



DESTINATIONS

# Put Singapore on your 2019 bucket list before it's too late

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In the same year that Queen Elizabeth attended the premiere of the Beatles movie “Help!” and the Mariner 4 sent back the first pictures of Mars, Singapore celebrated its independence. Back then, I had no interest in politics and probably couldn’t locate the island city-state near southern Malaysia on a map. But now, my desire to explore Asian destinations has changed. So even with only a few days to explore Singapore, I didn’t let hot and humid weather and the occasional rain shower damper my vacation. To make the most of my time, I selected both inside and outside venues, and visited places that were in close proximity to one another.

## ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

I popped inside this museum and stayed longer than anticipated. It is one of Singapore’s secret gems. Only a handful of tourists were there the day I visited. The Tang Shipwreck exhibit is fascinating. It showcases an amazing assortment of intact and well-preserved artifacts that date back to the Tang Dynasty (616-907). The treasured artifacts harken back to the ninth century and illustrate the importance of sea trade between Asia and the Middle East. Other rooms highlight ancient Singapore’s role as a major trading port, its ancient religions and a variety of Asian artwork.

## CHINATOWN





Chinatown Mural in Singapore  
Photo Credit: The Traveling Bornsteins

In the early 19th century, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, a British East Indian administrator and the founder of Singapore, designated an area for Chinese immigrants that became known as Chinatown. To pinpoint some key attractions, I picked up a “Footprints of Our Forefathers” map at the Chinatown Visitor Centre. The map recommended a number of historical places and activities including the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, a walk up Ann Siang Hill, the Thian Hock Keng Temple and Mural, and a short rest at the Telok Ayer Green. I managed to do it all in one day.

## GARDENS BY THE BAY





I could walk for hours in Gardens by the Bay, which is adjacent to the Marina Bay Sands. But with less than two hours to explore, I relied on a map. All the outdoor gardens are free, but the Flower Dome (the largest glass greenhouse in the world) the Cloud Forest (includes the tallest indoor waterfall), and the OCBC Skyway (offers panoramic views of the garden and Singapore skyline) charge entrance fees. Having previously visited a cloud forest in Costa Rica, I was impressed with Garden by the Bay's ability to create a man-made cloud forest. On a clear evening, visitors will be dazzled by two light and sound shows.

## MARINA BAY SANDS



Wide view of Marina Bay Sands in Singapore  
Photo Credit: The Traveling Bornsteins

On my way to Gardens by the Bay, I passed by the Helix Bridge, a 280 meters waterfront promenade. Rain forced me into nearby Marina Bay Sands. While I had not intended on stopping at this iconic location, I was impressed with the number of restaurants and shops inside. I passed the time by dining on local cuisine in a lobby restaurant. The pricey SkyPark Observation Deck offers great photo opportunities on non-cloudy days.

## MERLION PARK



Like millions of other people who have taken a photo in front of the 8.6-meter tall lion's head with the body of a fish, I waited my turn to stand near the spouting fountain. This national icon is associated with an ancient myth that involves a prince meeting a lion when he came to Lion City (Singapore). This is the perfect spot to get a panoramic view of the Marina Bay area as well as parts of the skyline. It's also a great place to hop aboard a river cruise.

## SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF HISTORIC DISTRICT





Fullerton Heritage Gallery in Singapore  
Photo Credit: The Traveling Bornsteins

Another great spot is the Fullerton Hotel Singapore, which used to be a general post office. I was surprised to find a small collection of artifacts in the Fullerton Heritage Gallery. As I walked toward the Asian Civilisations Museum, I passed by the National Gallery Singapore, Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall, and the Old Parliament House. All of the buildings have very interesting backstories, which is why I couldn't wait to snap a few photos.

## SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS





I took a tour bus to see this majestic garden which was established in 1859. Since my time was limited, I chose to focus on the notable National Orchid Garden – the largest display of orchids in the world. The orchid family is the largest family of flowering plants in the world. While orchids have been part of the garden since its opening, the actual National Orchid Garden was established on three hectares in 1995. Singapore Botanic Gardens is also recognized as the most visited botanic garden in the world.

## SINGAPORE RIVER CRUISE



After walking for hours, I needed a break. And a cruise along the Singapore River was the perfect respite. My cruise guide pointed out key aspects of Singapore's history, culture and architecture and frequently mentioned Sir Stamford Raffles' impact on the growing city. In the 19th century, Raffles recognized Singapore's ideal location as a trading center that eventually connected the East with the West.

## NEW IN 2019

One of the best things about visiting Singapore next year will be the Jewel Changi Airport, which will make its debut with a spectacular glass and steel facade in front of Changi Airport Terminal 1. The structure will add five levels above ground and five basement levels, covering approximately 1.4-million square feet. There will be new innovative attractions, gardens, stores, restaurants and a hotel within walking distance of Terminals 1, 2 and 3. So now is the best time to start planning your 2019 trip to Singapore, before tourists start flocking to this Southeast Asian country.

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Sandy Bornstein



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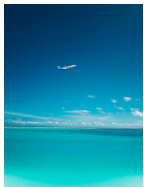
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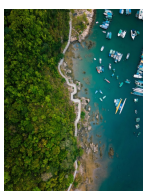
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