

# Welcome to Singapore

*Singapore is the perennial stopover no more. The city is jostling to be Asia's, even the world's, best city.*

## Bright Lights, Small City

Singapore is small in size but huge in ambition. In recent years it has lifted its global profile by means of numerous shots of adrenalin to its tourism industry. Integrated resorts bring in tourists and big money (mostly thanks to casinos), the arts and music scenes are overloaded with international acts, and the Formula One night race is now well established. It's hard to keep track of the changes sometimes. Singapore's great strides in the last few years have been mapped onto its skyline, a breathtaking hybrid of low-slung British colonial buildings and towering skyscrapers.

## Shop Till You Drop

Electronics, fashion, video games, raw cloth, spices, Chinese medicine – the list of things you can buy in Singapore is as long as it is varied. Shopping is almost a spiritual pursuit in Singapore and the heart of it all can be found at Orchard Rd, a veritable canyon of concrete, glass and steel. Singaporeans love their malls, spending vast amounts of leisure time bathing in icy air-conditioning while shopping, eating and movie-going. Prices are no longer dirt cheap, but the extraordinary variety and the decadence of the setting make shopping in Singapore memorable.

## Fried Rice Paradise

Singaporeans are food crazy; along with shopping, eating ranks as Singapore's national pastime. Food is both a widespread passion and a unifier across ethnic divides, with a profusion of establishments offering Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Nonya (a hybrid of Chinese and Malay culinary traditions) specialities. Although the city's hawk-er centres and food courts are justifiably its greatest claim to fame, eating in Singapore is not just about rubbing sweaty shoulders with locals. While much of its best food might originate over a humble wok, cooking in Singapore is elevated to an art form at many haute cuisine restaurants.

## Garden State, Diverse Spaces

Most people come to Singapore for the legendary eating and shopping, but the city's numerous lush and exotic gardens are a surprising bonus. Urban planning is important to the government, and there are large swaths of green spaces that break up Singapore's concrete landscape. There's the innovative (a rooftop garden on top of the Marina Barrage) to the serene (the MacRitchie Reservoir has a stunning tree-top walk) and the natural (Sungei Buloh is a stopover point for thousands of migratory birds).



## Why I Love Singapore

By Shawn Low, Author

Singapore is my second home (I grew up here) and each time I visit, there's always something new to see. It's a city that's constantly being tinkered with, and it's not all just about malls. There are new gardens, museums, art galleries, cool bars and a gazillion restaurants.

I love that Singapore never sleeps. I've lost count of the number of times I've rocked up with my brother to the local coffeeshop for cheap beer at three o'clock in the morning. And the food, oh the food. In Singapore, home isn't where the heart is...it's where the stomach leads.

**For more about our authors, see p224.**