapore.affles.com](http://www.singapore.affles.com)



**New Majestic Hotel:** This boutique hotel housed within a four-storey 1928 conservation building on Chinatown's Bukit Pasoh Road offers 30 eclectic rooms. Behind plain white doors lie works of art. A plaque beside each door explains the inspiration behind each artist's work. I recommend the Sandra Lee suite, dotted with sheep it is bound to give you a good night's sleep. The hotel features a small gym and a dipping pool with a unique view.

[www.newmajestichotel.com](http://www.newmajestichotel.com)

**The Scarlet:** An intimate boutique hotel located within the buzzing enclave of Ann Siang Hill, this luxurious establishment is housed in several conserved double-storied 19th century shophouses. Employing a theatrical theme, each of its 84 boudoirs is decorated with deluxe materials in shades of black, gold and red. The glitzy bar decked in black marble topped with a mirrored ceiling is where the beautiful people go. Head on up to the rooftop Mediterranean restaurant and dine under the stars while taking in views of the Singapore skyline. [www.thescarlethotel.com](http://www.thescarlethotel.com)



**RitzCarlton Millenia:** The ultimate in luxury accommodation, the Ritz Carlton boasts a series of superlatives including the best bathrooms in town. The high-ceiling marble bedecked lobby houses stunning sculptures. Raised feather beds in all its rooms and suites offer unobstructed views of Kallang and Marina Bay. An impressive multi-million modern art collection featuring works by Andy Warhol and Frank Stella is peppered throughout the property. Facilities include a Greco-Roman swimming pool and spa. Its champagne brunch is the talk of the town. [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

**St Regis Singapore:** The ultimate name in luxury hotels, the St Regis opened its first Asia hotel in Singapore, in December 2007. Its glass and steel façade opens up to a contemporary stylish lobby. All 299 rooms and suites come with a private butler service. Décor in its rooms and suites are luxurious and the French marble bathrooms feature a large freestanding bathtub. A fleet of its signature Bentleys transport guests to the hotel.

[www.starwoodhotels.com/stregis](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/stregis)

**The Fullerton Hotel:** Built in 1928, this former General Post Office was transformed into a 400-room hotel in 2001. Sunlight streams through the clear roof of Japanese rice paper sandwiched between glass in this eight-storey trapezium shaped building. Rooms and suites provide views of Marina Bay, the Singapore River and the financial district of Raffles Place. The hotel boasts a breathtaking 25-metre infinity pool overlooking the river. [www.fullertonhotel.com](http://www.fullertonhotel.com)



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in its room ranging from standard rooms to two bedroom suites is contemporary European with Asian accents. Go for its famous garden tour or simply lounge by the free form swimming pool. [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

**Fairmont Singapore:** This luxury business hotel is located within the Raffles City Shopping and Convention Centre. Its 769 rooms, feature private balconies and are luxuriously furnished. Carpeted rooms in shades of cream and green exude a contemporary feel and provide either city or harbour views. All rooms feature spacious bathrooms with marble bathtubs and tropical rain showers. A variety of dining options include the award-winning Japanese restaurant Inagiku. [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com)

**Swissôtel The Stamford:** This IM Pei designed hotel is Southeast Asia's tallest at 72 stories. All 1261 rooms and suites within this cylindrical building come with a private balcony offering spectacular views of downtown Singapore. Rooms and suites are tastefully decorated in a contemporary style with a touch of the East. Its spa is the largest in Asia with a menu of 50 different types of signature treatments. The double storied fitness club has yoga and Pilates studio as well as some of the best gym facilities on the isle. [www.swissotel.com](http://www.swissotel.com)

**Four Seasons Singapore:** Within walking distance of Orchard Road, the Four Season's art deco inspired interiors brings Manhattan style glamour to Singapore. This 254-room hotel boasts an impressive Asian art collection and the famous Four Seasons bed. Spacious European styled rooms offer views of Orchard Road and neighbouring Botanic Gardens. Take a refreshing dip at its rooftop pool or book an afternoon at the spa. Popular with celebrities, this hotel exudes the air of a private residence. [www.fourseasons.com/singapore](http://www.fourseasons.com/singapore)

**Shangri-La Singapore:** Synonymous with discreet and superb service, the Shangri-La is the residence of choice for visiting dignitaries, royalty and celebrities like David Beckham. Along leafy Orange Grove Road, the hotel lives up to its name for it is truly a verdant, luxurious 15-acre hideaway amidst the hustle and bustle of urban life. Decor



**The Sentosa Resort & Spa:** Pink frangipani trees line the driveway leading up to the resort's lobby while peacocks roam the grounds of this property overlooking the sea. Water gardens and a koi pond lend a Balinese feel to this 215-room luxury resort. Rooms, suites and villas are decorated in a contemporary scheme with Asian touches. Access to the beach is via a 132-step staircase and an award-winning spa housed in a colonial building offers a variety of treatments. [www.thesentosa.com](http://www.thesentosa.com)

**Amara Sanctuary Resort:** Spread over 3.5 hectares of greenery, the Amara Sanctuary, on Sentosa Island is a blend of the old and new. Its glass and steel facade and pine



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interiors of its lobby are minimalist chic while its spacious rooms, suites and villas are furnished in a contemporary style with a touch of rustic charm. Deluxe rooms are located in a new glass and steel block while its 20 one-bedroom suites are housed in a 1930s conserved former British army barracks. [www.amarasanctuary.com](http://www.amarasanctuary.com)

**Intercontinental Singapore:** Comprising of a modern tower block and two rows of 1920s conserved double-storied shophouses, Singapore's only Peranakan-style hotel is the place to soak up some local culture. Within Bugis Junction, the hotel is close to major museums and attractions. Décor in the rooms and suites is a blend of contemporary and Peranakan designs. This elegant hotel offers a unique programme where guests can participate in cultural immersion. [www.singapore.intercontinental.com](http://www.singapore.intercontinental.com)



**Meritus Mandarin:** Located right in the heart of Singapore's vibrant Orchard Road, the Meritus Mandarin retains its place at the head of the list of the city's best hotels. With 1200 five-star rooms, the hotel had a multi-million dollar facelift in 2006, which has revamped the interior and bought it back up to the standard expected from a hotel of this repute. Wall to wall Axminster carpeting, impeccable service and one of the best club lounges in the business, the Meritus Mandarin remains a popular choice. The hotel is also home to the world-famous Chatterbox restaurant which has been a Singapore fixture for decades and is well-known for its Mandarin Chicken Rice. During refurbishment, the restaurant has moved upstairs. [www.meritus-hotels.com](http://www.meritus-hotels.com)

**Marina Mandarin:** The only Singaporean member of the Leading Hotels of the World, the Marina Mandarin Hotel is a prism-like structure with one of the largest atriums in Asia. Located in the business district near Suntec Singapore, the hotel has 575 rooms, many of which boast fantastic ocean views. Like its sister hotel, the Meritus Mandarin, the Marina Mandarin was recently refurbished and has since won a host of awards. Service here is near perfect. [www.meritus-hotels.com](http://www.meritus-hotels.com)

**Singapore Marriott:** Known for its iconic green pagoda that rises out of the heart of the city, the Singapore Marriott is frequented by a steady stream of business and leisure travellers. Its restaurants are considered some of the best and include the famous Wan Hao Chinese eatery. And with one of the best pools and fitness rooms around, relaxation need not be confused with inertia. [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

**Grand Hyatt Singapore:** One of the luxury hotel chain's most famed outlets, the Grand Hyatt Singapore has long been a favourite on the Singapore hotel scene. 663 rooms and suites offer the ultimate in five-star luxury, located conveniently at the start of Orchard Road. The hotel is currently undergoing a refurbishment of the pool and leisure facilities which promise to be world class when they are completed in the final quarter of 2008. [singapore.grand.hyatt.com](http://singapore.grand.hyatt.com)

**Pan Pacific Singapore:** Located in Singapore's Marina Bay, the Pan Pacific Singapore boasts stunning views of the harbour area and offers guests easy access to Suntec Singapore and several shopping malls. Towering above a circular pool area, the hotel has become one of the most symbolic buildings in the city's illustrious skyline. There are a



number of award-winning dining options, but the foremost must surely be the Hai Tien Lo Restaurant, which serves Cantonese fare perched on the 37th storey. [pan.pacific.singapore.com](http://pan.pacific.singapore.com)

**The Carlton Hotel:** A Singaporean staple, the Carlton Hotel is renowned in the city for having some of the best service around. The 630 rooms are conveniently situated minutes from both the business and shopping districts, attracting a range of occupants. With a classically designed interior that achieves its aspiration to be the epitome of grandeur, the Carlton Hotel is, like it's maxim, the preferred address. [www.carlton.com.sg](http://www.carlton.com.sg)

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