

Welcome to Singapore

Capitalising on its melting pot of cultures, Singapore is finally getting some spark, and is fast becoming one of Asia's hit-list destinations.

Here, There, Everywhere

Whizzing around Singapore can take a matter of minutes, thanks to one of the world's most efficient and widespread public transport systems. Hankering for a *roti prata* breakfast in Little India, but want to visit the temples in Chinatown before lunch? No problem, you'll be there in a jiffy using the sparkling MRT system – and why not stop at Marina Bay for a spot of shopping on your way? Plus, with new MTR lines opening practically every two years, this tiny island just keeps on becoming easier to explore.

The Island of Feasting

Food in Singapore is taken very seriously. From cheap hawker fare to Michelin-starred fine dining, food-enamoured Singaporeans will line up for it, Instagram the hell out of it and passionately debate whether it is 'die, die, must try' – Singlish slang for 'to die for'. Don't fret about finding a place to chow down, as each neighbourhood is home to local hawker centres and coffeshops dishing up some of the island's best meals for just a couple of bucks. Simply follow your nose or join the longest queue – whatever morsels lie at the end, they are almost guaranteed to be scrumptious.

A Green City

The concrete jungles that once dominated Singapore's skyline are slowly giving way to green skyscrapers, which look more like living ecosystems than business hubs. Fervently working towards its 'City in a Garden' dream, the nation is ploughing money into becoming more sustainable and well, green. Head out of town a little and you'll find plenty of walking trails, treetop jungle bridges, wildlife galore and the city's green jewel, the Unesco World Heritage-listed Singapore Botanic Gardens: these are the lungs of Singapore.

Shopping Frenzy

When the sweltering outdoor heat gets too much, Singaporeans love ducking inside for a spot of retail therapy and a good dose of air-conditioning. Orchard Rd is the queen of shopping malls: with all the high-street brands, plenty of high-fashion houses, and a few discount outlets thrown into the mix, everyone's needs (and more often wants) are catered for here. If you prefer your shopping a little less mass-market, head out to local neighbourhoods for independent designers, quirky art galleries, bustling markets, Chinese medicines, Persian carpets and a sari or two.



Why I Love Singapore

By Ria de Jong, Writer

Small enough to feel intimate yet big enough to retain a degree of mystery, Singapore is a place I love discovering again and again. The city sometimes feels like it's travelling at a breakneck speed into tomorrow with its futuristic architecture, high-speed efficiency and shiny image, but you only need to take a small step off the main drag – into bustling village markets, smoky Chinese temples and heritage shophouse-lined streets – to get a dose of its rich history and culture. Then there's the food: nothing stills my beating heart quite like a perfectly grilled satay and an ice-cold Tiger Beer.

For more about our writer, see p224