



MULTIPLI-CITY

With its heritage neighborhoods, futuristic attractions and diverse culinary scene, the Little Red Dot is nothing if not diverse

BY DELLE CHAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CALEB MING

Singapore may be small, but this diminutive city-state contains multitudes. Futuristic gardens rise from the banks of historic rivers, heritage shophouses stand alongside gleaming skyscrapers, and the burgeoning culinary scene reflects tastes both traditional and modern, with open-air hawker centers drawing as many ardent customers as the trendiest contemporary restaurants. Here's how you can experience the best of this multi-faceted metropolis in just 48 hours.

Saturday

8am

Fuel up with some *kaya* toast at Heap Seng Leong. At this old-school coffee shop, pillowy, charcoal-toasted bread slices are slathered with a thick layer of handmade coconut-and-pandan jam, and topped with a pat of butter. Order yours with two soft-boiled eggs and an aromatic cup of its signature *kopi geyou* (black coffee mixed with butter) for the quintessential Singapore breakfast experience.

W

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12.30pm

Prep your stomach for a veritable feast at Maxwell Food Centre, where you can sample a smorgasbord of local delights, from *wonton* noodles to fish *bee hoon* (vermicelli). We recommend braving the long queues at Tian Tian Chicken Rice, which serves up a sterling rendition of the beloved Hainanese dish. This popular hawker stall was recently awarded a coveted “Bib Gourmand” by the Singapore Michelin Guide.



9am

Head east to explore the heritage neighborhood of Joo Chiat. Named after 20th-century landowner Chew Joo Chiat, this vibrant enclave is marked by the distinctive visual signatures of Peranakan culture — from pastel shophouses and patterned floor tiles, to eateries cooking up Peranakan fare like *laksa* (noodles in a spicy coconut broth).

11am

Also in the vicinity is Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong, which boasts a design aesthetic that's inspired by its historic surroundings. The hotel's all-day restaurant, Baba Chews, serves up Peranakan favorites like *ayam buah keluak* (chicken and black nuts in a spicy tamarind gravy). But if you're still stuffed from breakfast, the hotel is worth a visit just for its eclectic architecture — for instance, the feature wall behind the reception desk is festooned with a colorful mishmash of traditional batik prints.

2pm

It's time to explore the adjacent Chinatown neighborhood. Start off at the recently re-opened Chinatown Heritage Centre, where interactive exhibits depict how the Chinese members of Singapore's pioneer generation fled the famines, floods and unrest of China in search of a better life. Explore the neighborhood's narrow streets for a feel of its rich history and evolving identity — you'll find traditional businesses like teahouses sandwiched between modern lifestyle boutiques. Chinatown also offers fascinating insights into Singapore's religious landscape. Visit the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple & Museum, a Chinese temple housing what is purportedly the left canine tooth of Buddha himself. A stone's throw away is the Sri Mariamman Temple, the city's oldest Hindu complex. Look up — the temple's *gopuram* (pyramidal tower over the entrance gate) is adorned with colorful sculptures of Hindu deities, making for an intriguing visual spectacle.

6.30pm

At dusk, cross over to Keong Saik Road, home to trendy restaurants like Potato Head Folk, the first international outpost of the iconic Bali beach bar.

You'll find three different dining concepts under the same roof here — sink your teeth into messy, juicy burgers at Three Buns (located on the first and second floors), before heading upstairs to Studio 1939 or the rooftop bar for cocktails.



9pm

The hip hangouts of nearby Club Street and Ann Siang Hill really come to life after dark. Slake your thirst with more tipples — we highly recommend the Gin & Chronic — at Oxwell & Co, a Brit-inspired resto and bar housed in a restored three-story shophouse. There's also delicious finger food to be had, such as pork scratchings and salt-and-pepper squid. Tip: snag seats at the rooftop bar, which offers excellent views of the Chinatown district.

Singapore checklist

SEE

- **BooksActually**, 9 Yong Siak St, +65 6222 9195; booksactuallyshop.com
- **Buddha Tooth Relic Temple**, 288 South Bridge Rd, +65 6220 0220; btrts.org.sg
- **Chinatown Heritage Centre**, 48 Pagoda St, +65 6224 3928; chinatownheritagecentre.com.sg
- **Gardens by the Bay**, 18 Marina Gardens Dr, +65 6420 6848; gardensbythebay.com.sg
- **Merlion Park**, 1 Fullerton Rd, +65 6736 6622
- **National Gallery Singapore**, 1 St Andrew's Rd, +65 6271 7000; nationalgallery.sg
- **Sri Mariamman Temple**, 244 South Bridge Rd, +65 6223 4064

EAT

- **Aura**, National Gallery Singapore, 1 St Andrew's Rd, +65 6866 1977; aura.sg
- **Heap Seng Leong**, #01-5109, 10 North Bridge Rd, +65 6292 2368
- **Makansutra Gluttons Bay**, #01-15, 8 Raffles Ave, +65 6336 7025; makansutra.com
- **Maxwell Food Centre**, 1 Kadayannallur St
- **Oxwell & Co**, 5 Ann Siang Rd, +65 6438 3984; oxwellandco.com
- **Plain Vanilla**, 1D Yong Siak St, +65 8363 7614; plainvanillabakery.com
- **Potato Head Folk**, 36 Keong Saik Rd, +65 6327 1939; ptthead.com
- **Red House Seafood Restaurant**, 68 Prinsep St, +65 6336 6080; redhousesseafood.com
- **Toby's Estate**, 8 Rodyk St, +65 6636 7629; tobysestate.com.sg

STAY

- **Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong**, 86 East Coast Rd, +65 6723 7001; www.ihg.com



8am

Start your day bright and early with a morning stroll along charming Robertson Quay, located on the banks of the Singapore River. Make a pit stop at Toby's Estate, one of the stalwarts of the thriving local café scene. Here, you can tuck into brunch classics like Eggs Benedict, bircher muesli and java brewed from single-origin beans.

Sunday



10am

You're not too far away from Tiong Bahru, a gentrified 'hood bursting at the seams with cafés and quirky lifestyle stores, many housed in charming Art-Deco shophouses. Dating back to the 1930s, this is one of the city's oldest residential estates, and a lot of effort was put into making the flats look visually appealing — a stark contrast to the more utilitarian aesthetic that marked subsequent housing projects. In the 1950s, Chinese businessmen were known for housing their mistresses here, earning it the nickname Den of Beauties. These days, it's basically a den of hipsters. Rub shoulders with them at indie bookstore BooksActually and quaint bakery Plain Vanilla.

12nn

Prepare to get your hands dirty at Red House Seafood Restaurant, where you can tuck into another iconic local dish, the Singapore Chilli Crab. Here, a whole crab is stir-fried, then coated with a sweet-savory tomato-chili sauce. Mop up the piquant gravy with deep-fried golden *mantou* (fluffy steamed buns).

A perfect weekend in Singapore

2pm

It's off to the National Gallery Singapore, the latest addition to the city's arts scene. Housed in the former City Hall and Supreme Court, this gargantuan museum is where you'll find the world's largest public collection of contemporary South-East Asian art — that's over 8,000 paintings, sculptures, videos and installation pieces from across the region. If you've got little ones in tow, take them to the museum's Keppel Centre for Art Education, where they can participate in multi-sensory workshops and activities. Once you've had your fill of art, drop by Gallery & Co for a few souvenirs. This stylish retail and café space is more than your run-of-the-mill museum shop, with its shelves of gorgeous lifestyle products, including designer wristwatches and striking canvas totes.



5pm

Round off your museum visit at Aura, the gallery's upscale Italian restaurant and lounge. The cocktails here are more classic than contemporary, with evergreen offerings such as the Old Fashioned and the Negroni. Quaff a couple of sundowners while savoring spectacular views of the Marina Bay skyline, which is truly a feast for the eyes during sunset.

7pm

Chow down more hawker fare at the nearby Makansutra Gluttons Bay, an open-air food center set against the backdrop of Marina Bay. Take your pick from local favorites like *satay* (skewered grilled meats), barbecued chicken wings, Hokkien *mee* (stir-fried prawn noodles) and *sambal* stingray (stingray coated in a fiery chilli paste), just to name a few.

A perfect weekend in Singapore

8pm

Cross the Helix Bridge for a postprandial stroll at Gardens by the Bay, a sprawling green lung that looks like a scene straight out of *Avatar*: think futuristic glass conservatories, avant-garde sculptures, and the otherworldly Supertrees — towering, man-made vertical gardens housing over 162,900 plants. These incredible structures also generate solar power, collect rainwater and function as air vent ducts for the adjacent conservatories. Get tickets to the OCBC Skyway, an aerial walkway connecting two Supertrees, for panoramic views of the park. Be sure to catch the daily light shows at 7.45pm and 8.45pm, during which the gardens come alive in a blaze of color.



9pm

Amble along the Marina Bay Waterfront Promenade towards the Merlion Park, home to Singapore's national icon. At 8.6m in height, this half-fish, half-lion hybrid pays homage to the city's past as a fishing village and as the Malay kingdom of Singapura (which means "Lion City"). As a symbol, it also sums up 21st-century Singapore perfectly: a city that's a fascinating confluence of history and modernity, standing tall amid the rest of the world. [S](#)



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