

WHAT TO SEE & DO

You might enjoy trying to puzzle your way out of a tiny room, or enjoying incomparable views of nature at its best. You might choose to get up close with exotic fauna



THE NATURE TRAIL

GARDENS BY THE BAY

A nature park that is a perfect blend of technology and nature, Gardens by the Bay is part of a larger endeavour to transform Singapore from a Garden City to a City in a Garden. Sprawling across reclaimed land in central Singapore, the nature park's many attractions include the world's largest greenhouse, the Flower Dome, temperature-controlled and air-conditioned domes with indoor waterfalls and the desert-like Sun Pavilion. The highlight is the solar-powered Supertrees, which store energy during the day and become spectacular beacons of light at night. (www.gardensbythebay.com.sg)

SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

An old favourite, the charming Botanic Gardens seem like a throwback to the Victorian age—a serene green space to take a calm stroll in the middle of the bustling city. The over-150-year-old tropical garden is steeped in history and is conveniently located at the edge of the popular shopping belt, Orchard Road. Home to grand trees that are over hundreds of years old, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is popular for hosting music concerts and other events. (www.sbg.org.sg)

MOUNT FABER PARK

For a bit of history amid stunning scenery, head to Mount Faber Park, one of Singapore's oldest green spaces. You can take a cable car to Sentosa from here with an incomparable view spread out before you, or peep through one of its many lookout points to get 360-degree views of Singapore through strategically placed telescopes. Check out the wall mural depicting scenes from history at

Faber Point, the highest point in the park. (www.nparks.gov.sg)

WILDLIFE RESERVES SINGAPORE

A visit to the parks that make up the Wildlife Reserves Singapore is a must for all animal lovers. You have the choice of The Zoological Gardens, Bird Park, river and night safaris, where you get to hop on board a tram, travel through six different 'zones' and watch nocturnal animals in their environment. Pandas from China, white rhinos from Africa and toucans from South America are brought here and live in environments recreated for them to thrive in. The Giant Panda Forest is among the top attractions for visitors. (www.wrs.com.sg)

AROUND TOWN

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Boasting one of the best and largest collections of contemporary South-East Asian art, the museum has also displayed temporary exhibitions by modern artists such as Nobel Literature Prize Laureate Gao Xingjian. (www.singaporeartmuseum.sg)

ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM

This unique museum at Marina Bay Sands curates and creates exhibitions that combine elements of art, science, design, media, architecture and technology. Two of its newer exhibits include the 'Future World - Where Art Meets Science' exhibition, an interactive experience for adults and children highlighting the future of art. The other not-to-be-missed exhibit is the newly opened 'The Universe and Art', which showcases an artistic voyage through space, with over 120 original artworks, scientific artefacts and manuscripts. (www.marinabaysands.com; 10

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Bayfront Avenue)

TIONG BAHRU This quaint little neighbourhood has much to offer. There are loads of local eateries and other cafes, most of which are housed in old shop houses and refurbished structures. Start with a cuppa of gourmet coffee at Tiong Bahru Bakery, then walk down to Books Actually to browse through the rare collections stocking its shelves. Visit the Tiong Bahru wet market to get a taste of the local culture—they have everything from fresh flowers to local herbs and spices.

THE QUAYS A large part of downtown—Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay—are all connected by the Singapore River. Take a river taxi or walk to explore the dining and cultural offerings these areas offer. Stroll along the quay and end your day with a visit to STPI, a creative workshop and gallery (www.stpi.com.sg) at Robertson Quay, which showcases contemporary art on print and paper and regularly collaborates with leading artists from around the world. There are plenty of good dining options available around the area.

BINTAN You can even choose to get away from your big holiday with a mini-getaway to Bintan island, a mere 60-minute ferry ride from Singapore's Tanah Merah Terminal. The beaches are heavenly and the water a pristine blue. There are a range of beach-front resorts on the island—from high-end Banyan Tree and The Sanchaya to the family friendly Angsana and Club Med.

ADVENTURE ESCAPE ROOMS

Singaporeans are currently in the grips of a new thrill-a-minute group activity—breaking out of different 'escape room challenges'. A group is trapped in a small room and the only



INSIDER TIPS ON XXX DENISE KELLER TV presenter and yoga instructor
Favourite spots for outdoor yoga: Botanical Gardens, Singapore Quarry (a hidden area near Bukit Timah Nature Reserve) and the Marina Bay Sands rooftop. **The yoga class for a vacation workout:** Pure Yoga (www.pure-yoga.com). It has the best yoga teachers in town, great locations and the best facilities. Stråla Singapore (www.stralasg.com) for a laid-back vibe, with wonderful views of the Singapore River. It's great for beginners. **The place to head to for clean eating:** Real Food outlets—the mushroom dumplings are to die for. Glow Juice Bar and Café at the Hilton Singapore for amazing salads, wonderful juices and great staff and The Living Cafe for all things raw and amazing. **The shop for stylish fitness clothing:** Vivre Activewear for fashionable and functional yoga clothes that don't cost a fortune, and Under Armour for women's fitness wear. **The 'fittest' hotel in Singapore:** The Westin Singapore. This hidden gem is great for those who want a wellness programme. Fit offers everything, from yoga to guided runs around the iconic Marina Bay and juice cleansing, targeted nutrition. The spa is also great.

way out is to solve some mind-bending puzzles, treasure hunting, crawling through a tunnel or two and unscrambling cryptic clues. If you haven't found a way by the end of the hour, you're dead! This is a real-life Prison Break-like experience you don't want to miss. Singapore's best escape-room games are Xcape (www.xcape.sg), Lockdown Singapore (www.lockdown.sg), Exit Plan (www.exitplan.sg) and The Escape Artist (www.theescapeartist.sg).

CAR RACING Get in F1 mode with Ultimate Drive (www.ultimatedrive.com) to feel like a true racecar driver. You can rent a Ferrari or a Lamborghini for a 15-minute spin to feel like a true racecar driver. If you feel like being driven around instead, there's an option for that too—you get to hire a driver. If you're out in a group and are itching to get behind the wheels, then try your hand at some go-kart racing at Kartright Speedway (www.kartright.com).

BOUNCE This trampoline park located in Cathay Cineleisure Orchard mall feels like a brightly lit club with loud music. You literally bounce off walls and fly through the air or go through an obstacle course. For those who really want to test themselves, try taking the Leap of Faith—where you jump from a raised platform and leap out to catch hold of a trapeze or a grab bag. (www.bounceinc.com.sg)

TO PARTY

ZOUK For a high-energy vibe, head to this clubbing institution, which was the first to introduce House music. It continues to host to big-name DJs such as Armin van Buuren and Paul Oakenfold while its resident DJs have now begun releasing their own tracks through international. (www.zoukclub.com)

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURS

The best way to discover Singapore's cultural districts of Little India, Chinatown and Kampong Glam is to walk around or trishaw through. There is a lot to see, from visits to the Thian Hock Keng Temple and Heritage Museum in Chinatown, to shopping for quirky souvenirs in the Arab Street Area. You will discover hidden treasures in the form of old shopkeepers, hawkers and amazingly restored shop houses as you walk or cycle through these narrow lanes. (www.getyourguide.com)



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CAPITAL If you prefer something low-key, head to Capital, which is part of the new Zouk. With a whisky bar, cigar room and lounge, it offers a quieter experience. (www.zouclub.com)

EMPLOYEES ONLY This New York speakeasy type cocktail bar has made its first foray outside the Big Apple. A small, narrow space with an intimate vibe, the place has an old-world charm. The cocktails and food are good, and the music is fabulous. There's even a tarot card reader who is sure to be a fun distraction. (www.employeesonlysg.com)

SHANGHAI DOLLY A Mandopop (Mandarin pop) live music haunt, Shanghai Dolly is also the only cabaret-style club in town, with resident artistes dance to the tune of their resident singer and pianist. If the show isn't of interest, there's also a WanBao Karaoke Bar, Dolly Kitchen, Darts Lounge, Tiger TNP Sports Bar and a Lobby Bar to keep you occupied. (+65 6336 7676)

MONTREUX JAZZ CAFÉ Founded by Claude Nobs, the man behind the well-known Montreux Jazz Festival, this bar combines his passion for jazz and food in his restaurants. Enjoy an eclectic international cuisine and cocktails while listening to mellow live jazz. (www.montreuxjazzcafe.com)

BANG BANG High on energy and loud on the ears, Bang Bang is that ultimate party destination. It tends towards the formal so dress well to paint the town red—a cocktail dress and heels for women and shirt, pants and closed shoes for men. (www.bangbangclub.sg)

ATLAS Inspired by the grand European lobby bars that were common during the Art Deco



INSIDER TIPS ON XXX GAURAV KRIPALANI

Artistic Director, Singapore Repertory Theatre

A not-to-be-missed annual theatre event in Singapore: Shakespeare in the Park! You can bring your own food and a bottle of wine, lay on a picnic blanket under the stars and be entertained by an enjoyable production that always takes place on one of the largest sets you will ever see. **A must-visit site for a dose of local culture:** I always take my guests—particularly a visiting theatre director or set and costume designer—to the Asian Civilisations Museum. It is beautifully designed and gives you a sense of Singapore's history in a regional context. **The best kind of meal after an evening show:** The Sin Hoi Sia Seafood Restaurant in Tiong Bahru, which is open until 5am. It's got a casual vibe and serves great authentic local food. It also has plenty of vegetarian options in addition to meat and seafood. For something more upmarket, head to Employees Only. It's a terrific bar with great cocktails and amazing music. And they also serve food. **Boutique hotels that are hidden gems:** Wanderlust Hotel in Little India is always nice to escape to. The new riverfront Warehouse Hotel at Robertson Quay has a great restaurant and bar. And, of course, Hôtel Vagabond, which is near Arab Street. **Cool bars with great design:** ATLAS has a stunning Art Deco interior—and a phenomenal selection of gin. Manhattan at Regent Hotel Singapore feels like a grand old-style New York bar. For a relaxed ambience in which to enjoy a glass of wine, head to 13% Gastro Wine Bar at Aliwal Street. **A book about Singapore everyone must read:** Singapore at Random—it contains anecdotes, statistics, quotations, diagrams, facts, recipes, advice, folklore and other unusual and often useful tidbits.

period, this recently opened bar in the Gotham-city-like Parkview Square has a Great Gatsby-esque atmosphere. Go for the vibe, the extensive gin and champagne collection (about 950) and the cocktails that are inspired by that gilded age. (www.atlasbar.sg)

MANHATTAN Comfy leather chairs, a shimmering backdrop of hundreds of bottles and a cigar-lounge vibe—Manhattan is your quintessential grand hotel bar in the Regent Singapore Hotel. Choose from different rooms to find the one that suits your mood and enjoy a menu inspired by Manhattan's beloved neighbourhoods—Theatre District, Spanish Harlem and Wall Street. (www.regenthotels.com; 00 65 6725 3377)

SENTOSA

Luge rides, Universal Studios, waterparks, museums and so much more—a visit to the island of Sentosa can be a holiday in itself. Spend an afternoon at the exclusive Tanjong Beach Club (www.tanjongbeachclub.com), which overlooks the ocean. You can spend the whole day by the beach, indulge in some delicious food and if you come here on weekends, catch an award-winning movie at the outdoor Sunset Cinema (www.sunsetcinema.com.sg). The latest adventure zone operated by AJ Hackett (www.ajhackett.com) in Sentosa's Siloso Beach is perfect for thrill seekers. The highlight is the 50-metre bungee-jumping station—the first one in Singapore. They also have giant swings, sky bridges, vertical skywalks for adrenaline junkies.. If all that action absolutely demands a slower-paced activity, head to the Images of Singapore Live museum (www.imagesofsingaporelive.com; 00 65 6275 0426) for a guided tour and a themed boat ride that brings alive the history of Singapore. For a bit of nature, there's the Butterfly Park and Insect Kingdom (www.jungle.com.sg), a haven for 1,500 butterflies and over 3,000 rare insects.

