

HOW TO

EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE LIKE AN INSIDER

By Puja Disha Bharwani

Home is where you feel you belong, and for me, my little red dot is that place. I am proud to say that I am a Singapore girl in complete awe of what the island-city has achieved in such a short period of time. The efficient nation known for its pragmatic approach to everything is always moving and changing with the times. It prides itself on reinventing itself to make up for its tiny size and lack of resources.

A fishing village with no natural resources in the 1960s, it depended on the visionary Lee Kuan Yu to develop it through the hard work of its relentless people. From previously being known as a nanny state, to coming out of its shell and blooming into a more grown-up city, it is now at its peak as a smart and innovative nation ready to receive the 21st century traveller—one who is looking for an experience, clad with lightning-speed wi-fi connection for an interactive and well-navigated, independent journey.

The city, however, has not lost touch with its past. I love that we are reminded of its history everywhere—in the old shophouses in Chinatown and Kampong Glam which house fancy cocktail bars, world-class restaurants and hip yoga studios. Or in the street food stalls you will encounter in every

district. It is one of the few places where a hawker and a world-class French chef can share the glory of the Michelin-star status on the same platform. That's Singapore for you—a melting pot of people and cultures not only coexisting, but thriving because they are in this inspirational, unique space.

There has never been a better time to strip the first touristy layer off the island and go deeper—now that the little red dot is older, she knows who she is and isn't afraid to share her past experiences with her present state. Travel like a local, because that is the only way to take trips that matter and experience what any place has to offer.

Looking to do a girls' trip and not worry about safety issues? Or a quiet weekend to get your inner chakras balanced and not bust your diet? Or perhaps the multi-generational Indian family trip for a milestone birthday or the golden anniversary of your parents. Making sure everyone is entertained and all dietary restrictions met has never been easier than it is in Singapore.

Do yourself a favour and see the island city through the path less travelled this time. Skip the roads and MRT and opt to sail through the different quays in the city on the river taxi. Choose from a variety of transport and service apps to concierge anything,

from massages to *mie goreng*, to your hotel room. Go for a guided run around the iconic Marina Bay area and watch Singapore's very own burlesque artist Sukki Singapora give you a unique night of entertainment at one the select clubs she performs in.

Start off one morning with the softest croissants from Tiong Bahru Bakery (www.tiongbahrubakery.com) and their 40 Hands artisan coffee (www.40handscoffee.com)—these might even give a Melbourne café a run for its money. Walk through this quaint neighbourhood and visit BooksActually (www.booksactuallyshop.com) to get a taste of the thriving local literary scene. Shop at one of the interior accessories stores and end with lunch at Plain Vanilla (00 65 8363 7614).

If you are visiting with your family, the activities for kids of all ages has only increased and gotten better. Want to go through the rainforest terrain and feel like a navy seal doing outward bound training? Get touchy with digital art installations? Or pretend you are an astronaut with NASA for a couple of hours? Maybe you just want them enjoying some fresh air and being active outdoors along the Singapore River, while you sip a bespoke cocktail and nibble on truffle-infused dim sum. Whatever it is, Singapore will have you covered. 🇸🇬

