

SINGAPORE

ENCOUNTER

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Singapore Encounter

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JOSHUA SAMUEL BROWN

Joshua Samuel Brown (otherwise known as Josambro) is an American-born expatriate currently living a professionally nomadic lifestyle. A prolific traveller and writer, his features have appeared in an eclectic variety of publications around the globe, including the *South China Morning Post*, *Business Traveller Asia*, *Clamor Magazine* and *Cat Fancy*. Joshua's debut book, *Vignettes of Taiwan*, offers tales of betel nut beauties and how to avoid jail time by impersonating a Mormon. To date, Joshua has co-authored five travel guides for Lonely Planet, keeps a regular blog called *Snarky Tofu* at josambro.blogspot.com and also writes slightly more serious stuff at www.josambro.com. Joshua was also a 2009 USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Fellow.



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THEPHO TOGRAPHER

Felix Hug used to shoot hoops for a professional basketball team in Switzerland before he decided that shooting images was more enjoyable. In 2007 Felix was the runner-up at the Travel Photographer of the Year awards. He received an honourable mention at the *PDN/National Geographic Traveler* 'World in Focus' contest in 2005 and took home the *Asian Geographic* Nikon Grand Prize in 2004. Felix believes that the job of the travel photographer is to capture inspiring images instead of just documenting reality: 'Positive images and compassion will inspire and change the way we look at things.'

Our readers Many thanks to the travellers who wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes:
Allan Cowin



Laid-back Clarke Quay comes alive at night thanks to an assortment of bars, clubs and restaurants

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Our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies, so you can rely on their advice being well researched and impartial. They travel widely, visiting thousands of places, taking great pride in getting all the details right and telling it how it is.



THIS IS SINGAPORE

Once sullenly wary of outsiders, Singapore is now screaming its name to the world. Once upon a time they stopped longhairs at the border, now they're offering them big salaries to run digital animation labs. Once upon a time the city frowned on late nights, alcohol and wanton frivolity, now it's one of the nightlife capitals of Asia.

Once upon a time in Singapore... The fairy tales still get told of social controls so obsessively, surreally punctilious they achieved global infamy. Yes, it's still illegal to chew gum (without prescription!) and jaywalk, and yes the government still fusses, prods and badgers its citizens in every single aspect of their lives, but the 'Fine' city has actually transcended the joke and become, yes, a fine city.

At the centre of it all, the Colonial District is its cultural heart, home to some of Asia's most outstanding museums, some of its grandest Victorian architecture and, providing a spiky counterpoint, the unforgettable Esplanade theatre overlooking Marina Bay. Singapore's economic lifeblood used to flow through that bay and up the river. Now the shadow of a new economy looms over it, as the giant Sands casino resort rises towards full completion, while a barrage has turned the bay into a reservoir that will be the centrepiece for the New Singapore: globally minded, affluent and fun.

Upstream, echoes of the past cling to the river bank, but the belch and clatter of bumboat commerce has given way to the belch and clatter of drinkers and diners, as businesspeople mingle with mall-weary tourists over a few sundowners before taking on some of the city's superb clubs and restaurants. And everywhere, from fancy French cuisine to the ubiquitous hawker stalls, is food, the one defining obsession that unites everyone, if only momentarily. Any visitor willing to throw themselves into this food paradise will find no quicker way into the soul of Singapore.

Top Another exciting night of live music (p165) in Singapore **Bottom** The durian-like Esplanades – Theatres on the Bay (p67) adds a distinctive architectural flavour to Singapore's skyline