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3:30 - 4:30 pm Beach Bootcamp.

5:00 pm Personal massage session in the privacy of your own room. Dinner prepared by Nutritionist. 8:00 pm

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Day 3:

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Traditional Thai boxing lessons 3:00 - 5:00 pm

and conditioning. 5:30 - 8:00 pm Leisure time in the villa.

Day 4:

Our last day will be reserved for relaxation at the villa plus a personal training session at your convenience. Breakfast and lunch will be included, checkout - 5pm at the latest.

The schedule may be subject to change under certain circumstances.



Editor's Letter

After a fun but "boundary-pushing" day at an adventure park in New Zealand, I started comparing the rides to finding your Valentine.

The first ride was the Fearfall, which took you up to a dizzying height and then dropped you suddenly, leaving you with a weird feeling in your stomach. If you know the words of the Katy Perry song "Wide Awake", you'll know what I mean!

Then there was the Stratosfear, so exciting and fun, but it kept leaving you hanging (completely upside down for at least five of the longest seconds each swing). This was probably the only awful experience of the



park, and as I hung there I was wondering if my will was up to date and whether I'd die before I actually hit the ground.

The Log Flume wasn't very exciting, but it was lovely and sweet (though, in the end, rather wet...) The Motion Master 4D movie ride was fun, but it wasn't real. However, the Invader was just the right mix of swirls and twirls, ups and downs; it was a bit scary sometimes but it didn't make you feel sick. We all decided that this was our favourite – and the right combination for the perfect Valentine.

Whether you've been with your romantic partner for a week or a couple of decades, I think it's important to celebrate a romantic night, even if it's not on Valentine's Day itself. I'm sure a night or weekend away will do the trick, especially if you've been lucky enough to find yourself an Invader!

Happy Romantic February!



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Keeping you up to date with the latest news and promotions around town, plus heaps of online-only content. *Tip:* For fabulous EL travel deals, go to expatliving.sg/travel.

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CONTENTS



NEWS

- 18 What's New in Town
- 24 Dates for Your Diary
- 32 Forum:
 - Readers' letters

34 Social Pages:

Photos from recent events

PROPERTY

82 Investment Advice:

Changes in UK buy-to-let regulations

85 Street Talk:

Cool spots in Holland Village from a reader in the know

LIFE & FAMILY

- 92 News
- 100 Noticeboard:
- Pets for adoption
- 103 Learning for Life:

Enrichment activities all over the island

HOME

- 40 News
- 42 Home Showcase:

Take a tour of this beautiful Bukit Timah home

52 Resort Living:

How to recreate the look in your own place

57 Home Showcase:

Carl Hall shows us his St.Regis Residence apartment

- 66 Reader Recommendations: Kids' furniture
- 69 Buying Guide:

Beds, desks and more for children's rooms





Education Insights:

- 109 Tips on tertiary education for new graduates
- 112 Sir Manasseh Meyer International School is moving
- 114 Learning at the Integrated International School
- 117 People Profile:

The dynamic duo behind Aureus Academy

119 Expat Life:

Embracing challenges

122 Galas and Balls:
We meet an expert organiser of expat parties

126 Second-hand Goods:

Where to buy and sell used items



GET RID OF VARICOSE VEINS SPIDER VEINS HAND VEINS FACIAL VEINS

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- Are the spider veins on your face and legs causing you distress?
- Do you often experience aches, tiredness and cramps in your legs?

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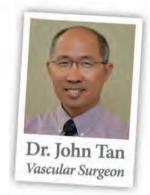
We are now able to remove varicose veins without any open surgery through the use of Endovenous Ablation Treatment (using Laser, Radiofrequency or Clarivein).

This method involves inserting a fine wire into the varicose veins and sealing them without any cuts. The procedure can be done under local anesthesia without any need for hospitalization. The wounds will heal with no incisional scars.

If you have thread-like spider veins on your legs and face, they can be successfully eliminated using combination of micro-sclerotherapy and vein-wave laser.



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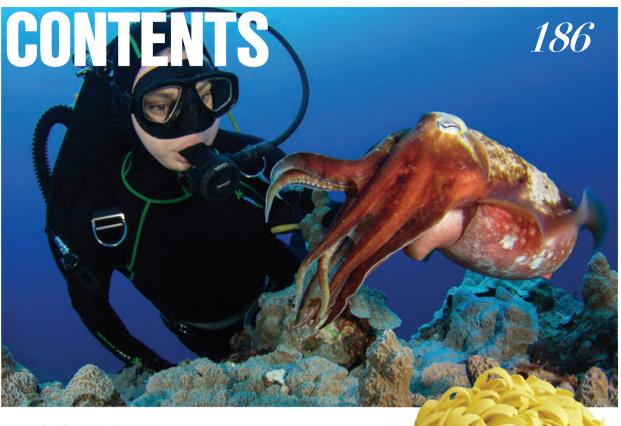
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ARTS & LEISURE

136 Spring Shopping:
A sneak peek at one of the season's hottest retail events

138 On the Stage:
Live music, dance and theatre

140 On the Screen:
Big-and small-screen highlights for this month

141 Enter *Expat Living*'s Photo Competition

142 On the Page:Recent book releases

144 On the Wall: What's on in the art scene



WINE & DINE

148 News

152 At the Bar:

New nightspots reviewed

bars, and date-night inspiration

136

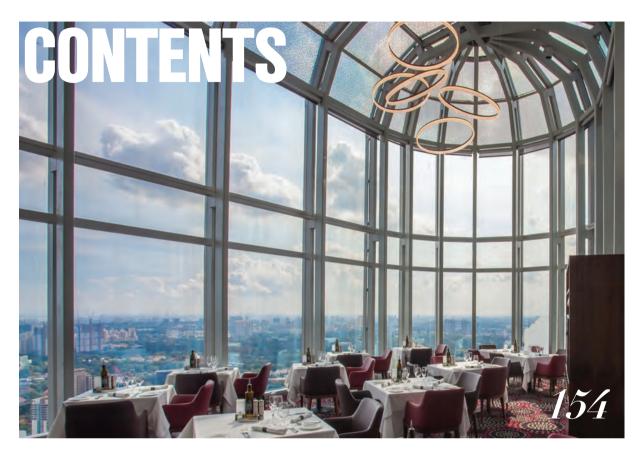
154 Valentine's Dining:Romantic restaurants and

meringue pie

164 Top Nights Out:
Our guide to perfect venues for special occasions

170 The Great Recipe Swap: Fish soup and lemon





TRAVEL

176 News

178 Highlights of Bhutan: Eight days in the Land of the Thunder Dragon

186 Diving in Micronesia

192 Inside Yangon: Myanmar's biggest and fastestgrowing city

HEALTH & FITNESS

206 News

209 Health Matters:
Most people are deficient in this vital mineral – are you?

212 Varicose and Spider Veins

REGULARS

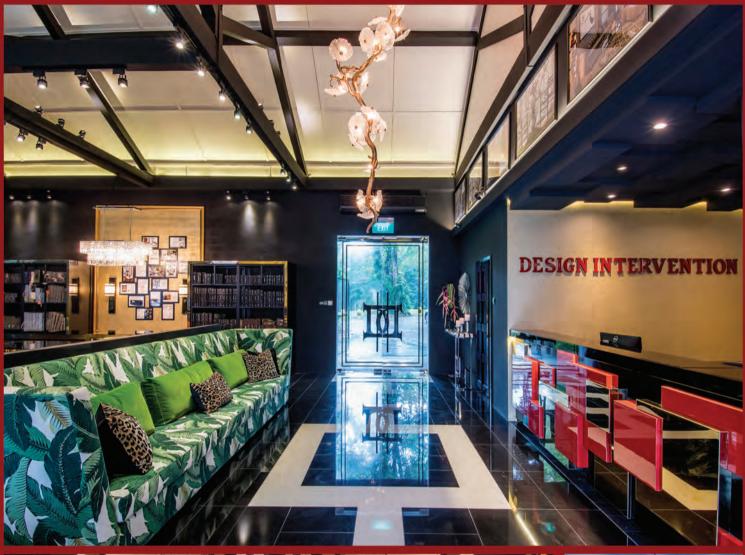
218 Subscribe Now!

219 Numbers & Websites
220 Horoscopes for February
222 Advertiser List
224 Parting Shot:
Remembering Africa

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Monkey Business

Celebrations marking the **Lunar New Year** will peak this month as we clock over to the **Year of the Monkey** on 8 February. Whether it's indulging in pineapple tarts. love letters and lapis cake, or taking a stroll through jam-packed Chinatown, there are many ways to get into the monkey spirit (not to mention two public holidays!). Don't miss the countdown party on 7 February in Chinatown (chinatownfestivals.sg), the light display running until 8 March, and, from 6 to 14 February, the River Hongbao on the Marina Bay Floating Platform, where you'll find giant lanterns portraying zodiac animals, plus food and auspicious fireworks, of course. The annual Chingay Parade, meanwhile, is on 19 and 20 February at 8pm at the F1 Pit Building (chingay.org.sg). Finally, a new floral display featuring begonias, dahlias and monkey-shaped topiaries in the theme of the Chinese classical tale Journey to the West can be seen at the Flower Dome, Gardens By The Bay, until 28 February. gardensbythebay.com.sg ▼





HEFORSHE HEROES

Nominations for the Singapore Committee for UN Women's

HeForShe Awards, which celebrate men stepping up for women, close on 30 March. So why not get involved? Pledge your support at heforshe.org and spread the word among family and friends. Nominate a HeForShe at unwomen.org.sg.

Also: To read an in-depth article on the issue, head to expatliving.sg and search for "gender equality". A

Along with its recent revamp of Snow City. the Science Centre has launched a new permanent exhibition, E3, which transports visitors to new frontiers. It includes Birdly, a virtual reality rig that takes you on a soaring, bird-like journey over New York; and Deep Space, a virtual trip to the far expanses of the universe. It's all about pushing the limits and exploring environments that were previously inaccessible for humans. Check out cool pop-up stations that showcase the next big breakthroughs in technology, such as Google Cardboard. science.edu.sg





CHINA COLLECTION

BY ANNE LOCKETT



MALAYSIAN LIVING

Prestigious residential resort **Leisure Farm** has opened the door to its latest development: Bayou Garden. This gated and guarded residential precinct features elegant three-storey garden and waterfront residences set within Leisure Farm's award-winning landscaped surrounds and facilities. Each residence has an imported designer kitchen equipped with top-notch appliances, and its master bedroom features wardrobe systems. Call +607 556 3003 for an appointment to view a Bayou Garden show home. **leisurefarm.com.my** ▼





FUN AT THE FAIR

Find distinctive gifts at **The Fair**'s first shopping event of the year. Held over two days, it will feature a special selection of exotic jewellery, home décor, art, aromatherapy, ladies and children's clothing, and food too. Lucky draw prizes will be given away hourly. 17 and 18 March, 10am to 6pm. Level 3, Pan Pacific Orchard, 10 Claymore Road. **9737 2384 | fairsandbazaars.com**

TECH TROUBLESHOOTING



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Cluny Court Lion Dance

Ring in the Lunar New Year and welcome the Year of the Monkey with fun and festivity at **Cluny Court**. Catch the Chinese New Year lion dance troupe performance at the mall entrance on Saturday, 20 February at 11am. Find Cluny Court at 501 Bukit Timah Road. facebook.com/ClunyCourt

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Poses are Red, Violets are Blue Valentine's Day memories

Valentine's Day began as a religious celebration of Christian saints, and only from the Middle Ages did it become associated with love. Today, 14 February is a commercial event that has spread globally, including into Asia. While the fascination of the day may have waned for many of us who are well beyond our teenage vears and have been settled with a partner for some time, it can still evoke wonderful gestures and pleasant memories – as these *Expat Living* staffers can attest.

SINGLES PARTIES

66A friend threw a traffic-light party one year (this was many years before Tinder!), where we dressed in either red, amber or green depending on our relationship status. It was so much fun!99 Catherine Willingham,

Online Editor

- 69 went to a different university to my now husband and we weren't always able to be together on Valentine's Day, so I have crashed quite a few singles parties. The most memorable was a big group of girls having a raucous evening of curry and copious amounts of wine which led to one girl turning up at her ex-boyfriend's house to demand to speak with him at 1am. I think they're married now!
 - Katie Peace, Regional Sales and Marketing Manager

Best Valentine's ever

⁶⁶It was our first as a couple, when my (now) husband purchased tickets to see La Traviata at The Royal Opera House (it was a sellout, so I dread to think how much he paid!) after I'd casually mentioned that I'd never been to the opera before - it was amazing!99

- Catherine Willingham, Online Editor

⁶⁶Typical of a long-distance relationship, I thought Martin and I would spend last Valentine's Day apart. I came home from work and found a \$50 note on the bed and a note saying that we were going to play a game. Attached was 'Clue #1' and a riddle that led me to the first place where we met. So I hopped in a taxi and a security guard at that place was holding onto my second clue, which led me to another special spot for us, and so on. Using the \$50 as my cab fare, I followed his clues to five spots around the city, with the final clue leading me back to my bedroom. When I got home, another note was on my bed; it said 'Dinner is at 8, don't be late. I'm sitting in our spot'. Lo and behold, he

> had flown over from Norway and was sitting at the same table at PS Café where we had our first date!99

- Leanda Rathmell, Production Manager





and Marketing Manager

- Emily Finch, Online Editor

CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2016

SHOPPING & FAIRS

SENTOSA BOARDWALK BAZAAR

If you find yourself in the vicinity of VivoCity and the bridge to Sentosa, the Sentosa Boardwalk Bazaar is a weekend market that's well worth a browse. 4pm to 11.30pm Saturday, 2pm to 9.30pm Sunday, rain or shine. Sentosa Boardwalk. tgifbazaars.com

HEALTH & BEAUTY BONANZA

Looking to be empowered to take control of your health and beauty? Keep those New Year resolutions on track, and head along to listen to the experts at this wellness event. Atos Wellness @ The Adelphi. mary@atos.com.sg



SPORTS & FITNESS



SAFARI ZOO RUN (27-28 FEB)

Fancy a run with a difference? Now in its sixth year, this wild annual marathon and more, hosted by the Singapore Zoo, features runs of different lengths to suit all levels. **zoo.com.sg**

SINGAPORE SLINGERS (8 NOV – 21 FEB)

Watch Singapore's own national basketball team shoot hoops at the OCBC Arena as they compete in the ASEAN Basketball League.

sportshub.com.sg

METASPRINT SERIES

(21 FEB, 20 MAR, 17 APR)
The MetaSport Sprint series is a great event for tri-athletes across all age groups, and has introduced as many as 17,000 people to the sport over eight years. It's on again in 2016!
metasprintseries.com





THEATRE, DRAMA & DANCE

THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF

(15 FEB – 19 MAR)
A unique blend of both Western and Asian traditions are portrave

and Asian traditions are portrayed in this incarnation of the original story, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf.* It's pitched to get a chuckle out of adults and yet is accessible to younger audience too. **itheatre.org**

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR & MORE

(5-13 MAR)

This imaginative puppet show is derived from some of Eric Carle's favourite classic stories. Watch the hungry caterpillar's journey to become a butterfly in this exhilarating adventure. Tickets through Sistic.

act3international.com.sg

KIDSFEST! 2016

(11-14 FEB)

For the Fifth time, KidsFest returns to Singapore with an exciting mixture of productions over a period of four weeks at SOTA Drama School.

kidsfest.com.sg

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(11-14 FEB)

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SOTA Drama Theatre. kidsfest.com.sg

THE KING AND I (20 FEB - 6 MAR)

Based on a love story that transcends culture and time - Anna and the King of Siam, the 1944 novel by Margaret Landon - this musical classic tells the story of Anna, the widowed British schoolteacher brought to Siam to tutor the King's many children. The Theatre @ MediaCorp. sistic.com.sg

PANGDEMONIUM 2016 SEASON TICKET

(25 FEB- 23 OCT)

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pangdemonium.com | admin@ pangdemonium.com

BON IVER

(26 FEB)

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FAMILY

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE (5 FEB)

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1 Lorong Chuan. admissions@ais.com.sg

WAITANGI DAY FAMILY CELEBRATIONS 2016 (14 FEB)

Come along with friends and families for an afternoon where good food, wine, fun and relaxation are guaranteed. There will be free activities for kids, a live band, bouncy castle, balloon sculpting, free popcorn and ice cream, and more. 1 Lorong Chuan. eventsmanager@nzchamber.org.sg

SINGAPORE AIRSHOW 2016

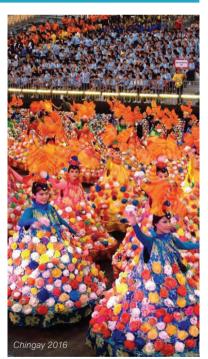
(16-21 FEB)

This show is not just about breathtaking aerobatic flying, it also offers an impressive array of static aircraft displays and is a global marketplace for buyers and sellers. Changi Exhibition Centre. singaporeairshow.com

CHINGAY 2016

(19-20 FEB

Marking the first year of Singapore's *next* fifty years, the theme of this year's colourful Chingay Parade is "lights of legacy, brighter Singapore"; it will take place at the **F1 Pit Building** and **Marina Promenade**. Tickets through Sistic.



STAMFORD AMERICAN SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Stamford American is the only school in Singapore to offer American and International Baccalaureate curriculums for children aged two to 18. Discover more on this Open House day. sais.edu.sg/open-house

ART



TIME OF OTHERS (UNTIL 28 FEB)

A contemporary survey consisting of artists' works representing social, historical and geopolitical involvement from the modern and dependent world we live in today. singaporeartmuseum.sg

PRESIDENT'S YOUNG TALENTS

(UNTIL 27 MAR)

The President's Young Talents exhibition returns for the sixth time to the Singapore Art Museum, showing contemporary artworks by promising young artists under the age of 35. **singaporeartmuseum.sg**

HOME

EXPAT KITCHEN

(2 FEB, 18 FEB)

Perfect your skills at Expat Kitchen's Chicken Dinner Makeovers, with dishes bursting with flavour and variety to liven the taste buds of the whole family! There's "Chicken'licious 1" on 2 February and "Chicken'licious 2" on 18 February, 10am to 1pm. \$165 for one class, \$312 for both. expat-kitchen.com

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PLAN AHEAD MARCH 2016

5 SECONDS OF SUMMER

(3 MAR)

For the first time, the wildly popular Australian pop-rock band is coming to Singapore where they'll play a show at The Star Theatre as part of their global "Sounds Live Feels Live" tour. Tickets through Sistic.

TERRY FOX RUN SINGAPORE 2016

(6 MAR)

A non-competitive run for individuals, families and groups to raise money for cancer research in the name of the Canadian athlete and activist. It's a day of celebrating Terry's legacy and helping keep alive his dream of finding a cure for cancer. The Big Splash, East Coast Park. tfrgeneralsg@gmail.com

MAISON & OBJET ASIA

(8-11 MAR)

The third edition of this annual trade event will feature a curated showing of high-end interior design concepts and solutions for the Asia-Pacific region, allowing property developers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, interior designers and architects to gain insights into recent market developments. Marina Bay Sands. maison-objet.com/en/asia

INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE FAIR SINGAPORE & THE DÉCOR SHOW (10-13 MAR)

This well-known fair features exhibitors of dining room furniture, handcrafted furniture, bedroom furniture, upholstery, occasional furniture, components, soft furnishings and more.

Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive. iffs.com.sg

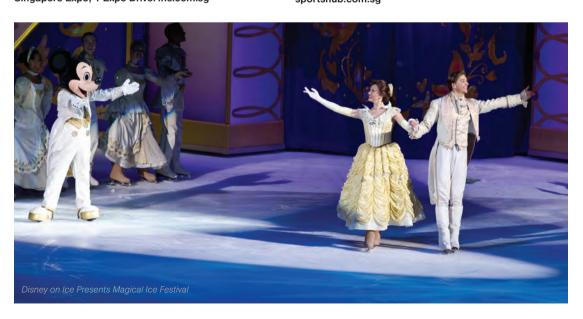


BOUTIQUES FAIRS SINGAPORE: SPRING FAIR (11-12 MAR)

Grab a coffee or a glass of bubbles and enjoy a browse of this fair's chic independent vendors, offering items for the home, outdoor furnishings, fashion for adults and kids, and more – you'll need to block out a half-day to explore all the fantastic pop-ups. The Pit Building. facebook.com/BoutiquesSingapore

DISNEY ON ICE PRESENTS MAGICAL ICE FESTIVAL

Enter the wintry world of the number-one animated feature film of all time, *Frozen*, meet sassy Rapunzel and her charming ally Flynn from *Tangled*, and get swept away by *Beauty and the Beast*. These and other Disney films feature in this ice-skating extravaganza. **Singapore Indoor Stadium. sportshub.com.sg**







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LETTERS Readers' thoughts and comments





We want to hear from you! Send us your thoughts on the magazine, or on any subject under the sun. To help her toast Zubin Mehta's 80th birthday, Suzette van Staden wins a bottle of champagne!

Arts Lover

My family and I really appreciate your arts pages, especially your timely information on live performances that are coming up. We don't always remember to search the Sistic site for something that might appeal to us, but your editor always seems to pick winners. As a result, we had the thrill of being in the audience for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, especially wonderful as I last saw Maestro Zubin Mehta conducting the Durban Philharmonic about 20 years ago! Even at the age of 80, he delivers magic. What a wonderful start to 2016!

Suzette van Staden



Sofa, So Good

My old sofa that we brought with us from the Netherlands via Jakarta a year ago looks very tired in our shiny new condo, so it's definitely time for a new one. I see that Expat Living does features on where to buy different types of furniture like dining sets, storage items, beds and so on. Are you planning one on sofas anytime soon? - or, if not, could you send me a list of where to look for one?

Lisa Visser

Ed: Our last sofa feature was in the July 2015 print magazine - and if you don't have a copy, look for it in the back issues on our website (expatliving.sq). More good news is that all roundup features of this type from our print magazine will soon be published online, too!

Intimately Informative – that's us!

As a female GP with a special interest in women's sexual health, I felt I should write to commend you on addressing an intimate topic that is too often swept under the carpet, both because of ignorance and because many women, and sometimes their doctors. too, find it embarrassing. Of course I'm referring to Viveve, the ultrasound treatment that aims to restore normal sexual function and pleasure to women who suffer from vaginal laxity.

The more openly we talk about these previously taboo problems that affect a large percentage of woman over 40, especially urinary incontinence, vaginal laxity (and its counterpart, vaginal atrophy causing problems such as pain during sex), the more women will seek advice and therapy, including vital hormone balancing, to improve the quality of their lives. Keep up the good work!

(Name withheld by request)

Ed: As the referral guide for expats, it's our job to keep our readers up to date with the latest goods, services and treatments available in this wonderful city - and to provide an open, frank platform for the exchange of empowering information. Thanks for getting in touch!

DR VALENTIN LOW

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Sanchaya Celebrations

A clutch of leading Hollywood figures, including legendary film producer Edward R. Pressman and *Slumdog Millionaire* star Dev Patel, recently gathered at The Sanchaya on Indonesia's Bintan Island as featured guests of an innovative new events series called Pala. Organised by the new boutique property and high-profile Singapore-based events organiser Olga Iserlis, Pala aimed to create a "modern Asian salon fostering intellectual and cultural exchange amongst Asia's top players".



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Quintessential Warhol

Visitors to the launch of new exhibition Andy Warhol: Social Circus at Gillman Barracks were transported to the famous artist's studio, the Silver Factory, in New York. The Factory was a breeding ground for creativity, and it was here that Warhol produced so many of his prints, paintings, photographs and films. Some of the Polaroids featured in the exhibition were shot in this factory.







Supporting the SEALs

Andy Stumpf, a decorated former member of US Navy SEAL Team 6, the most elite special operations unit on earth, was guest speaker at a fundraising event held in December in support of the Navy SEAL Foundation. Now retired from the military after 17 years of service, Andy is dedicated to raising money for the non-profit organisation that provides support to the families of those killed or wounded in combat. Held at the Conrad Centennial Hotel and hosted by The Navy League of Singapore, the successful event included a silent auction for an item donated by Certain Cellars.













Coming soon!

READER AWARDS 2016

The *Expat Living* Reader Awards are coming! Keep an eye out for your chance to vote for your favourite restaurants, spas, retailers, gyms, airlines, brunches and much more. Honour the best businesses in Singapore, and you'll also get the chance to win a fabulous holiday!

LOOK OUT FOR MORE DETAILS IN NEXT MONTH'S MAGAZINE!

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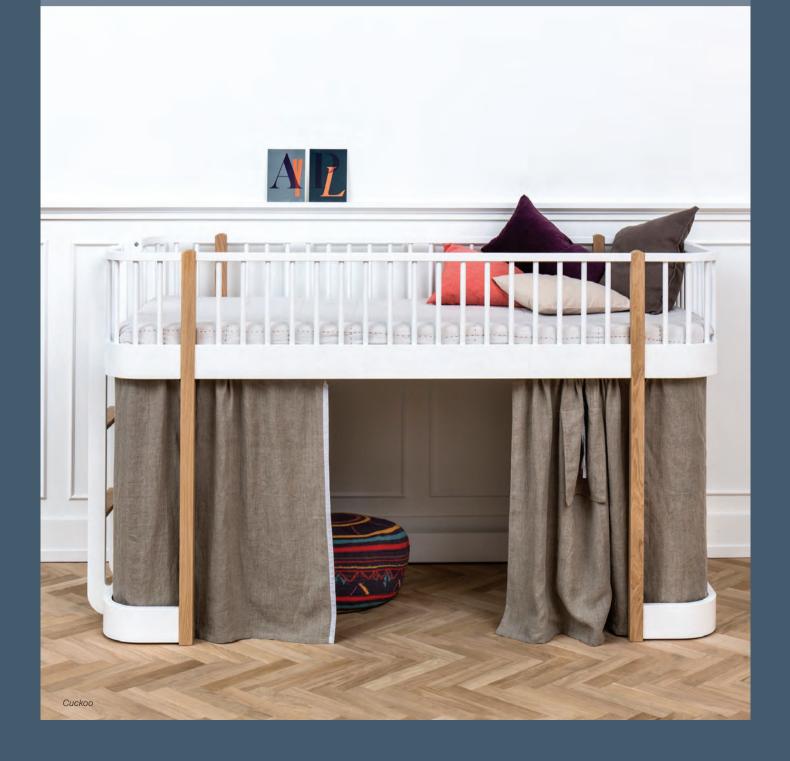




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Home



WHAT'S NEW Hot shops and what to buy right now

COASTAL CHIC

Draw nautical inspiration from the Ralph Lauren Cote D'Azur collection, streamlined and elegant pieces including a starboard end table in mahogany and a sleek, white-lacquered cocktail table. Silver accents, whites and deep navy upholstery help strike the balance between luxury and seaside elegance. Check it out at Proof Living, ION Orchard #04-16, 2 Orchard Turn.



The soft, translucent mineral material alabaster is having a resurgence on the home décor scene, thanks to design trendsetters such as Kelly Wearstler and Aerin Lauder. Its natural translucence and softening properties make alabaster perfect for lighting, giving a multi-tonal and warmly glowing effect. See for yourself the new lighting collection at Taylor **B**, which includes table lamps, wall sconces and chandeliers, at 43 Keppel Road, Level 1, 2 and 4, or

Reader Giveaway!

Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery is giving away one of these Twist stools by Karpenter in European oak in satin black, worth \$250, to a lucky reader. The Italian brand oozes contemporary style, keeping its designs simple and clean. To enter the competition, go to expatliving. sg/competitions, or to see more of the Karpenter collection, head to mountainteak.com.





If you get twitchy at the sight of a picture hanging skew-whiff on a wall, this collection may not be for you, but each piece certainly makes a décor statement. The quirkily contemporary Drugeot Labo collection, available at Journey East, mixes traditionally crafted French oak furniture with bright colours, fine finishes and asymmetrical shapes. Journey East, 315 Outram Road, #03-02. journeyeast.com



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East Meets Vest

About to return to the UK after nearly ten years in Singapore, LUCY RIDGWELL is beginning to tie up loose ends here and plan for the family's future life on the Isle of Wight. We take a look around her beautifully styled home, and ask her about leaving the country that has been home for almost a decade.

By Amy Brook-Partridge; photography by Michael Bernabe

Who lives here: Lucy and Struan (British), their sons Alec and Digby, and Maisie the "Westie" (West Highland White Terrier).

Size of the home: Three-bedroom, two-storey house with garden.

Personal style: English country living meets tropical colonial, with plenty of colour.

Lucy's favourite furniture and furnishings: Two lovely antique Chinese cabinets; bone inlay pieces shipped in from India and now in her bedroom; rugs and a rattan sofa found on the side of the road in Alexandra Park.









Left: Lucy has two Chinese cabinets, both purchased from Elliott's Antiques in Raffles Hotel Arcade. One houses the television, and the other has been "pimped up" and turned into a drinks cabinet. The white pineapples on top of one cabinet are from Bungalow 55. "I had a pineapple thing going on for a while," admits Lucy.

Bottom right: "I'm really thankful for this playroom; it's a super space."

he semi-detached house where the Ridgwells live is in a much sought-after area on the outskirts of Bukit Timah – it's within walking distance of the Botanic Gardens and Cluny Court, it benefits from many road and transport links but is set back from any main roads, and it's wonderfully peaceful and quiet, at least when I visit.

"We've been in this house for four-and-a-half years, and it's been great. It's close to Pibo's, which was Alec and Digby's preschool, and the layout is perfect when you have a toddler as it's lovely and open. We also have an eat-in kitchen, which is still fairly unusual here," says Lucy. The family had previously started their Singapore journey in a "much bigger" shophouse near Newton Circus, but when the landlord doubled the rent they unsurprisingly decided to leave.

The only work carried out on this next home was to add decking around the edges of the external living area. "We eat outside here all the time, and without the decking you would barely get around the table. It's also created a great scooting path for the kids around the house."

Lucy refers to the style of her home as English farmhouse meets colonial Chinese, and you can see references to this everywhere, with plenty of pieces picked up from her travels and explorations mixed with family pictures and a variety of furniture.









The spacious master bedroom suite is a grown-up haven.

Typically British armchairs and an eclectic assortment of framed pictures express Lucy's distinctive style.

Boutiques Pit Building

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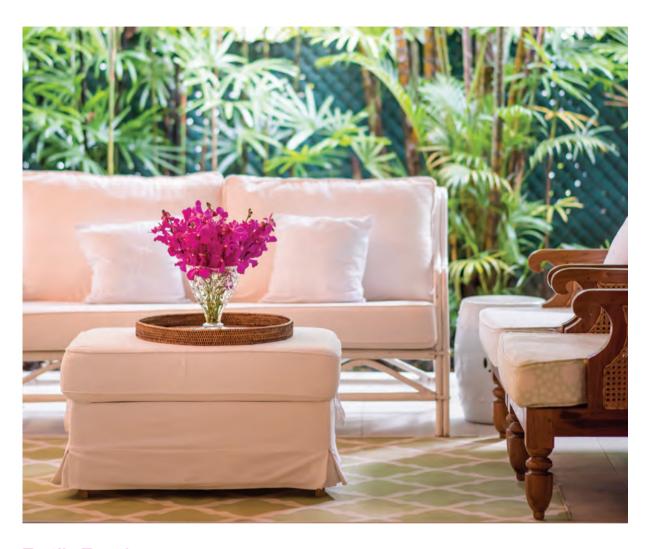


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Textile Trends

Lucy clearly has an eye for patterns and colours. Each room is a vibrant combination of hues and textures, some of which you might not expect to work but in reality just do. Particular examples are the living area, with its pinks, reds and blues, and the master bedroom's striking pink-and-white bone inlay furniture from India juxtaposed against the typically British armchairs, which have been recovered, and traditional pictures displayed on the walls. "It's not about one colour, it's about lots of colours!" says Lucy, and this is evident everywhere.

The floors are adorned with carpets sourced from Lucy's own company, Ruby Slipper, which she set up in 2007 shortly after arriving in Singapore. She started out selling bed linen, and later

branched out into carpets. This was prompted by the move into her current house and the realisation that she needed something to cover much of the large expanse of marble floors. Not a fan of Persian rugs and noting she was most definitely "over" IKEA, she found nothing she liked in the middle ground.

"I was going to India for my 40th birthday and planned to buy some rugs for myself. I had a chance meeting with a manufacturer and it dawned on me that if I had this issue, surely other people do too. Now I can supply made-to-order carpets; people choose the size, colour and pattern, and it takes around six weeks from order to delivery." The business has also reaffirmed Lucy's appreciation of her current home.

"That's another reason why I love this house: it's a great location for people to come over and view everything here – it just makes everything so much easier."

Now, with the impending move back to the UK, she's torn between having someone run the business for her, or selling it altogether. Either way, a decision needs to be made before movetime in June. Lucy is clear, however, that it's time to move back, with no regrets.

"We've had some great years in Singapore, but it's just time. When the haze was here a few months ago, we went back to the UK for a visit, and it was the first time I'd seen the children wrapped up for the cold. I was worried it would be a nightmare, but we had the most awesome time."



Recommendations

Interiors

Michael Tan ("for upholstery") Carlmey Interiors 9634 2998

Make Room ("for ideas and advice") 315 Outram Road #10-01 Tan Boon Liat Building 9113 1274 | make-room.net

Cuckoo ("for children's bedrooms") Block 6B Dempsey Road 9111 3598 | cuckoo.com.sg

Pottery Jungle ("for lamps, vases and a myriad of finds") 85 Lor Tawas 6265 5808 | thowkwang.com.sg

Ruby Slipper ("for rugs and bed-linen") 9116 4471 | rubyslipper.com.sg

Leisure

Singapore Air Force Museum ("heaven for boys of all ages") Paya Lebar Air Base, 400 Airport Road 6461 8504 | mindef.gov.sg

The Ritz-Carlton ("fantastic for staycations, with amazing rooms and views")
7 Raffles Avenue
6337 8888 | ritzcarlton.com

Food and drinks

Rabbit Carrot Gun 49 East Coast Road 6348 8568 | rabbit-carrot-gun.com

Ming Jiang ("for crispy duck pancakes") 5 Rochester Park 6774 0122

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Rosalie Pompon ("for beautiful clothes from France") 501 Bukit Timah Road #02-11 Cluny Court 6463 5347 | rosaliepompon.com

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"Resort living" is a popular home style in Singapore, but what actually defines it? We asked around for some expert opinions on how to get the look in your own space.

ou know what it's like: you come back from holiday but still have that lingering vacation feeling. You feel relaxed and refreshed, and it definitely has something to do with the resort you just stayed in. Was it the crisp, clean bed sheets and fluffy white towels, the warm air breezing through from the balcony, or the jasmine or fresh sea air floating through the window? It's no wonder resort style is one of the most commonly requested here in Singapore, and there are plenty of ways you can recreate the look in your own home.

"Resort living is about feeling like you're on holiday all the time," says Caroline Chin-Geyler, owner and head stylist at Arete Culture. "In terms of interior decorating, the aim is to create a languid, tranquil look that blurs the lines between indoors and outdoors."

But why is it so popular in Singapore? "There are three main reasons," explains Caroline. "Our tropical climate allows for this style all year round. Space is scarce here so we want some way of maximising it and bringing the outdoors in. Finally, the pace of life here is so hectic and fullon that, at the end of the day, most of us just want a private escape of our own to unwind and relax in."



Styling Tips

To recreate this style in your home, Caroline offers five great tips:

Surround yourself with your favourite scented reeds and candles; scent is so important as it can evoke a sense of being somewhere special.

Don't rely on overhead lighting; warm and atmospheric lighting is essential in setting the mood. A few carefully chosen table and floor lamps will do wonders in creating a welcoming feel.

Crisp white bedding, plush cushions and duvets or throws are my secret weapons to recreate the sumptuous and elegant feel of a resort bedroom.

Keep everything neat and tidy. Organise, de-clutter and store away things that you don't need. It's important to keep clutter out of sight.

A piece of art will add depth and character to a room and give it a focal point. It doesn't matter if it's an \$80 treasure you've picked up on holiday or a \$30,000 gallery masterpiece.

Regency Park
"This is a beautiful home that has the necessary ingredients for resort-style living. The indoor and outdoor spaces are cohesive; we've used cosy and comfortable furniture in a vibrant colour palette, and added plush textures and interesting keepsakes; scented reeds, candles and fresh flowers finish the look. Most importantly, the home is a reflection of the owners: people who are always travelling and are very much influenced by their travel experiences."

















The Hasienda

"Elegant with pops of colour, this home allows for entertaining both indoors and out. Subtle, luxe textures and a combination of wood, stone and metallic surfaces are combined with a mix of eclectic furniture to create the feel of a boutique resort. We also peppered the home with plenty of artwork and keepsakes to give the rooms more character."

Arete Culture has two stores selling a range of lighting, artwork, cushions and other home accessories. Find them at 63 Hillview Avenue, #09-08 Lam Soon Building, and 315 Outram Road, #06-01 Tan Boon Liat Building. For more information, go to areteculture.com.





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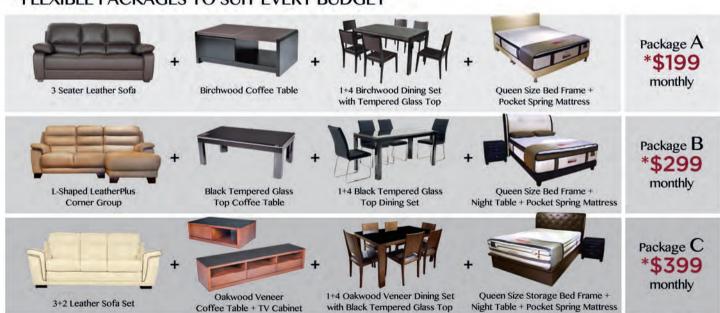
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Masculine 1998

By Amy Brook-Partridge; photography by Timothy Wee and Michael Bernabe



Who lives here: American expat Carl Hall.

Size of home: 2,000 square feet, three bedrooms plus study, four bathrooms and helper's quarters. Leased.

Personal style: Contemporary with traditional touches.

or a shopaholic, living in the St.
Regis Residences would be a
dream, but the charming Carl Hall
admits that he rarely visits Orchard
Road for retail therapy, even though it's just
a stone's throw away.

What did appeal to him was the apartment's layout, convenient central location, and, unusually, the building's history. "My father was in the construction business, and when I was growing up I learnt to pay attention to a building's construction background.

"Here in Singapore, I looked at 19 potential homes in two days, and narrowed it down to three places. It was important to me that I found out who the builder was and any other relevant building information, and I also knew that the St. Regis would want to retain its brand reputation with the property. When my father comes out to visit, I know he'll notice if anything is wrong with it," he laughs.

This is Carl's first international posting – he moved here from Chicago, where he lived for seven years. He's actually only in Singapore for around 12 days a month; he spends the rest of the time travelling for his job as vice-president of medical products and managing director for Asia-Pacific and the Middle East for Cardinal Health.

"It's been a really interesting, sometimes challenging time; the thing that excited me most about coming here was the diversity of doing business in this area. You have both established markets and emerging ones, which means that two conversations are rarely the same."











It was important to Carl, however, that when he was in Singapore he had a place he could call home. Although he says he knows what he likes, he needed someone else to pull it together. Carl and New York-based designer Peter Sandel have known each other since they met at Baylor University in Texas 20 years ago, and, with Peter having started up Peter Sandel Design in 2013, he was the obvious person to take on the project of designing Carl's apartment.

"Peter has that eye," says Carl. "Every place he has lived in has looked amazing. I had a ton of frequent flyer miles and so I asked him to come over and figure out what to do with my place."

Cool Designs

Carl's brief to Peter was to create a masculine yet modern feel that would also include his experiences and influences. "At the end of the day, I'm still Southern at heart, so I also wanted a little tradition and warmth – for example, the darker, warmer woods of the bed and sideboard in my bedroom." Peter worked on the apartment in two phases, first coming over to style the living areas, and then to work on the bedrooms.

Not only does Carl clearly love the space Peter has created for him, he is also seriously impressed with his friend's ability to adapt in a different market. "Peter knew very little about Singapore," he says.

His dining table was one of the few pieces that came with Carl from the US. The painting in the background is Shard, by Los Angeles-based artist Charley Alexander. "I wanted some colour in here, and I love its different shapes and textures too. It inspired me from the moment I first looked at it."

Year of the Monkey (Carpet Auction



To celebrate the **Year of the Monkey**, we've gone **Bananas** and will be giving out **'Hong Baos'** for you to spend at this **Special Sale**.

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@ Colonial Room

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by 15th Feb 2016



15 Dempsey Road #01-09 Singapore 249675

Email: hedgerscarpets@singnet.com.sg Website: www.hedgerscarpetgallery.com.sg "I gave him a month's notice on the project and was away for two of the three weeks he spent here the first time. It was great that he was able to figure out and connect with suppliers so quickly."

Carl particularly loves the study area, which is set in the living space but surrounded by glass walls. "I work a lot from home, so when I viewed the condo this was one of the main things that sold the place to me. Now I love the way I can sit here and see everything, while still being separated from the other areas." The pictures on the wall behind the desk all reflect his experiences, and each one holds specific meaning for him.

For Carl, this is home for the foreseeable future. "It's so convenient: it takes around 15 to 20 minutes to get from here to pretty much anywhere, and there's great service from the St. Regis. I have no intention of moving for now." He also enjoys a full-on social life when he is in Singapore, exploring the many new restaurants that pop up, as well as exercising regularly, and travelling to other countries for new adventures when he can squeeze in the time.





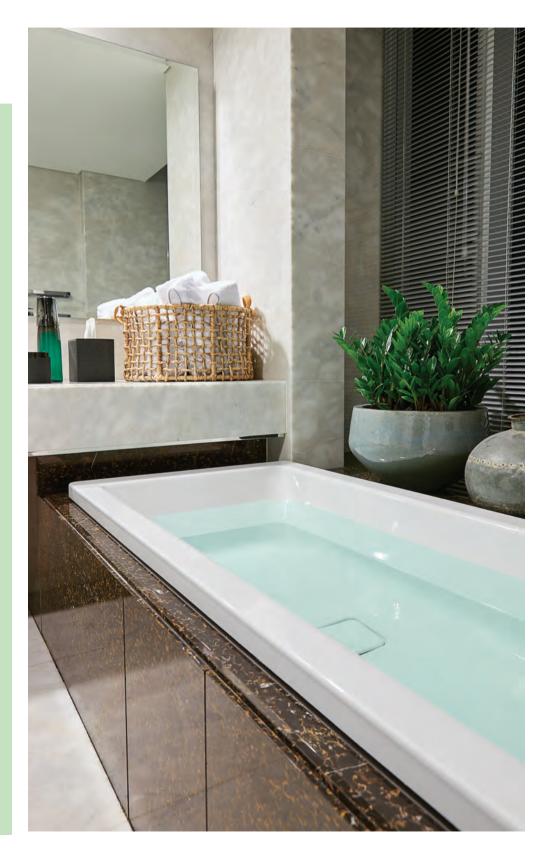


Peter's Perspective

Since we've been friends for years it didn't take long for me to interpret Carl's wishes for this project. We knew we wanted the space to tell his story, including his new life in Singapore. We would accomplish that with Chinese antiques carefully balanced with fresh and modern pieces – a style uniquely his own.

I don't sleep when I'm in Singapore; I love exploring the city for new sources of inspiration. I'm inspired by the pastel-coloured shophouses and their European-influenced architecture, all juxtaposed against the backdrop of a young, modern city; old and new, working together and looking sublime! It was from this perfect composition that I was inspired to design Carl's new home abroad.

Singapore is an exciting place to work; for many, it's also the easiest place to do business. However. when it comes to interior design, it's an insider's game. More than once while out shopping I've been grabbed by a desperate housewife completely at a loss as to what to do with her new and empty Singapore home. Expats looking to personalise their homes abroad find it daunting; sourcing furnishings that are familiar and that they are comfortable with can be tricky. For that I would recommend hiring a designer and it's an added bonus if you're also friends.





Carl's Recommendations

FOOD & DRINKS

Neon Pigeon

1 Keong Saik Road 6222 3623 | neonpigeonsg.com

Spago

Sands Sky Park Marina Bay Sands 6688 9955 | marinabaysands.com

Brasserie Gavroche

66 Tras Street 6225 8266 | brasseriegavroche.com

Astor Bar ("for the best martini in town") St. Regis Hotel, Lobby Level 29 Tanglin Road 6506 6859 I astorbar.com

Common Man Coffee Roasters

commonmancoffeeroasters.com

Manhattan Bar

Regent Hotel 1 Cuscaden Road 6733 8888 regenthotels.com/en/singapore

Operation Dagger

7 Ann Siang Hill operationdagger.com

HOME

BODE Fabrics & Furnishings

#05-10 Tan Boon Liat Building 315 Outram Road 9040 3996 | bode.com.sg

Lee's Antiques & Interiors (Laura Lee) #06-08/09 Citilink Warehouse Complex 102E Pasir Panjang Road 8100 0428

Merlin Frame Maker & Art Gallery

#05-30 Paragon (and various other locations)
290 Orchard Road
6735 1866 | merlin.com.sg

Proof Living

#04-16 ION Orchard 2 Orchard Turn 6509 0555 | proof.com.sg

The Shophouse

#07-03 Tan Boon Liat Building 315 Outram Road 6323 7190 | theshophouse.com

Peter Sandel Design

petersandel.com



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Youthful Frends

Children grow up so fast: it's frequently said and it's undeniably true. This makes looking for children's furniture a tricky business, as ideally you want something aesthetically pleasing which suits their tastes (and yours) but is practical to boot. Here are three readers' perspectives.

Photography by Ken Tan

Simone Okada, Brazilian

We had finished renovating our apartment in Brazil two weeks before moving here, and we wanted our Singapore furniture to match what we had back there so we'd feel more at home. Having it look similar to our place in Brazil gave us comfort, being so far away from home sweet home!

We'd heard about Gallery 278 from our agent, and found the store itself beautiful, with amazing pieces. The service was all done via email while we were in Brazil packing and preparing to move, and it was great. We rented our furniture, and everything was in the apartment ready for us by the time we moved.

Our daughter Alice's bedroom in Brazil is a true princess room. For me, the most important piece in a bedroom is the bed; we carefully chose a big, grown-up princess bed in Alice's favourite colour, pink. She loves her bedroom.

We're very happy with our rented furniture; it makes sense for us as we have a fully furnished apartment in Brazil. We were sad to leave our apartment behind, but also excited about starting our new adventure in Asia.



Gallery 278 278 River Valley Road 6737 2322 | gallery278.com

Ave Tivenan, Irish

Our five-year-old daughter was beginning to outgrow her IKEA toddler bed, so I had been researching children's furniture retailers for a while. We'd visited some of the usual suspects and found their products very nice but also pricey. We wanted a piece that would last our daughter for years, but when I compared the prices with what was being charged in their host country I discovered a large percentage went on shipping and over-inflated exchange rate differentials.

I'd heard about Ni-Night through a good friend who had collaborated with the store over a clothing project. Given that the outlet was in the east, close to where I live, I just popped over one day to take a look. Majella understood what we wanted and why, and explained in detail the manufacturing process, the wood used and the installation, and was even able to throw in a good mattress at cost so we had everything we needed.

We initially thought we wanted a bunk bed for future sleepovers, but we actually decided on a loft bed in white with a built-in table underneath. My daughter loves it, and we love it too! I've already been back a few times to purchase other items, including a large purple beanbag and other bits and bobs. I'll be back to get a bed for my son sometime next year. We can't fault anything about the experience, including the reasonable cost. I could spend a lot of time in that shop.



Ni-Night 7 Joo Chiat Place 6440 7567 | ni-night.com



Marjorie Graaven, Dutch

We have bought furniture from Piccolo House on many occasions, back to when I was expecting our now three-year-old son. Our most recent purchases were made after we moved to a new house; this coupled with the fact that our son was now an energetic toddler meant our requirements for his room had again changed.

Our purchases so far include a cot, which we chose because it's a Belgian brand and conformed to European child-safety regulations for children's cots. Also, it's a poster bed that converts into a toddler bed and hence has a longer lifespan than others. The changing table is the same brand as the cot and matches it nicely; it can also be used as a chest of drawers.

I breastfed for 18 months in the rocking chair we bought, and from which I continue to read to my son. We also purchased two sets of bookcases as he grew, and a teepee, which is in a corner of his room where he likes to hide, as most toddlers do. We've also purchased carpets, bed linen and pillowcases, all primarily chosen because we liked their colours. Our son's room has a nautical theme, and therefore most of the soft items in his room are mainly blue.

We are very happy with our purchases. We're now expecting our second child and would consider going to the same store again. 3

Piccolo House (various locations) #01-32B The Grandstand 200 Turf Club Road 6763 3612 | piccolo-house.com



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"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy", or so the saying goes, but not when you have snazzy study furniture like this to help kids concentrate.

1 Universo Positivo Metal Spook, available in white or agate grey, \$315, Ethnicraft Online, 72 Eunos Avenue 7, #05-05, 9272 1545, ethnicraft-online. com.sg 2 Sebra hanging desk, \$99.95 (small) or \$129.95 (large), metal chair, \$178 (small) or \$398 (large), and bookcases in paulownia wood, \$250 for set of 3, Cuckoo, 6B Dempsey Road, 9111 3598, cuckoo.com.sg 3 Colombo table, \$1,610, WTP The Furniture Company, 3 Kung Chong Road, 6235 2760, wtpstyle.com 4 Kids' table in American oak or walnut, available in red, blue and orange, \$380 (small) or \$520 (large), Cuckoo 5 Atelier desk and stool on wheels, price on request, Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery, 315 Outram Road, #07-02 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6224 7176, mountainteak.com 6 Java carved chair, \$150, Originals, 896 Dunearn Road, #02-03 Sime Darby Centre, 6471 9918, originals. com.sg 7 Miniature vintage leather chair, \$295, Red Saga Seeds, 21 Ubi Road 1, #01-01, 6744 8682, redsagaseeds.com 8 Mr Marius Origami Secretary Desk, Ethnicraft Online 9 Kids' chair in Indian recycled teak, Originals

















10 Seaside Collection dresser, price on request, **Danish Design**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #06-03 Century Warehouse, 6270 8483, danishdesignco.com.sg **11** Elephant upholstered chair, price on request, **Artful House**, 315 Outram Road, #08-04 Tan Boon Liat Building, 8112 6127, artful-house.com **12** Victorian garden accent chair, **Finn Avenue**, 8B Admiralty Street, #02-21 8B@Admiralty, 6753 3466, finnavenue.com **13** Vintage park bench for kids in teak and cast iron, price on request, **In Situ**, 238 River Valley Road, 6733 7307, insitu-sg.com **14** Starlight turnable mattress with a soft and a firm side, and Junior pillow, made from natural latex, **Sofzsleep**, 6100 4569, sofzsleep.com **15** Fatboy Edison The Petit, \$130, rechargeable LED lamp with three light settings, and Fatboy Cooper Cappie shade, \$30, **House of AnLi**, 163 Tanglin Road, #03-13 Tanglin Mall, 6235 3851, houseofanli.com **16** Loft bed, \$1,250, and various soft furnishings and bedroom accessories starting from \$150, **Ni-Night**, 7 Joo Chiat Place, 6440 7567, ni-night.com **17** Wood collection loft bed, available in Nordic wood and all-white, price on request, **Danish Design**









18 Sleigh bed (\$900), trundle (\$350), trundle mattress (\$190) and various soft furnishings and bedroom accessories starting from \$60, Ni-Night 19&21 Kili baby cot and junior bed in birch wood, \$1,495, available in 4 colours, Cuckoo, 6B Dempsey Road, 9111 3598, cuckoo.com.sg 20 Ariel Junior bedroom collection, price on request, Star Living, 1 Pasir Panjang Road, 6273 2522, starliving.com.sg 22 Handcrafted bone-inlay side table, Hacienda Blue, 9061 9446, Watten Heights, haciendablue.com 23 Kids' floral armchair, \$99, Red Saga Seeds, 21 Ubi Road 1, #01-01, 6744 8682, redsagaseeds.com 24 Ash Junior bedroom collection, price on request, Star Living



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25 Customised bedroom furniture and interior décor, E&A Interiors, 46 Kim Yam Road, #04-24, 6702 4850, eandainteriors.com 26 Child's bed, \$499, Children's Showcase, 163 Tanglin Road, #03-08A, 6735 0884, showcase. com.sg 27 Sunrise bed, \$1,120, Cuckoo, 6B Dempsey Road, 9111 3598, cuckoo.com.sg 28 Sleigh Chloe daybed with guardrails and trundle, price on request, Gallery 278, 278 River Valley Road, 6737 2322, gallery278.com 29 Brooklyn bunk bed without trundle, Gallery 278 30 Handcrafted bone-inlay side table, Hacienda Blue, 9061 9446, Watten Heights, haciendablue.com 31 Wicker rocking chair, also in black, \$749, Make Room, 315 Outram Road, #10-01 Tan Boon Liat Building, 9113 1274, make-room.net





February16 eXPatuving 75









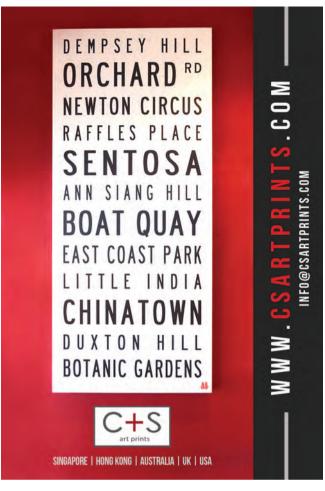
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Being a landlord in the UK has widely been considered a profitable venture since the introduction of the buy-to-let mortgage 18 years ago. According to CHRIS POTTER from Chartwell Associates, a company that offers international property finance advice, a shakeup in buy-to-let property regulations is about to affect the UK market; here he outlines the three changes that expat investors should be aware of this year.

#1 Restrictions on mortgage interest relief

Tax relief on mortgage interest will be capped at 20 percent, the basic tax rate. Currently, landlords are able to deduct mortgage interest and the expenses associated with running the property from the gross rental income, to calculate their taxable profits. In practice, some landlords have been getting tax relief at the highest rate of 45 percent. The reduction to 20 percent (to be phased in over a four-year period from April 2017) will affect the profitability of some buy-to-let property investments.

Landlords will no longer be able to claim 10 percent of the rent for wear and tear. Previously, landlords of furnished properties could claim even if they hadn't made any improvements. This new regulation is meant to ensure that landlords only deduct expenses they actually incur in relation to their property.

Impact on expat investors: Both these changes could affect the profitability of some buy-to-let property investments that were "cash flow neutral" or "cash flow positive", making them "cash flow negative". In practice, it means that the owner will either have to top up the rental income to pay the mortgage from savings, or from their overseas income. Some investors may look at re-structuring the finance terms to make this more efficient.

#2 Stamp Duty Hike

Anyone who buys additional residential property, including second homes and buy-to-let, will pay an additional three percent in stamp duty from 1 April 2016. The extra charge applies above the current "stamp duty land tax" rates. This means there will now be three percent tax (currently it's zero) to pay on the first £125,000 of a property you purchase.

Impact on expat investors: This change could substantially increase the initial costs of buying a property, unless it's your first property. Some investors may have to choose less expensive properties or consider buying now before the extra charge takes effect.

#3 European Mortgage Credit Directive

The Mortgage Credit Directive (MCD) is European legislation designed to foster a single market for mortgages and to protect consumers. In practice, this legislation will result in some UK buy-to-let mortgages becoming regulated by the UK Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Secondly, mortgage lenders will be required to take a new approach to monitoring customers' foreign exchange exposure, including where part, or all, of their income is in a foreign currency, other than pounds sterling.

Impact on expat investors: Although this piece of legislation may sound the least threatening, it may make lenders less willing to provide mortgages to overseas investors. This is because they'll be required to monitor cross-currency mortgages and sterling mortgages supported by an income that's paid in a currency other than sterling.

They must subsequently report to the client if it varies by a certain percentage (20 percent). The extra work that this will entail may discourage some lenders from offering mortgages to people without sterling income. We know that some lenders are considering taking a 25 percent "haircut" to any non-sterling income. The bottom line is that getting a UK mortgage may become harder for expats.

The upside:

- When structured correctly, investment property still remains an excellent investment that should produce good, stable returns and the potential for capital growth in the long term.
- Despite the reduction in mortgage interest relief, leveraging will still work well with property investment, although it needs to be planned and structured with more thought and expertise. (There are very few other types of investments where you can buy a £100,000 asset for as little as £30,000.) Also, the current thinking is that rents in the UK will probably rise over the next few years effectively passing this cost on to the tenants so rental yields may take a dip for only a year or so.



- Although the mortgage interest rate has been restricted to 20 percent, just about all other expenditure is still tax-deductible. It pays for investors to ensure their accounts and returns are done professionally, or to take advice when completing a tax return.
- Although the extra stamp duty is a headache when buying, you will get it back when the property is sold. That's because expenses incurred in the buying and selling of a property can be offset against any capital gain, so although it may be many years down the line, investors should be able to recover this by reducing any capital gains tax liability.
- If you have a buy-to-let property or a portfolio of properties, or are considering buying an investment property, it pays to talk to a company that is experienced in this market.

Chartwell Associates offers a free initial consultation and review of property investments and portfolios. 6225 5707 | chartwell-associates.com





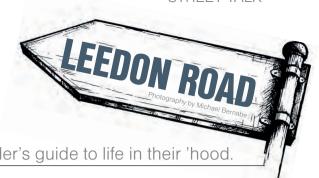




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STREET TALK An insider's guide to life in their 'hood.

THE SPECIFICS













NAMES: TIFFANY AND KIM MORRISSEY

FROM: Honolulu, Hawaii, and

Cork, Ireland

OCCUPATIONS: Business Development Manager and

IT Manager

What street do you live on? Leedon Road.

Exact words you tell a taxi driver to get home?

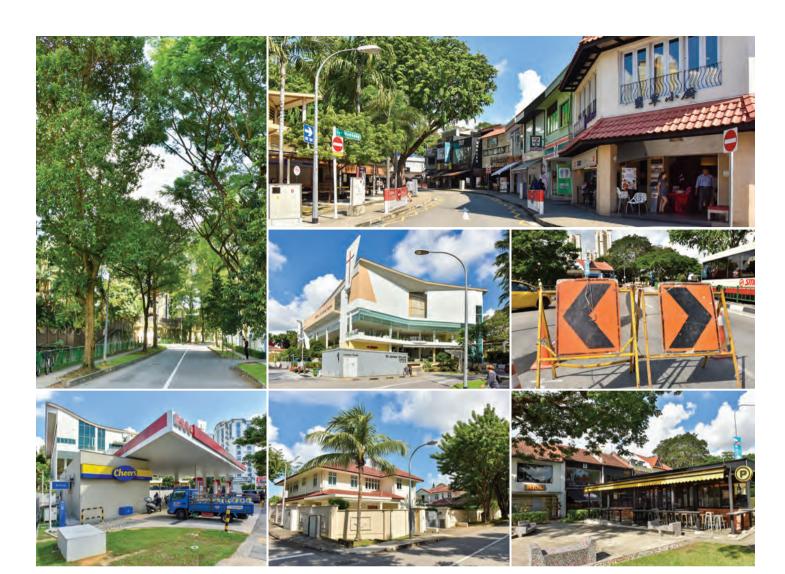
Holland Village. When we get closer on the flyover we say, "Second right at the petrol station, Uncle."

Closest MRT station? Holland Village.

How long have you lived here? Three-and-a-half years.

Why here?

We love that Holland Village has its own MRT station and town centre with a variety of bars and restaurants.



THE SCENE

When you walk out of your place, the first thing you see is:

A beautiful, green, tree-lined street and a church.

The closest store to your front door is:

A Cheers convenience store.

Your street would make the perfect backdrop for a remake of: Love Actually, because it reminds us of a London urban village.

Your neighbours are great, but you wouldn't mind a little less: Leaving their front door wide open!

The unofficial uniform of your street is:

High-waisted shorts on the weekends, as many students hang out here; otherwise a pair of sunnies and a T-shirt would be the most common.

If a celebrity moves in next door, it will most likely be:

Tom Hardy, because he'd like to come over to ours now and then for a cup of tea!

When you're in need of a dose of culture, you:

Wander around Dempsey Hill to check out the art galleries and heritage buildings, and enjoy the alfresco dining choices.

If you're missing home, you: Buy Spam or Kerrygold butter from Cold Storage.

A mandatory stop for out-of-town guests is:

The Holland Village coffee shop for sting-ray and cold Tiger beers.

You'd swap houses in a second with:

A mansion with a pool on Ford Avenue.

A common myth about your neighbourhood is:

That only expats live in Holland Village – it's not true!

If you're ever woken up at night, it's almost always due to:

Loud racing-cars on Holland Road.

A massive late-night rager on your street is likely to be:

At Lorong Mambong, which turns pedestrian-only at night and has lots of busy bars.



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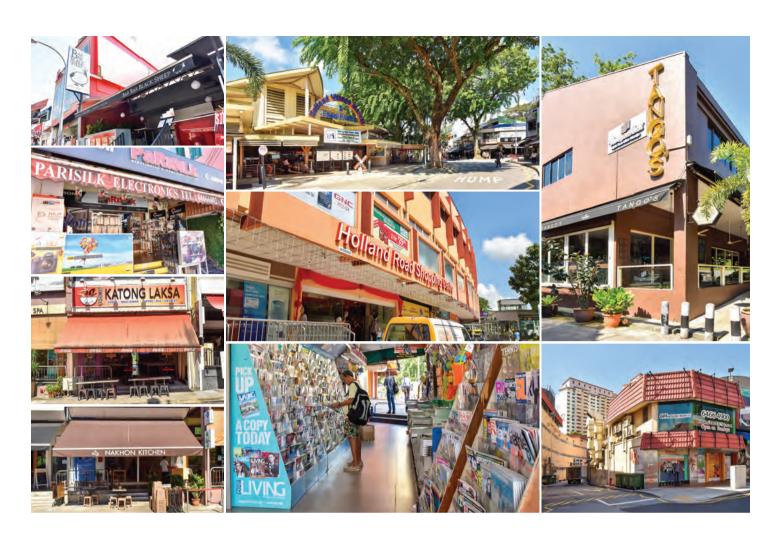
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Medical Director
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THE SUPERLATIVES

Your favourite neighbourhood joints are:

Bar Bar Black Sheep for Little Creatures Pale Ale and yummy Indian food; Nakhon Kitchen for inexpensive Thai food; Original Sin in Chip Bee Gardens for a fancy vegetarian dining treat; The Pit for fantastic chicken wings and a relaxing atmosphere off the high street; Tango for a busier atmosphere, people-watching and after-work drinks during the one-for-one happy hour.

You won't find better local food than at:

363 Katong Laksa for the best laksa, fish otah and nasi lemak.

The strangest thing you've ever seen on your street is:

Two different helpers walking the family dogs and standing outside our gate

flirting with our building security guard; he frequently has females stopping by for a chat!

We love a good bargain. The best deals in your neighbourhood are:

Parisilk for electronics; Quick Massage at the Holland Village Shopping Centre for regular massages; Flowers at the Holland Village wet market; the shoe uncle who sits outside the MRT exit to fix or shine shoes; and the key uncle next to the shoe uncle to cut a new key.

The guiltiest pleasure in your area is:

Chicken cutlet with curry sauce over rice at **Old Chang Kee** or pizza at **Crust**.

One thing you'd never change is: Lorong Mambong being a pedestrianonly street at night.

But one thing you wouldn't mind seeing go is:

Construction of the new centre or mall next to Chip Bee Gardens; it needs to hurry up and finish!

The city gives you \$5 million to soup up your street. You use it to:

Add a pedestrian bridge from Leedon Road to Holland Village, and build a cinema and a gym in the town centre.

Why should your neighbourhood be featured in a guidebook?

Holland Village has a great vibe and residents are spoilt for choice. You can enjoy outdoor dining and drinks on Lorong Mambong and you're just a stone's throw from other cool places like Dempsey Hill, Rochester Park, the Botanic Gardens, Turf City and Bukit Timah.



Whether they're newcomers or "old hands", we'd love our readers to get to know your neighbourhood. Help us by sending an email to contribute@expatliving.sg with "Street Talk" in the subject line. Include your name and street, and we'll be in touch.













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WHAT'S NEW Latest updates for parents & children



For such a tiny, densely populated country, Singapore still retains many swathes of natural beauty. Preliminary design plans for The Green Corridor, the subject of much debate in recent years, were released last year, revealing initial concepts for the 24km stretch that was once the Singapore-to-Malaysia railway line. The plan is online (ura.sg/railrfp), and now open for public comment that will feed into the further development of the corridor. Part of the corridor, south of Holland Road, will close this year for the laying of a new water pipeline, but will reopen in stages as work is completed. So we recommend competing in the Green Corridor Run on 6 March while you still have the chance. greencorridorrun.com.sg

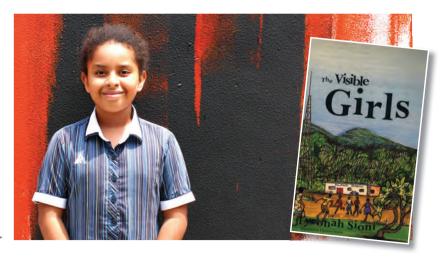
In the far north, 50-hectare Serangoon Island - renamed Coney Island - is now open, complete with resident Brahman cow, 80 bird species and kilometres of cycleways and walkways. It's easily accessible from the mainland over two walkways, so pop it on your outdoors to-do list - and bring a picnic. Open 7am to 7pm. nparks.gov.sg ▲

It's common for couples to relocate to Singapore for one spouse's employment, but what happens when a couple separates while abroad? Find out at a presentation and open forum with Consilium Law Corporation entitled "The Aftermath of Divorce: What You Need to Know", covering topics such as relocation, parental child abduction, financial and custody issues. 3pm to 5pm, 17 February. The American Club, Claymore Road. Refreshments provided. Numbers are limited; to register, call 6235 2700 or email sabrina@consiliumlaw.com.sq.



SHINING THROUGH ACTION

This is a girl to watch. Since winning gold at a United Nations writing competition for her book The Visible Girls, Tyra Sioni, a Grade 4 student at the Australian International School, was recently appointed Children's Ambassador to the UN. Hailing from Papua New Guinea, Tyra wrote about the discrimination faced by women in her home country. She launched her book at the annual Voices of Future Generations Children's Summit where she helped finalise a statement on the Declaration of Children and the World's Sustainable Development Goals.







Children begin loosing baby teeth at age 6.

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Has your child been screened yet?





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Expats often trade stories about the astronomical cost of medical treatment and care, whether it's for illness or an accident, and with good reason. Many expatriates, while receiving some form of medical insurance through their employers as part of a company benefit package, may only be minimally covered, at best. Simple surgery in a private hospital can add up: \$15,000 for common knee injuries; \$15,000 for an appendectomy; \$20,000 for a tonsillectomy. Healthcare plans provided by employers often have low limits that can leave you facing large hospital bills, and this is where top-up coverage comes into play. Established in 2009, **Expat Insurance** currently provides protection to more than 20,000 expats, including top-up plans that work by increasing your medical coverage limits on an individual or family basis, and that should be considered before accepting – and when reviewing – any employee benefits programme. Take steps to educate yourself about your coverage, and protect yourself with an appropriate medical insurance policy before it's too late. Call 6401 9201 or email info@expatinsurance.com.sg, or get a quote at **expatinsurance.com.sg**.

GADGET TO GO

Someone in gadget-land has dreamed up the latest iteration of a versatile go-anywhere adapter. The **Twist+ World Adapter DUO** piggybacks onto a MacBook power adapter and charges up to four devices simultaneously – on only one power point. Its universal plug sockets are compatible in over 150 countries (including Australia, with nifty prongs that rotate diagonally to accommodate the power supply) with a simple





OH, BABY!

French baby carrier brand Je Porte Mon Bébé has no shortage of innovative products, the latest of which is the popular All-Seasons PhysioCarrier, now available in a leather version, in addition to the full cotton model. Suitable for newborns (additional inserts and pillows are sold separately) to toddlers (up to 20kg), the carrier is designed with our hot and humid climate in mind - the cotton body panel can be unzipped to expose a mesh panel, improving ventilation. From \$249.90. Baby Slings and Carriers. 6397 6691 babyslingsandcarriers.com <





Talking Toddlers

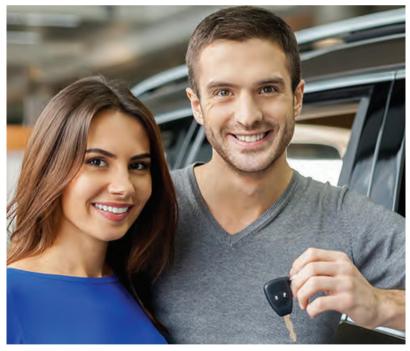
Good news! To meet overwhelming demand for places, Odyssey The Global Preschool will open new toddler classes at their Wilkinson and Fourth Avenue branches. There are also plans in place to extend the popular Chinese immersion programme to the toddlers class (18 to 30 months) that coincides with the optimal period for language acquisition in children. What's more, every class will have a designated full-time Chinese Language teacher who stays with the class throughout the day and interacts with the children primarily in native Chinese. With registration for 2016 open, now is the time to call and book a personal tour. 20 Fourth Avenue, 101 Wilkinson Road (IB accredited) and 191 Jalan Loyang Besar. 6781 8800 | theodyssey.sg ◀

SAY CHEESE!

There are now more reasons to visit the **Trick Eye Museum** on Sentosa, with six new themes unveiled after a recent update to exhibits. New zones invite visitors to awaken their senses, with themes including supernatural, fantasy, excitement and mystery. We can't wait to check out the new photo settings that include animations and interactive four-dimensional exhibits; children will love it! Resorts World Sentosa.







V-V-V-VROOM

If you're a Mazda fan, you'll be happy to hear that **Evergreen Rent-A-Car** is offering special deals on new Mazdas for long-term lease (minimum rental duration: two years), between now and April. There's a range of quotes available on different cars, taking into account different buyer preferences and budgets. Popular choices from the range include the Mazda 5, the large eight-seater Mazda Biante and saloon options such as the Mazda 3 and 2. 159 Sin Ming Road, #01-07 Amtech Building. **6459 0990 | evergreenrentacar.com**



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Environment News



ART FROM RUBBISH

Ghost nets are a major problem for the world's oceans, not only washing up on beaches and polluting the landscape, but pointlessly drifting - entangling and ultimately killing marine life; turtles are especially vulnerable. The nets originate from trawling boats, which are used in the fishing industry in Southeast Asia, and ocean currents then circulate them far and wide. Long burdened with the negative environmental impact of ghost nets, Northern Australian indigenous coastal communities have been creatively turning this dangerous rubbish into artworks in collaboration with the Ghost Nets Art Project (ghostnets. com.au), which melds awareness raising, recycling, sustainability and conservation into truly collectable pieces. Works featuring the art of Erub Artists (erubarts.com.au), from remote Darnley Island, will return to Redot Gallery later this year after a successful exhibition last year. They will also show their work at the Sydney Biennale and the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. redotgallery.com A

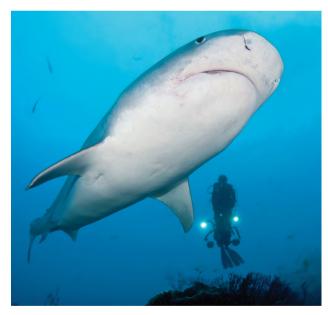


BABY RESCUE

Forest fires in Indonesia could see more orangutan babies being sold into the illegal pet trade. Forced out of their forest home by the fires, orangutans become easy targets for poachers. Tragically, poachers will kill an orangutan mother to get to her baby. In a recent undercover operation, **WWF's Wildlife Crime Unit**, with help from police in Sumatra, intercepted the sale of three baby orangutans.



The infants, found squeezed into small baskets, were in poor health but are making a recovery at a rehabilitation centre. WWF reports that 70 rescued orangutans have so far been successfully reintroduced to Tigapuluh National Park in Sumatra. You can help to feed an orphaned orangutan through WWF Singapore's online gift catalogue. giftcatalogue.wwf.sg



COUNTING SHARKS

Despite many restaurants and supermarkets having dropped shark fin products, shark fin soup is still a popular delicacy in Singapore over Chinese New Year. It's estimated that some shark populations have fallen by over 90 percent in the past 20 years, driven by demand from an increasingly prosperous China. Alarming statistics show that fins from up to 73 million sharks pass through Hong Kong markets each year. If you're a diver, why not carry out some shark research on your next underwater adventure? The **Shark Savers** campaign group will provide you with a scientific log to count and identify your shark encounters so you can be part of their global shark project. **sharksavers.org**



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NOTICEBOARD

ANIMAL ADOPTION



Ms Cabbage was abandoned, along with her daughter and friends, at a construction site. She may initially appear aloof, but really she yearns for warmth and love.

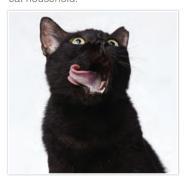
When her owner moved away, **Tamtam** was left to the kindness of strangers until someone reported her to be removed from the neighbourhood. Rescued into a multi-cat home, Tamtam has a nature that would rather suit somewhere she can get the undivided attention she needs.



ER UCH C

Mr Bon is looking for some patient adopters who can understand that, although he likes the occasional strokes, he doesn't like being carried too long. He is three years old, and suitable for a single cat owner.

Sirius was found as an injured community cat. He is four years old, has now been given a clean bill of health and is looking for a home to call his own. He's a gentle and affectionate cat who loves cuddles and a nice warm lap to curl up on. Sirius is most suitable for a single-cat household.



The Cat Welfare Society (CWS) has launched a commemorative coffee table book aimed at raising funds to support its cause. The 100-page book, *The Society of Cats*, pictures the adventures of Singapore's community cats, all those featured being rescued or adopted animals. The book is also full of quotes, fun facts and valuable tips on cat care. It's priced at \$25, which is equal to the cost of sterilising one male cat.

There is an ongoing demand for CWS's services; the organisation handles more than 2,500 cases annually from the public, town councils and government agencies, and carries out the sterilisation of 4,000 cats per year. Funding is required to meet the costs of these services.

To purchase *The Society* of *Cats* go to **shopee.sg/ catwelfaresociety**, or if you're interested in finding out more about the society or adopting a cat, go to **catwelfare.org**.



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It's said that variety is the spice of life, and Singapore has bountiful opportunities to try out new sports, culture and language. Here, *Expat Living* readers tell us what their children have experienced at seven different activities across the island.



Camp Asia

Nicole Joye, Swiss Liam (11), Fynn (9), Evan (4) Nicole has lived in Singapore for 15 years

We found out about Camp Asia four years ago when my two older boys joined Stamford American International School, and they've been attending its camps for the past year. We chose the camps this year for the variety of courses available, and my children attend every Saturday for an hour. Liam does soccer, Fynn does golf and drama, and Evan does soccer and tennis.

The boys like the enthusiastic teachers, the small groups and being able to make new friends. I would absolutely recommend Camp Asia for its weekly programmes and for its holiday camps, too. The staff are friendly, knowledgeable and fun. I also like how well organised everything is, the fact that the location is close to where we live, and the timing of the morning classes.

Two locations: Australian International School and Stamford American International School 6593 3691 | campasia.asia

JSSL Arsenal

Fukiko and Jonathon Mann, Japanese and British Moe (8), Sho (13), Max (14) Have been living in Singapore for 19 years

All our kids have been participating in JSSL football programmes for the past five years. They are very fortunate to be in the NeXt Gen and Elite programmes, which are intensive with one or two mid-week training sessions and one on Saturday, plus Sunday league games and frequent tournaments both in Singapore and abroad.

From a parent's perspective, soccer gives kids much more than just foot skills and exercise. They learn teamwork, discipline and also respect for other players, their coaches and the sport. However, it's very important for them to be placed in the appropriate training sessions and teams. As the largest soccer school in Singapore, JSSL has the range of players and coaches to give players, no matter their age, fitness or skill level, a rewarding experience.

Our daughter Moe really enjoys playing in the girls' league and competing in local competitions with an eager team of young girls. Her team also competes in a JSSL boys' league and has competed in a boys' tournament abroad. Also, our boys, who are older, relish the intensity of training that comes with the Elite programme.

This is a big commitment and step-up in fitness levels and technique, and again JSSL has the dedicated and skilful coaches that make this possible.

The reward is the chance to compete in (and frequently win!) leagues and competitions here and abroad – and, more importantly, the camaraderie and lasting friendships that come from competing as a team at this level. I would definitely recommend JSSL.



Five locations: Dulwich College; Tanglin Trust School; Macpherson Central; UWC South East Asia (East Campus); Global Indian International School 9168 3324 | jssl-singapore.com



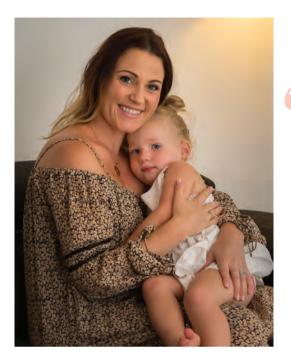
Little Mandarins

Amy and Steve Schell, US Jack (11) and Will (8) Have been living in Singapore for six months

We started at Little Mandarins six months ago. My boys are learning Mandarin at school, which is why we chose to have them tutored; they share a private tutor once a week on Saturdays at the Dempsey Hill location. It has allowed them to go into more depth and strengthen the skills they're learning at school. We liked that they offered the type of lessons we were looking for, and it it's also conveniently located to our home.

I contacted Little Mandarins after I saw their flyer at the American Club, where they offer a class for younger children. I'm impressed by how much the boys have learnt in the short period of time that they have been taking lessons. I think what we all like most about Little Mandarins is the cheerful atmosphere, and the fact that it isn't your typical classroom setting. It's not just textbook learning; they incorporate games and many other fun activities into the curriculum. I would highly recommend Little Mandarins to others. My boys actually look forward to their lessons, which I think says a lot!

Block 71 Loewen Road, #01-03 6473 8377 | little-mandarins.com



Marsden Swim School Nicola and Philip Gennaoui, Australian Lyla (2) Have been living in Singapore for five years

We have been taking Lyla to Marsden Swim School since she was six months old. We chose Marsden purely because all the teachers are AUSTSWIM-certified and they had testimonials. Lyla is in the Infants and Toddlers programme, which she attends once a week.

We found out about Marsden through a recommendation. We love the teachers and they have made learning to swim very fun for Lyla and a really enjoyable half-hour for me, too. I absolutely recommend Marsden Swim School. Lyla loves her swimming class and her teacher, and has become a little fish in the water. The teachers have made Lyla not only extremely comfortable in the water but very confident.

Five locations: Queenstown Swimming Complex; Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex; Australian International School; Canadian International School; Turf City 6473 8353 | marsdenswimschool.com

Tanglin Arts Studio

Susan and Tony Morandi, Rhode Island (US) Kaelyn (10) and Kendyll (7) Have been living in Singapore for five months

Kendyll has been dancing at Tanglin since we moved here in August 2015. She was part of a wonderful dance studio in Rhode Island that was like family to her. So when we moved to Singapore we promised her that we would find a studio that felt like home. After looking online I reached out to Katja, who responded with a warm and welcoming email.

Kendyll attended the open house and immediately felt like she belonged. The teachers were fantastic about helping us find the right classes for her, based on her dance level, not just her age. Kendyll does jazz, ballet, tap and acrobatics, and is part of the junior performance team at the Horse City location.

She is so happy at Tanglin, loves her teachers, has made new friends and is always excited to go to class. I found the studio independently through internet searches and would absolutely recommend it; the teachers are attentive, fun, professional and genuinely care about the students. The owner, Katja, is always present and engaged with parents and students. What's more, there are a large variety of classes, with many offered on different days and at various times. Kendyll has grown so much in the time she has been with Tanglin Arts School.

Four locations: 100 Turf Club Road, #01-02 Horsecity Block K (main studio); Sentosa Cove; Claymore Hill; Loewen Gardens.
6479 0304 | tanglinartsdancestudio.com





Triple T Soccer Academy

Vibecke and Harald Paulsen Lovik, Norwegian Oscar (9)

Have been living in Singapore for eight years

Oscar started playing with Coach Michael in August 2013, when he was a coach for the Stingers. When Michael left to start his own Academy, most of the players followed him, and Oscar joined the Titans.

Coach Michael is not only a highly skilled football coach, he is also a father figure for all his players; he teaches the kids values and respect, not only for the game but also for each other and for their opponents. In our first season, the Titans were awarded the League's Fair Play Trophy.

Titans train every Saturday from 9am to 10.30am, and Michael and his team of coaches are on hand if the kids want to continue past the fixed timeslot. Titans participate in the J league (held every other Sunday afternoon at Turf Club) and in friendly matches, and they have also participated in a couple of local tournaments.

We found Triple T Soccer Academy through friends of Oscar. We would highly recommend it to players of all levels – and for parents it's a great venue to meet other parents. Coach Michael is a master of building on each player's individual strengths; we see the players individually and as a team improve week by week.

48 Woodleigh Park 9127 5098 | titansfootballsg.com

VivaLing

Ariane Janis, French Takis (11) and Amalia (9) Have been living in Singapore for two years

My children attend the French School Singapore where they have English lessons, but I wanted them to pick up English very quickly, especially their speaking and comprehension. VivaLing is an online language academy that they have been attending for 18 months, and it has helped us a lot.

They each do one or two sessions online per week, usually for 40 minutes. I had the pleasure to discover VivaLing through a French fair. After contacting them, they suggested coaches who are a good match for our children, and that's why Takis and Amalia have so much fun during their lessons. They can talk about their subjects of interest and the coaches can focus the conversation on subjects the children like.

Our goals have been reached, because Takis and Amalia are now confident with speaking English – Amalia wasn't talking a word of the language when we started. It's also flexible, so it's not a problem to organise their lessons; you can change the schedule.

I'd definitely recommend VivaLing. My children have



drastically improved their speaking and understanding of the English language and they have fun during their lessons. Moreover, the system of programming the lessons is really convenient; I can easily change the appointments to fit my

vivaling.com



BUILDING BEAUTY

For Bianca Antonio, the combination of advanced mathematics and progressive art was the perfect equation for a beautiful future. At Singapore American School, Bianca discovered the intersection of her passions in a structural engineering class. As a member of the Gawad Kalinga service club that helps to build homes in the Philippines, Bianca also witnessed how beautiful structures could change lives. Her portfolio, passion, and purpose earned her acceptance to Brown University as a structural engineering major, and she intends to use math and art to continue building beauty.



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Eton House 6





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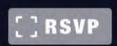
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Shaping the future through education

Off to College

If you're living in Singapore and your child is about to graduate, chances are that they'll be going to university abroad. Tertiary education is a big step, and enrolling abroad makes it even more challenging. But it's more than worth it, according to recently graduated expat kid ELINE JEANNE. Here, she provides some tips for high-school students who are thinking about applying overseas, and she also asks *Expat Living*'s own editor-in-chief for some advice for their parents.

TIPS FROM A FELLOW EXPAT STUDENT

#1 Go to fairs and do the research

University or college fairs can be daunting, whether they're housing hundreds of college representatives or just one, but don't be scared off. Attending these fairs can arm you with a lot of useful information, making the application process a whole lot easier. To make it a more manageable task, make a list of the institutions you're interested in before attending the fair. That way, you can visit these booths first, before getting side-tracked by others.

#2 Chat to potential, current and former students online

A lot of universities offer communication platforms for potential students, and I suggest you use them. Look for someone to chat with who has studied the course you're interested in, and talk to some current students about general university life there. The best advice comes from fellow students, not brochures!

#3 Don't stress about your "stuff" - you'll be able to get what you need over there

There are a lot of "what to pack for college" lists floating around on the internet, but as an international student, I suggest you pay no attention to them. It's not the best idea to stock up on instant noodles and shampoo months before you head off, because you'll have to fit it all in a suitcase. Remember, you won't be the only new student starting university, and businesses are fully aware of this and will act on it. You'll be able to find pretty much everything once you get to university, and you'll usually get a good deal!



#4 Spend time with your family, even amid all the exam stress

There's no denying that applying to colleges and simultaneously preparing for exams can get stressful, but remember to always take time for yourself and your family. As much as they may get on your nerves sometimes, I can guarantee that you'll miss them once you're at university. So do some fun things and make memories to hold on to when you're feeling a bit homesick in a few months' time.

#5 Do your research well in advance, and if possible plan a fact-finding trip

Visiting overseas campuses can mean paying for expensive flights. If you're looking to go to university somewhere close to where you're originally from, then start doing your research well in advance. That way, if you go back to visit family over summer, you can visit potential universities at a much lower cost. However, if you don't have the option of a personal visit, don't worry; if you do enough research – and the right kind of research – you'll get a good feel for the place without seeing it in person.

#6 Remember to be excited!

It's undeniable that applying to university and moving away from home can be hard, but remember to also be excited. You're starting the next chapter of your life, and that comes with so many joys – something to keep in mind while you're staying up late for yet another night, scrolling through university websites!





TIPS FROM A PARENT

REBECCA BISSET has already sent one daughter off to university, and is preparing to do the same with her second. Here are some of her tips for parents about going through the process.

• Every child is unique

I had to make sure to differentiate between what my daughter wants to do versus what I think she'd be good at. It's easy to see what you think they would be good at, but they might want to do something completely different.

. Don't let them do it all on their own

I honestly think it's too big a decision to let a child make on their own. And that's the difficulty, because if you are trying to guide them, you don't want to be blamed afterwards if they don't enjoy the course. You can be blamed for their failure, but on the other hand it's a huge decision for a 17- or 18-year-old to be making.

• Be prepared for the hardships, because they'll come

She was better at the emotional aspects than me. It took a while for the separation to click. When I left my daughter at university that first morning, that was awful, and you can't cry because they will get upset. Only when I was leaving her did it really sink in.

· Do your own research

Do your own research and come up with lots of different options for them. You can use this research to try and guide them, but without telling them what to do.

· Be there for them emotionally

With all the changes on the horizon, parents tend to bear the brunt of the rollercoaster of emotions and mood swings. My advice is to just listen, don't judge, and try not to boss them about too much.

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Moving By Katie Roberts Augustia

Sir Manasseh Meyer International School (SMM) is the latest international school readying itself to move into a new state-of-the-art campus. Head of School DR DANIEL KAHN explains what the staff, children and parents are excited about.

t's obvious from our chat about SMM's imminent move to a new campus at Sembawang that Dr Kahn is enthusiastic about this next phase of the school's development. He stresses, though, that a few things will remain the same: for example, the medium size of the school (facilities at the new campus are designed to serve 450 students), and the fact that it is open to all, not only those of Jewish faith.

"Our multicultural, multi-religion learning environment welcomes children of all faiths and races," says Dr Kahn. "We currently have 19 nationalities represented at the school." Similarly, tuition fees will remain among the lowest for an international school in Singapore. "Unlike many others, SMM is a not-for-profit school. We're supported through the generosity of the Sir Manasseh Meyer Synagogue and School Trust, which ensures children receive a rich educational experience."

Purpose-built space

So what can parents expect at the new location? Technology, for one thing. "It's a wireless campus, so students and teachers can use their provided iPads and MacBook Airs everywhere," says Dr Kahn. "Each classroom is fitted with an 87-inch projector Smartboard, which will bring the world into the classroom, whether it's a virtual tour to see the *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre or the Great Pyramids in Egypt. We have also built specialised science labs for chemistry, physics and biology."

Along with two libraries, there are plenty of facilities to encourage kids to get sporty, including a seven-lane swimming pool, a soccer field, a gymnasium and an indoor playground for Early Childhood students.

SMM also values the arts, and a 450-seat auditorium will host concert and theatre productions. "Our students won't just read Shakespearean plays. They'll perform in them too. And they won't just learn about Beethoven, they'll be given the opportunity to perform his works," says Dr Kahn.

Reading first

SMM is working toward becoming the first school in Southeast Asia to have all its teachers trained as certified reading experts. "They're undertaking a programme that provides the latest educational, psychological and medical research into the most effective ways to teach language acquisition and reading," says Dr Kahn. This part of the curriculum exposes



children to "best practices", which maximise their progression from decoding to critical reading and developing strong comprehension skills.

The unique curriculum is designed in such a way that children, when they move on from SMM, are prepared to successfully complete the International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement and "A" level exams, or any other curriculum, for that matter. "By emphasising research skills and critical and creative thinking, we prepare our students to excel in high school and beyond," says Dr Kahn.

What's in a name?

British businessman, retail estate entrepreneur and philanthropist **Sir Manasseh Meyer** (1843-1930) left an enduring legacy within Singapore's Jewish community. He came to the island in 1861, and his contribution included two synagogues, both of which operate to this day; he was a leading donor to Raffles College, and a supporter of the National University of Singapore – its Manasseh Meyer Building on the Bukit Timah campus was named after him. Inspired by his conversations with Albert Einstein (who visited him to request funding for a new university in Jerusalem), Meyer provided funds in perpetuity to support educational excellence and ethical excellence. George V knighted him in 1929 for his services towards the cultural upliftment of the Jewish community.

SMM is an international Jewish day school for children aged 18 months to Grade 8. It is located at 38C Belvedere Close until mid-March, and thereafter at 3 Jalan Ulu, Sembawang. 6737 9746 | smm.edu.sg



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A Passion for Learning

DR VANESSA VON AUER from the **Integrated International School** tells *Expat Living* how she came to establish the school of her dreams.

What's your background in learning and education?

Learning is to me one of the most thrilling aspects of being human. Acquiring knowledge through school or through self-teaching is a skill that impacts on so much of our personality, day-to-day interactions and passions. I continue to be an avid adult learner and enjoy attending professional development courses, or lessons that are completely outside the work realm.

Learning, however, is not identical for every person. My background in education started initially with my role as a clinical psychologist, where I consistently met very capable students who for some reason were not realising their potential. Worse yet, they seemed to dislike learning and attending school. It became apparent that many students in Singapore could benefit from a smaller school environment which offered a vigorous yet flexible curriculum, and student-centred teaching.



Did you attend school in Singapore?

I know the international school scene here well, having attended two different international schools from Grade 8 to Grade 12. The initial part of my education was at a German-speaking school. As I intended to study abroad after high school, and wanted to experience a

more international curriculum, I changed to an international school that offered the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Was it personal experience from your own schooling that motivated you to set up IIS, or did you see an unmet need in the education sector?

Both. I have fond memories of one particular history teacher, Ms Fran, who was different from the rest. She stood out for her caring manner and her passion for making learning fun and interesting. I always admired her for truly loving what she did as a career.

When I returned from studying in America, it became apparent that the international school system hadn't changed much. While most of the schools offered the globally recognised IB programme, they didn't cater to students who required a more flexible or different learning approach. Keeping Ms Fran's teaching style in mind, and realising that many students weren't achieving what they could be achieving, I founded the Integrated International School in 2009.

What would you say sets IIS apart from other schools?

IIS is a warm, family-oriented school which puts the student first. Our students are unique individuals;





their lessons can be modified to suit their learning styles, and they receive individualised support. We encourage students to ask questions and make mistakes – because those are two of the best ways to cement learning. Besides our individualised teaching style, we also offer a variety of support services to students, including occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioural therapy and counselling. Although many students do not require such specific support, it's convenient for them (and their parents) to have access to it when necessary.

What are your plans and dreams for the future of IIS?

We want to continue offering an academic curriculum of high standard to our students without ever neglecting them as capable, unique learners. We would like to continue growing our school community, though with an

emphasis on growing organically rather than on commercial expansion, so that, again, our students' needs come first.



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The Sweet of Success

Singapore is a long way from California, where brothers Lawrence and Julius HOLMEFJORD-SARABI grew up. The pair, one an award-winning and the other an IT whizz, run Aureus Academy, which has more than 35



full-time teachers and 1,300 students learning music across three locations. We caught up with the dynamic duo in their 3,700-square-foot flagship space at Forum The Shopping Mall.



full scholarship to the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory. "Nowhere in the world could compete with the offer that Singapore gave: tuition, board, living expenses; it was incredible and the facilities magnificent. There are dozens of Steinway grand pianos, massive recital halls, one of the best recording studios in Southeast Asia, and regular interaction with some of the world's greatest musicians," he says of the opportunity.

Lawrence started piano lessons at age 11, while Julius learnt the trumpet. Talking over each other, as brothers often do, Julius explains that Lawrence's teacher was in a different league. "I used to drive Lawrence to lessons and hang about and watch; I found it inspiring," he says. Lawrence, who still performs around the world, endorses Julius's praise. "My teacher is now 96 years old - his lineage

goes directly back to Beethoven."

The two are now creating full-time jobs for many of Lawrence's fellow Conservatory graduates - as many as 70 percent of the teachers at Aureus are Singaporean or performance graduates of Yong Siew Toh. NAFA, and Lasalle.

While this qualification takes care of their professional skills, the other equally important requirement is their rapport with children. "Potential teachers go through an audition process with some of our existing students," says Lawrence, "and we watch the interaction. We also ask the parents for feedback, to find out if they think the teacher has a natural ability to connect with their children. We've seen doctoral candidates broken by the students – just because you have a PhD doesn't mean you can work with anyone of any age! A good teacher should be able to work with each child, regardless of age, to understand how to unlock their potential."

While Lawrence has the musical side of the business covered. Julius's IT and organisational skills have also attracted the praise of parents. "We had a lot of people comment on our customer service, flexibility and response times. We focus on the little things that make a big difference!"

He continues: "One of the essential things we learned from our own parents, who have spent decades in the hospitality industry, is to instil in our staff a friendly and can-do attitude towards customer service. Importantly, in this youthful environment we maintain an atmosphere that is welcoming and positive - after all, we're here to teach kids!" 2

ou've probably figured out we're young, right?" says Lawrence quizzically, midway through my interview with him and his brother, Julius. Their youthful looks hadn't escaped me - I'd already done some mental guesswork about their ages, which they confirmed to be accurate.

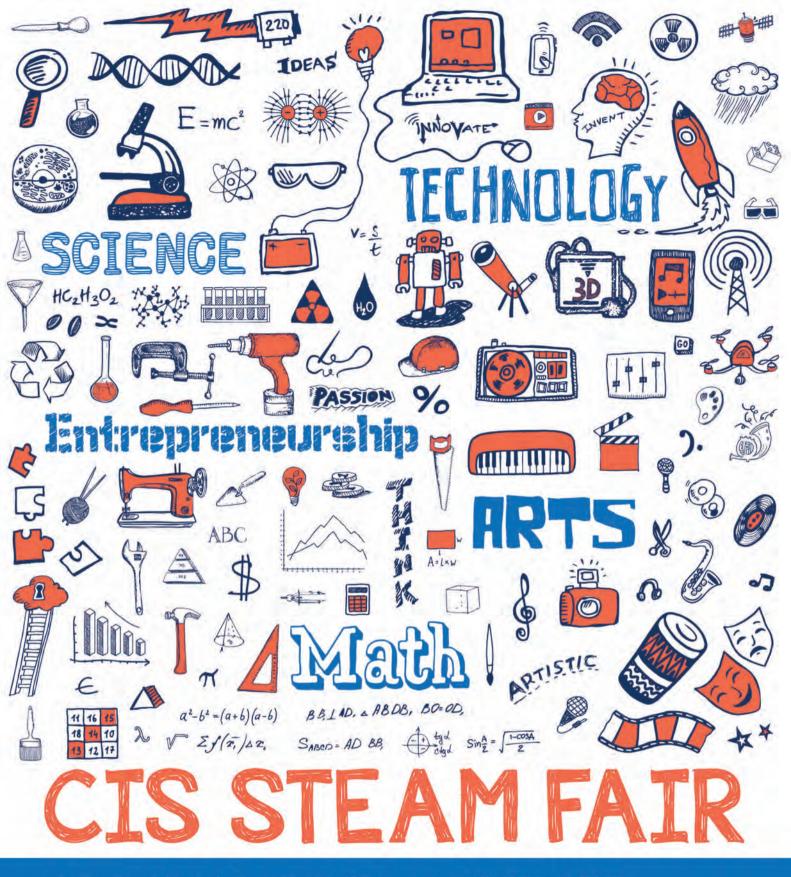
Lawrence, 24, and Julius, 23, are the fresh-faced duo at the helm of Singapore's leading music school, Aureus Academy, that opened in September 2013. With the help of early private investment - mostly from parents who were impressed with the school and thought it constituted a "sound business idea" - Aureus has grown significantly in just two years.

This fast rise can be traced back to 2010 when Lawrence, still a teenager, accepted a



Aureus Academy offers individual lessons tailored to students' abilities in piano, voice, guitar, violin and more at The Forum on Orchard Road, I12 Katong on East Coast Road, and Rochester Mall.





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Healthy Challenge

Expatriate life can be more challenging in many ways than a standard hometown existence, but very few expats take the time to acknowledge that this may in fact be part of the personal appeal. By recognising the benefits of challenge and balancing disruptive situations with support and a positive mindset, KIM FORRESTER says it is possible to use every challenge as a springboard to greater growth, understanding and fulfilment.

ince our first steps off the African continent 50,000 or more years ago, humans have undergone a constant process of exploration, dispersion and adventure. This may explain the sometimes irresistible allure that expatriate life has for some people, and the deep-set sense of fulfilment that often comes from adapting to new lands and cultures.

Despite an array of personalities, mindsets and beliefs, there is one factor that all expatriates have in common: at some stage they have decided to say goodbye to all that is familiar and comfortable to pursue an endeavour in a foreign land. This ability – and in many cases, desire – to seek out newness and challenge is at the root of any expatriate relocation. Perhaps those who undertake the expat experience are honouring the same fundamental instinct that led our ancient ancestors out of Africa.

Interestingly, many expats neither recognise nor acknowledge this trait within themselves; they do not realise – or they forget – that taking up the expat challenge is a choice that many others refuse to make. Mel, mother of three teenage boys, has overseen the relocation of her family throughout Australia, and to the Philippines, the US and Singapore. When asked about her apparent desire to seek out challenge, she responds with surprise. "I wouldn't say that about myself, but it's probably right. A few of my friends have asked me why I don't just say, 'No, I'm not moving.' But what am I saying no for? So that we can stay in the same town and do the same

thing for the rest of our lives? I guess there is a part of me that doesn't want that kind of life."

Recognising that you are someone who seeks out and thrives on challenge can be both powerful and liberating; realising that you choose challenging situations (even if these decisions are made unconsciously) frees you from a victim mentality and enables you to handle stress and disruption more effectively.

Getting the most out of challenge

According to human behaviour expert, Dr John Demartini, challenge is a vital element of personal growth. "People have to have challenge to facilitate the birth of innovation, creation and opportunity," he says. "Pain is your innate feedback mechanism; you need pain, discomfort and things that challenge you in order to grow and succeed."

This idea is backed up by a 2014 study conducted by organisational psychologist Brady Firth. His research into the adaptability of new expats on international assignments revealed that a challenging environment – one that provided stretched goals and opportunities for personal achievement and growth – was a powerful positive factor in expat adaptability.

Being challenged somehow increases an expat's ability to integrate and settle at work.

However, the study also shows that these very same challenges can decrease the psychological wellbeing of a new expat and lead to conditions such as emotional exhaustion.



People have to have challenge to facilitate the birth of innovation, creation and opportunity"

- Dr John Demartini

Having a supportive emotional environment is imperative to reap the benefits of personal challenges.

Mel has seen the benefits of the challenge-meets-support dynamic play out in her family several times. In her experience, if one family member has struggled with a relocation, others in the family have stepped up to counsel and support them. This has created a deep bond and co-reliance that she feels hometown families are often missing.

"When we go home and see other families, it becomes apparent how close we are as a unit. We see families that are much more dysfunctional than we are, despite the fact we have moved around and rearranged our lives so many times. As a family, we have learned how to help each other through disruption."

How to thrive off the back of challenge:

- Balance challenge with support: Be willing to place yourself or your loved ones in a position of unease or disruption, but ensure that an equal measure of emotional support is available for those who struggle.
- Distinguish real challenge from fear: Media or social pressures can easily arouse fear about threats that are fabricated or exaggerated. A measured approach will help you maintain a healthy perspective and allow you to focus your energies only on those challenges that are beneficial to your personal growth and sense of fulfilment.
- Recognise when things are just not working: If a situation has become overwhelming or untenable and the support you need is not available, it may be time to move on. There is no failure in recognising what is best for your wellbeing.
- Maintain a positive outlook: Trust in your ability to endure, and in the resilience of your loved ones. Seek the support you need, but always understand that challenge, if approached correctly, can be an inspiring and invigorating experience.

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Since the first American Association George Washington Ball in the 1930s, annual balls and galas have become a tradition for expatriate organisations in Singapore. A veteran of the catering industry, BOB TAN, from the Fairmont Singapore & Swissôtel The Stamford, has seen his fair share of expats letting their hair down, including guests of Austcham's annual Australia Day Ball, now the largest black-tie event in Southeast Asia. Here he shares some of his favourite stories.

ingaporean Bob Tan – or "Uncle Bob" as he is affectionately known – is the brains behind hundreds of events at the Fairmont Singapore, where he is Senior Catering Sales Manager. His blend of positive attitude and steely resolve, backed by decades of experience, has earned him a massive reputation in the industry.

After completing catering school and an internship in 1971 with the Shangri-La group (starting out as a commis waiter – the least experienced member of a restaurant staff), Bob spent two years in Lausanne, Switzerland, learning the ropes at hotel school. He then earned a posting to the Shangri-La Hotel in Kowloon, Hong Kong. In 1984, he returned to Singapore and a job at the Fairmont, which was then badged as the Westin Stamford Hotel. He has been there ever since.

"I've worked with a lot of expats: Canadians, Australians, British, French and others, organising their respective galas and balls. Austcham, whose event attracts more than 1,000 people – and which we've hosted since 1988 – is still with us, because we have the largest pillar-less ballroom of all Singapore hotels. They also know that I understand their preferences and can run their events successfully," he says with a smile on his face.

Uncle Bob fondly recalls the 80th birthday celebrations of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 2003 – when he managed to squeeze 2,068 people into the ballroom. "I liaised with seven different government ministers and departments for a year to pull off the four-and-a-half-hour event. That is the most sleepless and hectic event that I've ever done; it was a big task."

Another was the Head of State dinner in 2009, when Singapore hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference, with President Obama in attendance. The event for 300 people was held outdoors at the Esplanade waterfront, with a mobile kitchen cooking on site. "One of the menu highlights was a dish of veal cheek – many guests requested the recipe," he says.

Bob says nothing is impossible in catering, and he rarely says no to a request. "The only difficult challenge is when ball organisers try to squeeze in extra tables a day before the event. We have to abide by Singapore's fire safety regulations, but one possible solution is to add more people to the current tables," he says. Using a Singlish expression to describe the stress, he says, "I have to 'crack my head' to see how the extra people can fit in."

Over the years, Bob has seen trends change in catering. The focus was once on the music and entertainment; now it has shifted to food. "Today, organisers request to bring in their own products, and to showcase their countries' fresh produce, such as beef from Australia, oysters from Ireland and salmon from Norway. Some event organisers fly in celebrity chefs to design guest menus; our culinary team has the capability to work hand-in-hand with well-known chefs from around the world."

When asked about his longevity in the catering industry, which is synonymous with long hours and early burn-out, he replies, "I've been working for 43 years – and I'm still happy. The secret is to always try to smile all day. In the hospitality industry you must have passion and a positive mind-set – though, having said that, it's not a career I recommend to my three children, because of the 24/7

demands. When you love your job, and love the people you work with, you know you're in for a great day. I say be happy and make the most of every day."

So, will Bob be stopping any time soon? "I'm due to retire in 2020," he says, "but my colleagues say 'No, no! You're too young to retire.' I'm working with a young team, and I'm young at heart; age is just a number."





S H (AND)

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J. Crew! Pottery Barn! Nordstrom! If you're an American expat craving some goods from home, or an online shopper keen to tap into these highly popular US brands, then read on to discover how, with the help of PacMe.com, you can easily make purchases and get them sent to your home in Singapore.

Look, we love a wander down Orchard Road as much as the next expat, but if it's great value you're after, then you can stomp around Paragon or Wisma until the queues at Din Tai Fung go home, but the shopping ain't going to get any cheaper!

So, what's the alternative? Simple: shop online in the US with a shipping consolidator like PacMe.com that gives you a sales tax-free US mailing address and then delivers your loot to your lobby in Singapore.

"We launched our business into a crowded field of over 100 competitors," says Ken Crouse, who founded PacMe with Randy Wilson in Portland, Oregon. "I had been a customer of many of them over the years, and found that they all lacked two things: a true consolidation/repacking service, which is really how you save money, and customer service that can work from 10,000km away."

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"Dimensional weight is the bugaboo of our industry, and it's not very well understood," says Randy. "Simply put, if there is empty space in your box, you are probably paying for it!"

PacMe addict Michelle learnt about dimensional weight the hard way. "I once tried one of the competitors that advertised the lowest per-kilogram shipping rate to Singapore, but they didn't repack properly, and I paid way more overall than what I would have at PacMe," she says. "I won't fall for that again."

So, what's PacMe's secret to great customer service? Ken and Randy personally handle this side of the business and go the extra mile for their customers – literally! "The only reason to launch a business is to make customers happy," says Ken. "It's a boring day when we don't delight at least one of them."

And delight they do, if Michelle's donut tale is anything to go by! "The customer service is ridiculously good. I mean, they bought me extra donuts on their account just because there was room in my shipment. Now who does that? I think I've used most of the package forwarders out there, but now I have found PacMe.com and am totally hooked," she says.

Here's another PacMe customer, Vivien, gushing about PacMe's stellar customer service: "I was doing a renovation project and needed some odd-shaped items. Randy went to the store to check out how an item was packaged and advised me what sorts of things we could do to reduce the overall shipping cost. There were some items that just wouldn't fit, so PacMe's owner Ken hand-carried those items for me on his flight back to Singapore. I was astounded!"



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Second-hand Shopping

There are some great places to buy and sell used items in Singapore, whether it's online or in a store. For those trying to watch their spending, or simply wanting to enjoy the excitement that comes with thrift-shopping, the following websites and shops are a must!

CRAIGSLIST ***

The Craigslist online database is huge, and the process of placing an ad to sell something is quick, easy and free. It offers a two-way email relay service free of charge, so you don't have to share any of your contact details. **craigslist.com.sg**

GUMTREE ★★★★

Regard Gumtree as the nicer-looking version of Craigslist. The two websites essentially offer the same services, but the Gumtree website is cleaner, easier to navigate, and lets you narrow your search down to sellers close to you; it has a useful mobile app too. **gumtree.sg**

LOCANTO **

If you're looking for something specific to buy quickly, the Locanto website and app are ideal. The kids' and home sections are massive, and posting an ad is simple; you just have to create a free account. **locanto.sg**

EXPAT RESALE

Expat Resale acts as a middleman between seller and buyer. It specialises in babies' and children's stuff, and delivery is free for orders over \$75. Those looking to sell will need to check the website, as it's currently not accepting new merchandise. Items are evaluated before they are accepted. **expatresale.com**

BAKIPA

Bakipa is a mobile app that allows you to quickly and easily browse new and used items for babies, kids and parents. This is great for any busy mum or dad who wants a quick and secure way to buy and sell. **bakipa.com**

CAROUSELL ★★★★

An app and website that makes selling and buying a wide range of stuff, including event tickets, as simple as taking a photo. **sg.carousell.com**

DONATIONS AND THRIFT SHOPS

If you're mainly looking to de-clutter your home rather than making a profit from selling, why not donate your items? The following organisations accept secondhand goods for sale; their shops are usually filled with plenty of babies' and kids' items, as well as furniture and appliances. Even better, all the money spent by those who are buying goes to a good cause!

- New2u is the thrift shop of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations. Check the website for updates. scwo.org.sg
- The Salvation Army has several second-hand stores around Singapore, where you can either buy or sell used items. redshieldindustries.com
- The Red Cross runs two charity shops in Singapore, where
 it buys used items at a great price and accepts donated
 items in good condition. All proceeds go to local charities.

FACEBOOK GROUPS

Just ask to join any of the following Facebook groups and you can start selling straight away:

- East Coast Mothers Exchange
- All For Kids
- Singapore Expat Wives

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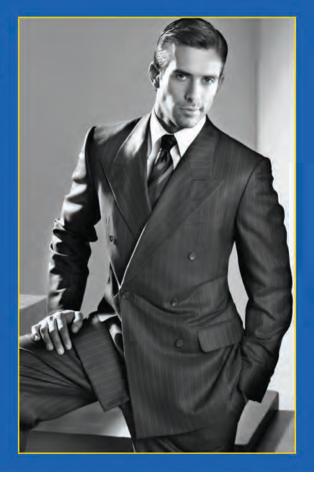
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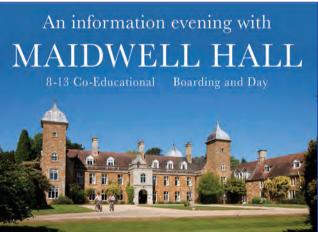
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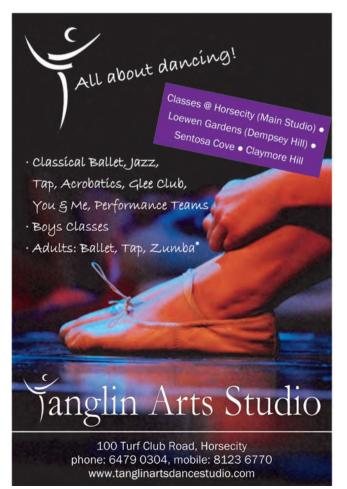


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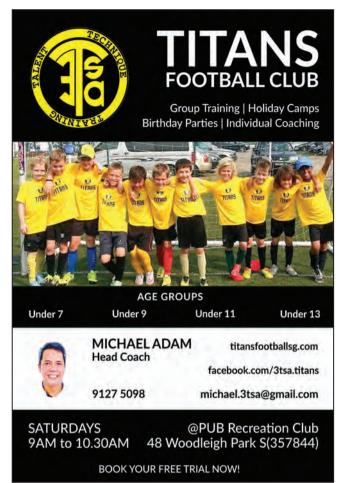
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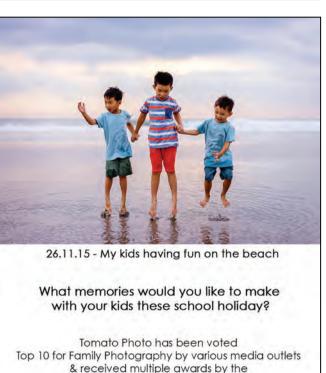
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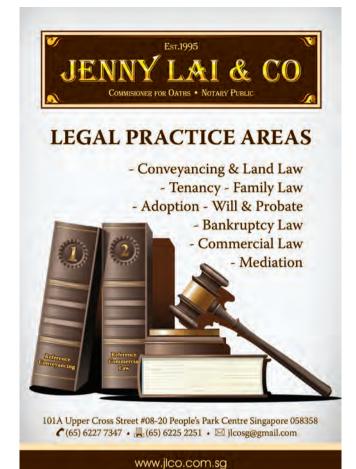


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Mark your calendars! Next month, the biannual Boutiques at The Pit Building is back for its spring edition and here mega-popular shopping fair, now in its 15th year. Started by expat Danish artist Charlotte Cain, the event is known for experience, transforming each retail space into a mini-boutique for shoppers independent businesses and socially responsible up-and-coming designers, with womenswear, handbags, jewellery, menswear, children's clothing, home décor and art: there's truly something for everyone. Here's a taste of what you can expect from the spring edition, which will give shoppers exclusive access to brand new spring and summer collections.

Attention, accessory addicts

You'll love the wide selection of accessories on offer, from beautifully crafted shoes by The Tui Collection and lust-worthy leather bags by Elyse & i, to all sorts of fun jewellery – pop art pieces by Grin (pretty, hand-painted paper necklaces, anyone?) and sustainable, artistic styles from WoonHung Jewellery, for example.

Dean dappen dudes...

You'll want to check out **Hat of Cain**'s range of hand-woven Panama hats (a must-have in tropical Singapore), as well as smart and stylish threads by **Colony Clothing**, including airy linen shirts. Visit the craft beer bar afterward for a post-shop pick-me-up.



Zor you, kiddos

Not only is there a play space hosted by The Children's Showcase, but there are plenty of toys and clothes for kids, too. Be sure to check out Chandamama's collection of kidswear crafted with natural fabrics and dyes; not only are the pieces beautifully handmade in India, but the company supports children's projects in that country, through a portion of the brand's profits.





Ley, home décor fanatics...

You'll be awed by the range of home décor and art pieces on offer. Look out for gorgeous porcelain flowers by ceramic artist Tay Siew Cheng, and Make Room's brand new outdoor furniture collection, which is being launched exclusively at the fair. Also, new to this year's event is The Lounge and Art Space - designed by Make Room Interior Design - with bespoke art décor collections for the home; it's a great place to chill out and mull over your must-haves list!

Listen up, ladies

Don't miss chic resortwear designs by Simone Irani - think easy-breezy dresses and colourful kaftans - plus stylish swimwear and beachwear by August Society, which uses sustainable fabrics made from recycled polyamide (and if anyone can make a rash-guard look good, it's definitely these guys!). Don't forget to head over to the pop-up café and wine bar for some refuelling - with so many deals and steals to score, you're going to need some stamina!

Boutique Fairs Singapore gives back by sponsoring various charities including HOME, Netherlands Charity out for reps from these charities - some of whom will be selling various wares - to find out more about volunteering and donation opportunities.

Visit Boutiques at The Pit Building - Spring Edition on Friday, 11 March from 9am to 8pm, and Saturday, 12 March from 9am to 6pm. F1 Pit Building, 1 Republic Boulevard, #02-01/02/03. facebook.com/boutiquessingapore instagram.com/boutiquefairssg

ON THE STAGE

Here's what's happening on the Singapore stage this month

NOT YOUR AVERAGE ROMANCE

Pangdemonium presents a post-Valentine's Day play that's anything but your typical love story. Set against the backdrop of a clinical drug trial, *The Effect* revolves around two young volunteers: psychology student Connie and charming nomad Tristan. Sealed off from the real world and monitored by two bickering doctors, Connie and Tristan find themselves increasingly attracted to each other; and as the doses continue to double, so do their feelings. Written by Critic's Circle Award-winning Lucy Prebble, the play questions how much control we really have over what we feel and explores questions of sanity and the nature of love in today's pill-popping culture. See it from 25 February to 13 March at the Victoria Theatre. Tickets from Sistic. pangdemonium.com



INDIE SOUNDS

Indie music lovers can look forward to hearing songs from Grammy Award-winning group **Bon Iver** this month, when the American indie-folk act hits our shores for the first time. Led by singer-songwriter Justin Vernon, the band is known for songs such as "Holocene", "Flume" and "Skinny Love", among others, from albums including *Bon Iver*, *Bon Iver* and *For Emma*, *Forever Ago*. See Bon Iver – Live in Singapore on 26 February at 8pm at The Star Theatre. Tickets from Sistic.

FOR KIDS A CAUTIONARY TALE

When Boy becomes bored with watching his flock, he pretends that Wolf is close by, and he calls for help; and even after his friends the sheep warn him about the consequences, he continues to repeat his trick. Using music, puppetry, interactive storytelling and physical theatre, iTheatre's *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* is a show that's sure to entertain both kids and grownups alike, with messages about the perils of lying, plus loads of laughs. See it from 15 February to 19 March at the Jubilee Hall at Raffles Hotel. Tickets from Sistic. itheatre.org



GET YOUR GROOVE ON

Classic R&B band **Kool and the Gang** performs live on 27 February at the MasterCard Theatres at Marina Bay Sands, bringing us their unique sound of jazz, soul and funk. The Grammy Award-winning band is best known for such hits as "Jungle Boogie", "Summer Madness", "Ladies' Night", "Get Down On It" and, the perennial party song, "Celebration". Tickets from Sistic.



CLASSIC COVERS

Multi-Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist and vocalist **Diana Krall** brings her Wallflower World Tour to Singapore on 16 and 17 February, giving fans the chance to hear songs from



her recently released album, Wallflower, in which she covers popular classics from the 1960s onwards from such artists as Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, the Eagles and Elton John. Esplanade Concert Hall; tickets from Sistic.

CIRCUS WITH A TWIST

Get ready to be awestruck – contemporary urban circus, Cirque Éloize iD, returns to Singapore with jaw-dropping acts that you have to see to believe. Featuring 16 performers including acrobats, aerialists, jugglers, breakdancers, contortionists and a fearless stunt biker, among others, this heart-pounding musical performance weaves together urban dance with 10 different circus arts, all set against video projections drawn from science-fiction films, comic books and graffiti. See it from 27 February to 6 March at MasterCard Theatres at Marina Bay Sands. Tickets from Sistic.

baseentertainmentasia.com



BACK FOR MORE

Canadian funny-man **Russell Peters** brings back his Almost Famous World Tour on 15 February for a "Special Return Engagement" at Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre. Fans can expect much of the same material from his April 2015 show – including loads of improv and hilarious audience interaction – plus some brand new antics. But, be warned, seats for this show will surely be in demand, judging from last year's three sell-out performances.



CNY SPECTACULAR

Themed "Lights of Legacy, Brighter Singapore", this year's **Chingay Parade** boasts a blazing, flying dragon, colourful floats, aerial acts and illuminated performances, plus a fireworks display. See it on 19 and 20 February at 8pm; there will also be a Chingay Night Fiesta on 21 February at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park. Tickets from Sistic. For more details, visit **chingay.org.sg**.



ONTHE SCREEN

Here's our pick of this month's happenings on the big screen and the small screen.

BIG SCREEN

NORM OF THE NORTH

Polar bear Norm's greatest gripe is that there's no room for tourists in the Arctic. But, when a maniacal developer threatens to build luxury condos on his turf, Norm (voiced by Rob Schneider) does what any normal polar bear would do – he heads to New York City to stop it. With a motley



crew of lemmings at his side, Norm takes on the Big Apple, big business and a big identity crisis. This animated adventure comedy also features the voices of Bill Nighy, Heather Graham and *The Hangover*'s Ken Jeong. Opens 4 February at Golden Village cinemas.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES



Based on Jane Austen's great novel, this romantic action-comedy-horror movie is a mash-up parody of her 1813 classic tale and elements of modern zombie fiction. When a mysterious plague hits 19th-century England, the country is overrun with the undead; luckily, tough heroine

Elizabeth Bennet (*Cinderella*'s Lily James) is a master of martial arts and weaponry. Putting aside personal and social prejudices, she and Mr Darcy (Sam Riley) must unite on the battlefield to rid the land of zombies and discover their true love for each other. The film also stars Jack Huston, Bella Heathcote, Douglas Booth and Matt Smith, as well as Lena Headey and Charles Dance from *Game of Thrones*. Opens 11 February at Cathay cineplexes.

GODS OF EGYPT

When Set (Gerard Butler), the merciless god of darkness, takes over the throne of Egypt and plunges the once peaceful and prosperous empire into chaos and conflict, few dare to rebel against him. But, when the love interest of a young thief (Brenton Thwaites) is taken captive by the god, he seeks to dethrone and defeat Set with the aid of the powerful Horus (Game of Thrones' Nikolaj Coster-Waldau). This fantasy film also features Geoffrey Rush, Rufus Sewell and Abbey Lee. Opens 25 February at Cathay cineplexes.

SMALL SCREEN

GONE GLOBAL

The time has come - Netflix is now available in Singapore and the rest of the world. Which means that, with a monthly subscription, we



can now binge-watch the Netflix original series that everyone's been talking about (without having to use a VPN!), including Narcos, Grace and Frankie, Marvel's Daredevil and Marvel's Jessica Jones, Sense8, Marco Polo, along with loads of licensed TV shows and movies. This year alone, Netflix plans to release 31 new and returning original series, two dozen original feature films and documentaries, a range of stand-up comedy specials and 30 original kids' series, available at the same time to members everywhere – so, get excited (and comfy on your sofa!). netflix.com

ANGEL FROM HELL

This new comedy series stars Emmy Award winner Jane Lynch (*Glee*) as Amy, an eccentric woman who inserts herself into Allison's (Maggie Lawson) organised and



seemingly perfect life, claiming to be her guardian angel. Premieres 5 February at 9pm on RTL CBS Entertainment HD (StarHub TV Channel 509).

VINYL



Bobby Cannavale stars as Richie, a record label president who tries to save his company and his soul without destroying everyone in his path in this brand new drama series from Martin Scorsese,

Mick Jagger and Terence Winter. Starring Olivia Wilde, Ray Romano and Juno Temple, the show chronicles the sex- and drugs-fuelled music business at the dawn of punk, disco and hip-hop in 1970s New York. Premieres 15 February at 10pm on HBO (StarHub TV Channel 601). Then, catch the Season Five premiere of *Girls* at 11pm.

OSCARS WEEK

In celebration of the Academy Awards, HBO (StarHub TV Channel 601) will air Oscar-winning movies every night at 9pm for the entire week leading up to the awards show. First up is *The Theory of Everything* on 24 February, followed by *The Imitation Game*, *Interstellar* and *American Sniper*, and ending with *Boyhood* on the 28th. Then, tune into the Oscars Red Carpet Live on 29 February at 8am (with an encore at 7pm), and a live telecast of the 88th Annual Academy Awards on 29 February at 9.30am (aired again at 8pm).



Calling all shutterbugs! The annual Expat Living Photo Competition returns for its seventh instalment and, once again, we have great prizes on offer for the best images.





GREAT OUTDOORS: This category's all about capturing great shots of natural surroundings and some animal action, too.

CITYSCAPES: Think architectural masterpieces, structures, skylines and urban atmosphere.

EPICUREAN ADVENTURES: Take us on a journey to discover amazing food and delightful delicacies.

JILTURE AND HERITAGE: Here, we want to see people in their element, and places saturated in tradition - from monks in ancient wats to the village women in the remote hills of far-off lands.

FAMILY MOMENTS: This category covers special shared moments, images of loved ones recorded in Singapore and beyond.

All photos must be in JPG format (ideally between 1MB and 5MB in size). You can email them to contribute@expatliving.sg (with the subject, "Photo Competition 2016"). There's a maximum of five photos per entrant.

Photos should be accompanied by a text document (no embedded photos, please) with captions of no more than 50 words per photo - giving a title and perhaps some background information on the shot; feel free to share what you loved about the location, or what you like about the photo in general.

You must keep your **original files** (digital files or scanned photos) for reference; they may be needed to demonstrate that this is your own work.

Each photo sent by email must not exceed 5MB in size. If your photo is larger than 5MB, please reduce the size, and we will ask for a larger version if you have a winning entry.

Photos taken on a camera-phone are acceptable. Images taken on film must be scanned into digital format by the entrant.

Some digital manipulation of photos is acceptable (cropping, sharpening and so on).

Closing date for entries is 20 March 2016. Results will be announced in the June issue of Expat Living.

Be sure to check expatliving.sg for further details about the competition, including an announcement of all the great prizes up for grabs, and confirmation of our judging panel.



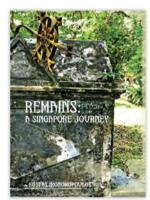
ONTHE

If you're looking for a good read this month, here are our thoughts on a selection of recent releases.

REMAINS: A SINGAPORE JOURNEY

Kostas Ikonomopoulos Ethos Books | 208 pages

His own "burning interest" in Singapore's necropolis became a compulsion for Greek expat Kostas Ikonomopoulos, who went on to visit and to write about its remaining cemeteries, and some additional oddities for good measure.



Part travel tale, part personal

musing and part historical record of Singapore's fast disappearing heritage, this book is one of discovery. His descriptive style of writing creates the feeling of being by his side as he records his physical and psychological state at each cemetery: battling humidity, mosquitoes and sunburn and all the while reflecting on his compulsion to be there.

In stark juxtaposition, Kostas intertwines the stories of the dead (uncovered through countless hours of researching old newspapers and historical records) with musings on modern life in Singapore, touching on diverse themes from suicide to the unstoppable development of this city. Reading this, I learnt about the Muslim graves that lie just a few hundred metres from where I've lived for almost six years.

Unfortunately, there is no index to look up any cemetery independently, and the chapter headings are more poetic than informative. The author has included some black-and-white-photos, but mostly drawings of the tombstones and inscriptions – probably because many are so weathered and difficult to read, and others not written in English.

Kostas deals with questions I'd never even pondered but feel I should have known the answers to: like, who was Vanda? The grave of the woman after whom Singapore's national flower was named, Agnes Joaquim, lies in the Armenian cemetery. She died after being awarded first place for the rarest orchid at the 1899 annual flower show.

If you are looking to turn back time, find history and explore a different Singapore, then this book and these cemeteries will help you to do just that – and possibly serve as a springboard to making your own discoveries, too.

Katie Roberts

SINGAPORE: A PORTRAIT IN DIVERSITY

Tom Soper Ethos Books | 131 pages tomsoperphotography.com

Here's another worthwhile SG50-related publication, one that presses all our *Expat Living* buttons. Described by its British photographer-author Tom Soper as a celebration of the nation's diversity in its 50th year, it involved him shooting portraits of 50 people from 50 different countries, all of whom live in Singapore.

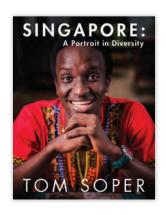
As the publisher's foreword points out, questions of social diversity and multiculturalism, especially concerning migrant workers, immigrants and what Singaporeans call "foreign talents", have become hot topics that go well beyond these shores, and especially so in view of Europe's escalating migrant crisis.

According to Tom, as the project snowballed he realised he could have found noteworthy subjects from 100 or more countries, such is the diversity of nationalities who flock to this city state. Singapore attracts a certain kind of person, he says: "outgoing, fun, interesting, high-achieving and, I now know, always happy to help out a fellow expat".

Living in Singapore has always felt like a privilege to him, and it has been good to him and his family during their five years here. Where else, he asks, could he have met and photographed a Mongolian barber, an Indian chocolatier, a Kazakhstani harpist, an American novelist, a French submariner, a composer from Myanmar or a female 747 pilot from Luxembourg? To that list you can add the likes of Cameroonian football coach Marcel Elessa, Danish lawyer and triathlete Jacob Wissum, South African speech-language therapist Candice Quarmby and many more, including a gaggle of students.

Representing Singapore is my own friend, the wonderful tour guide Geraldene Lowe-Ismail; the brilliant smile on the cover is that of Tanzanian student Israel George Jeremiah. And as a bonus, novelist Alison Jean Lester, whose sterling *Lillian on Life* we reviewed on these pages last year, has contributed a poignant essay as her own personal farewell to Singapore after living here for more than 16 years.

Verne Maree



EAT SINGAPORE 2016

Bethany Chuah eatsingapore.sg

Presented in the form of a book, EAT Singapore is really



a dining privileges programme that originated in Sweden and has now been brought to Singapore – the project's 16th city and its first in Asia – by Asian expat entrepreneurs Peter Ulrich and Karin van der Vliet. It's designed to fit into a handbag and contains information on and contact details for 12 "lovingly curated" restaurants, where the holder of one of these little red books will receive one of two main courses free for a table for two.

You can do that once only at each of a list of interesting establishments including Bincho (Japanese), Bochinche (Argentinian), El Mero Mero (Mexican), Kilo (various fusion), Long Chim (Thai street food), Luxe (Australian), Oso (Italian), Saha (modern Indian), The Black Swan (European) and several others. You pay \$65 for your copy of the limited edition book from the website, register its unique serial number and then, as they suggest, "go forth and feast".

Verne Maree

NEWS:SHAKESPEARE LIVES

Throughout 2016, the GREAT Britain campaign invites you to celebrate the life and legacy of William Shakespeare through "Shakespeare Lives" – a global programme of activities and events to highlight his enduring influence and extend the use of Shakespeare as an educational resource. Here in Singapore, the British Council is currently offering a free, six-week online course titled Exploring English: Shakespeare. Be quick, though – it runs only until 21 February.

Also look out for:

- "Shakespeare Lives Writing the City", a creative writing competition
- A touring Shakespeare Lives exhibition at public libraries from 15 March to 30 September
- Public talks and workshops
- A Shakespeare film festival, in partnership with The Arts House
- A Shakespeare film screening at the European Union Film Festival
- An online Shakespeare Day Live on 23 April 2016
- A six-month Shakespeare Lives interactive online festival, livestreaming Shakespeare content from the UK.

shakespearelives.org britishcouncil.org/shakespearelives

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

To tell us what books are piled up on your bedside table, or what you've recently downloaded to your Kindle, dash off an email to verne.maree@expatliving.sg. It won't take long!





Rosie Milne British author INDONESIA ETC.: EXPLORING THE

IMPROBABLE NATION

BY ELIZABETH PISANI

Genre?

Narrative non-fiction, travel

How did you get hold of it?

I was given it at the recent Singapore Writers Festival.

What do you think of it?

It's funny and wisely humane, the close observations of an audacious woman who is interested in everything, everybody and every place she encounters.

Would you recommend it?

Yes, especially since it's about one of Singapore's closest neighbours. I don't always agree with Pisani's arguments, though. She tries to draw a distinction between corruption and patronage, in an Indonesian context. I've heard that argument before, and I'm not convinced. I also think she is more relaxed about Islamism in Indonesia than she might have been if she were writing now – she was travelling in Indonesia before ISIS went on the rampage.



ARTS&LEISURE

ONTHE

What's on in Singapore's art scene this month

AN EXPLORATION OF GREATNESS

Named after the highest peak on Earth, the Everest exhibition showcases recent works by multidisciplinary artist Ang Sookoon that reflect on the subject of "greatness and its exception in form, scale, feeling and desire". In addition to the show's feature piece, a fabric installation that represents an abstract manifestation of a mountain range – created in collaboration with British designer Sorcha O'Raghallaigh, whose designs have been worn by the likes of Kate Moss and Lady Gaga – the Singapore- and Brusselsbased artist also presents a series of smaller sculptures made from bronze and wax, as well as videos and drawings, to transport visitors from everyday life to the fantastic. See it until 21 February at Objectifs, 155 Middle Road. **objectifs.com.sg**







ARTISTS ON THE RISE

From now until 27 March, catch the **Prudential Eye Awards Exhibition** at ArtScience Museum, showcasing emerging contemporary artists from countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Taiwan, China, Japan, India, Bangladesh and Singapore. Featuring 39 works from the 15 shortlisted artists for the Prudential Eye Awards, which took place on 19 January, the exhibition features works across five different categories: digital and video, installation, painting, sculpture and photography. 6 Bayfront Avenue. **prudentialeyeawards.com**

THE BEAUTY OF PAPER

Currently on display at STPI (Singapore Tyler Print Institute) is **Freely**, **Freely**, a solo exhibition by Singaporean artist Jane Lee. Known for blurring the lines between the two- and three-dimensional, Jane challenges the notion of what constitutes a painting by using unconventional materials, tools and techniques. In addition to offset lithography and screen-print techniques, she stacks and collages all kinds of paper – from recycled and tracing paper to STPI handmade cotton paper and textile paper – and other materials like Mylar and acrylic sheets to create multidimensional installation works that touch on themes of entrapment and freedom, with birds and nature scenes as metaphors throughout. See it until 5 March at STPI, 41 Robertson





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A SUMPTUOUS BEEF SELECTION

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CHUCK & BLADE

Considered the best cut for flavourful beef stew, this is also often sold as braising steak. A wee bit more tender than stewing steak, it is likewise a wonderful choice for casseroles.



FORE RIB

Need a cut for a marvellous roast? With its good marbling and fat cover on the outside, fore ribs are your best bets. Better yet, cut these into "Ribeyes" for grilling, frying or BBQ.



SIRLOIN

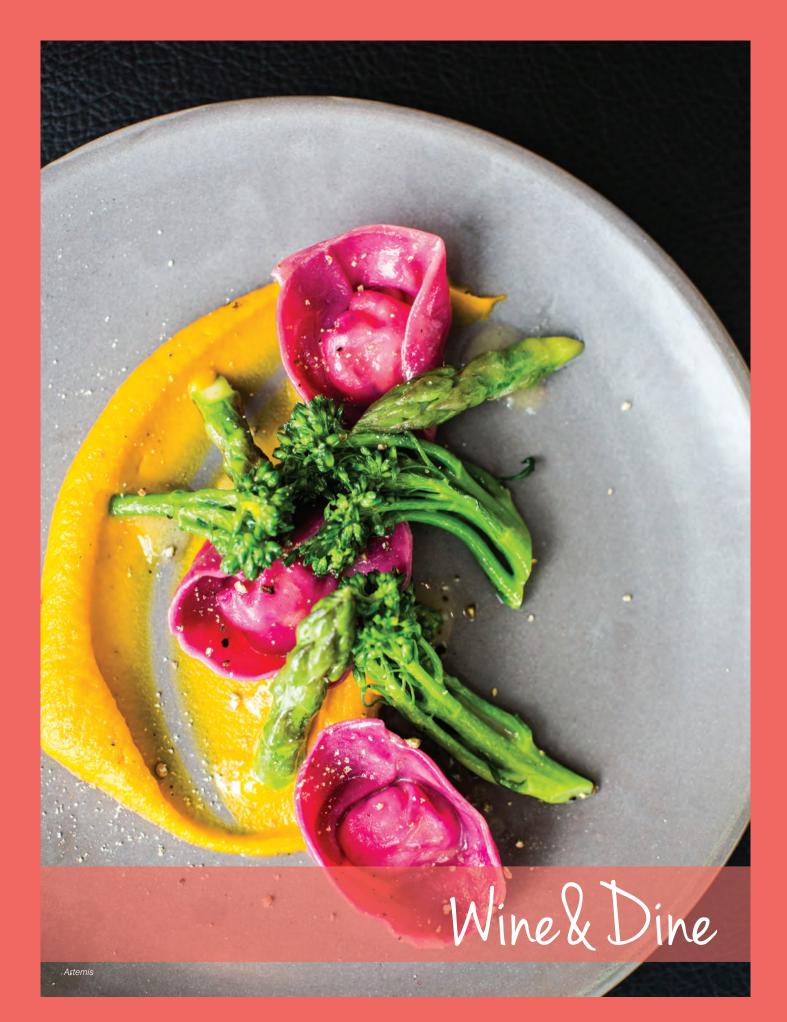
The almighty sirloin – probably the most prized beef cut. This very tender and very lean fillet is an outstanding steak choice, suitable for quick cooking under the grill or frying.



SILVERSIDE & TOPSIDE

If you seek something truly lean, choose silverside, best cut into steaks for frying or grilling and in stir-fries. Topside is just as lean, except for a layer of fat tied around it.





WHAT'S NEW The latest trends in food and wine

Loving the original restaurant in Ubud's crispy duck and gorgeous location - the name Bebek Tepi Sawah means "by the side of a padi field" - we had to check out its new outlet in Chijmes. Big and brightly lit, this has a less evocative setting; and though it has a long bar, the emphasis is less on drinks (beer and wine, with house white or red at \$12, and several Bali-themed mocktails) and more on the food.

Signature deep-fried crispy duck (\$26) is half-a-bird served with rice, Balinese vegetables and three "sauces": sambal merah, sambal mata (sliced onion) and a fiery chilli; the dish can also come grilled. We also like the crispy shrimp Cajun (\$18), served with a black sauce laced with chilli seeds and crunchy enough to be munched whole - imagine what all that calcium is doing for your bone mineral density! For starters, shrimp avocado salad (\$16) comes with a sweetish creamy dressing; more traditional is the chicken sate lilit grilled on sugarcane sticks. For dessert lovers, there's the likes of pisang goreng (\$9), fried banana with ice cream. Expect a wide menu with something for everyone. 30 Victoria Street, #02-01 Chijmes. 6336 1015 | bebektepisawahrestaurant.com ▼



Also from Ubud...

Yes, there's another Indonesian import in town. If you're a fan of Naughty Nuri's Warung, you'll definitely want to pay a visit to the newly opened outlet here in Singapore, at Capitol Piazza. The eatery is famous for its smoky barbecued pork ribs, as well as its martinis. Don't expect to pay the same low prices as in Bali, though.

More Free Flow Signature dishes at the new-ish, wallet-friendly champagne Sunday brunch at the Hilton Singapore's Opus Bar and Grill are Scotch eggs and foie gras. Before you sample that delectable pair, though, scoff some seafood from Australia, France or Canada, and linger over the charcuterie station; the line-up includes jamón ibérico, lomo ham, gravalax and sobrasada, plus eight different types of olives and capers. The atmosphere is intimate and cosy - diners are not swallowed up in a cavernous room, and the eight live food stations are readily accessible. Cooked to order on the charcoal grill are lamb chops, beef tenderloin and waqyu steak, with the small sizes a good option for kids. Thankfully, there's no pasta or French fries - kids have to forage further afield for more varied choices. Of the 30 desserts, don't miss the icy cold meringue bombs - the liquid nitrogen creates a smoky effect as it escapes the nose and mouth (great entertainment!). And, do leave space for the 25 cheeses! It's \$108 with all the sparkling, red and white wine, beer, fresh juices and bloody Marys you can drink, or \$138 with champagne too; it's \$39 for children. 581 Orchard Road. 6730 3390 | singapore.hilton.com



'A ROOM WITH A VIEW'

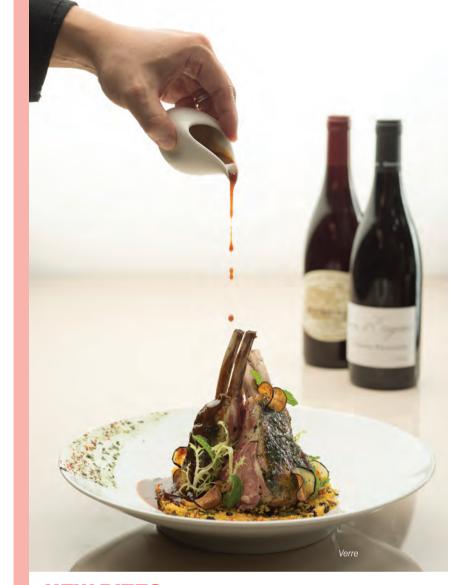
It's an Italian Romance at Stellar this SAN VALENTINO, with an intimate six-course gastronomic dinner with Sevruga caviar, truffle consomme, Kobe rib eye or turbot, as well as two whimsical desserts - the Bouquet and the Branch.

STELLAR: 12TH - 14TH FEBRUARY 2016 6 courses plus a glass of Moët and Chandon Rosé \$200++ / \$240 (window seat on 14th Feb)

V-DAY DINING

If you're looking for somewhere to celebrate with your sweetie this Valentine's Day, Pan Pacific's has two special dining options to choose from. On 14 February, enjoy specialties like Alaskan king crab, fresh oysters and artisanal cheeses at Edge restaurant's celebratory buffet dinner spread, complete with seven live food stations, and rose petals and candles on each table for an extra romantic touch (\$148, including a glass of Veuve Cliquot champagne, unlimited wine, coffee, tea and soft drinks, or \$128 without alcohol). or try a special seven-course kaiseki presentation at Keyaki on 13 and 14 February (\$198 per person). Available for both lunch and dinner, the kaiseki menu includes such highlights as wagyu beef teppanyaki and grilled lobster with spicy cod roe sauce, among other authentic specialties made with ingredients imported from Japan, plus a glass of sparkling sake.





NEW BITES

- Empress restaurant recently opened at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), serving up contemporary Chinese fare, from dim sum and noodle dishes to seafood selections and roasts. Expect superb views of Boat Quay and the CBD, as it's situated right on the river. Also open at ACM is Privé, offering casual all-day dining favourites such as eggs Benedict (\$16), burgers (\$25 to \$29) and sticky date pudding (\$12), and the same relaxed vibes as its sister restaurant at Keppel Bay. 1 Empress Place. acm.org.sg
- Robertson Quay's Verre has been relaunched as Verre Modern Bistro and Wine Bar, presenting 750 labels, with an emphasis on Bordeaux blends and Burgundy varietals (many of which are served by the glass!). A menu of "wine bites" includes oysters, charcuterie boards, paté and artisanal cheeses (the sommelier can recommend wine pairings for each plate), and pricey mains like duck confit (\$35) and lamb chop with Moroccan couscous and mint sauce (\$46). 8 Rodyk Street, #01-05/06. verre.com.sg
- Dehesa has opened at 12 North Canal Road, offering Spanish "nose to tail" specialties by Chef Jean-Phillipe Patruno, formerly at Bomba Paella Bar and UNA. Here, it's all about "swine, wine and dine" (sorry, vegetarians), with a wide range of meaty choices including suckling pig (\$35), pork belly (\$24), lamb sweetbreads (\$22), ox tongue (\$14), crispy tripe with white peppercorn and chilli padi (\$12) and eggs with chorizo (\$15), plus a few seafood dishes, too.
- The Emmanuel Stroobant Group has introduced its latest concept: Saint
 Pierre Market a gourmet delicatessen focused on healthy, veggie-centric
 eats. For grab-and-go lunches without the guilt, choose from options like
 quinoa (\$14.80) and kale soba salad (\$13.80), whole-wheat wraps (\$12.80)
 and a selection of soups, sandwiches and sweets, many of which are
 vegan, gluten-free and nut-free. 391 Orchard Road, #02-11 Ngee Ann City.

SKY-HIGH Romance

This Valentine's Day, it's all about Italian romance at **Stellar at 1-Altitude**, located on the 62nd level of One Raffles Place. From
12 to 14 February, the restaurant will offer a special six-course "San
Valentino" dinner, plus a glass of Moët & Chandon Rosé, at \$200 per
person (it's \$240 per person for a window seat on 14 February). Menu
highlights include Sevruga caviar with sea urchin, truffle consommé,
prawn carbonara with parmesan cream, soft poached egg yolk
and bacon ash, and Kobe rib-eye or roasted turbot with white truffle
polenta, as well as sweet, almost-too-pretty-to-eat treats such as the
Bouquet − Geneva apples, yoghurt custard, almond sable and roasted
Marcona almonds − and The Branch dessert − strawberry morsels
that pop in your mouth, presented on a wooden branch. With a feast
this fab, paired with spectacular city views, we can't think of a better
way to spend V-Day. **6438 0410 | 1-altitude.com** ▲



MICHELIN CHEF TAKES MALAYSIA

If you'll be in Langkawi, Malaysia, from 18 to 20 February, you definitely won't want to miss **The Datai Langkawi**'s exclusive "haute cuisine showcase" featuring culinary legend **Michel Roux O.B.E.**, best known for his three-Michelin-starred restaurants in the UK – Le Gavroche in London and The Waterside Inn in Bray. For three nights, the hotel dining room will be under the expert leadership of the French-born, award-winning chef and his team, offering a fine-dining experience of Michelin star prestige. Guests will enjoy Michel Roux Champagne and



canapés by the pool before tucking into a five-course set menu (\$233). And, to round off the gastronomic experience, Pierre Bat, Sommelier of the House of Veyret Latour (Bordeaux), will offer a wine flight (\$91), pairing the perfect bottle with each course. And, those looking for a more hands-on experience can opt for a special masterclass (\$316) in which participants will prepare two courses for lunch under the guidance of Chef Michel. For more details or reservations, visit thedatai.com or email reservations@ dataihotels.com.

POSH PERANAKAN

Regarded as an ambassador for Singaporean cuisine. renowned chef Violet Oon, who specialises in Nyonya (Peranakan) food, recently opened her second restaurant in Singapore, this time at the nation's newest treasure, the National Gallery Singapore. As fans of Violet's Bukit Timah outlet, we couldn't wait to experience the muchanticipated National Kitchen by Violet Oon for ourselves. It sure didn't disappoint. It's worth going for the décor alone; gorgeously designed by Violet's daughter, Su-Lyn, the chic space features dark wood with Art Deco-like gold trimmings, rattan ceiling fans, old-fashioned chandeliers, Peranakan tiled floors, black-and-white photo-adorned walls and a beautiful bar that boasts a strong cocktail list; our favourite was the **Collier** (\$16), made with Bombay Sapphire, spiced pear puree, cloves and rosemary absolutely divine.

Violet's food is the perfect sampling of Singaporean-Peranakan fare, with Indian, Malay and Hainanese influences throughout – **cod in creamy laksa sauce** (\$34), **fish head curry** (\$35) and **chicken rice** (\$17), for instance. If you like spice, go for the **ikan goreng chilli** (\$19) – fried red snapper topped with a heaping dollop of spicy chilli padi garlic *rempah* (ground spice paste) – and the deliciously piquant **sambal eggplant** (\$12) wedges. Finish with the super-sweet **pineapple upside down cake** (\$12) – light butter sponge topped with pineapple and butterscotch sauce. Portions are generous, so we'd suggest going with a group to sample all sorts of different dishes from the extensive menu. 1 St Andrews Road, #02-01 National Gallery Singapore. **violetoon.com** ▼



BATTHE

We scour the bar scene to bring you the new and noteworthy. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it!

Little Island Brewing Co

Block 6 Changi Village 6543 9100 | libc.co

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: If you've ever taken a bum-boat to Pulau Ubin, you'll know where to find Little Island Brewing Co. And, though it's at the far east of the island, this is one place to put on your must-try list. The long wooden tables, umbrellas and rustic atmosphere reminded me of an Australian beer garden.



THE CHOSEN ONE: Go for one of brew-master Steve Spinney's six **handcrafted beers** (starting at \$10 a pint), dispensed by means of a self-service system; our preference was for the **Singapore Pale Ale**, but there's something for every taste. As soon as you arrive, load an MRT-like card with credit, and help yourself – everything is measured and charged by the millilitre.

THE CHEAPSKATE: While the beer is anything but expensive, the Italian wines are good value at \$5 per 100ml.

BITE ON THIS: Highlights from the \$15 set lunch (served from midday to 3pm) are the **short rib burger**, **beer battered fish and chips** (the sea bass comes fresh from the nearby *kelong*) and **roasted pumpkin**, **cauliflower and green bean salad**. Dinner options (from \$16, served from 6pm) feature meat: **wagyu**, **lamb**, **rib eye** and more, cooked on either the Argentinean grill or the Southern Pride smoker; there's a healthy selection of salads, too, plus tasty bites for kids at \$12.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: With views through the trees and out to sea, we think this is one place where an afternoon could easily turn into an evening session; it's value for money, and kids are well catered for with space to roam. The entrance is a little tricky to find – adjacent to an open-air car park, and just beyond the Changi Point Ferry Terminal – but well worth it.

Katie Roberts

The Flagship

18/20 Bukit Pasoh Road, Level 1 theflagship.sg

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: This gritty, unassuming whisky bar takes its inspiration from 1960s American dive bars, with a speakeasy air to it, thanks to its location at the end of a secluded passageway, behind a sliding door. The cosy bar is stripped back to basics, and lets the timber counter and shelves packed full of whiskies do the talking. We were met by a friendly and extremely knowledgeable bartender who happily recommended a variety of whiskies and bourbons based on our tastes.

THE CHOSEN ONE: This is the perfect bar for everyone, from whisky fanatics to first-timers (like me) – everyone is accommodated here. With a stunning range of over 100 spirits to choose from, it's hard to pinpoint one particular tipple, but our personal favourites included the Japanese **Nikka From The Barrel** (\$19 for 30ml, \$24 for 45ml), and the sweeter **Ardbeg Uigeadail** (\$18 for 30ml, \$22 for 45ml) from Scotland.

THE CHEAPSKATE: This is a great spot for a cheap date night; all the whiskies are reasonably priced with labels on each of the bottles clearly indicating the prices for 30ml and 45ml shots. Plus, they serve beer chasers at \$2 a shot!

BITE ON THIS: The bar food here is simple yet tasty – the perfect accompaniment to whisky tasting. We enjoyed the gruyère and feta balls with aioli dip (\$12), pok pok chicken wings with Vietnamese and Thai spices (\$10), and some French fries (\$10).

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: This is an easygoing, fun and unpretentious way to do a whisky tasting. But, be warned: they don't take reservations, so go along early to ensure you get a seat at the bar for the full experience.

Natalie Whittell





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A Taste of Romance

Whether you're after sky-high fine dining or a casual Italian feast, dinner in the gardens or a swanky steakhouse date night, Singapore has tons of dreamy eating options to choose from. Here we put some of the island's most romantic date-night spots to the test.



CORNER HOUSE

1 Cluny Road, Singapore Botanic Gardens 6469 1000 | cornerhouse.com.sg

THE ATMOSPHERE: Set in the beautiful two-storey black-and-white colonial house in which British botanist EJH Corner lived from 1929 to 1945, Corner House is tranquil and charming. Our table, on a secluded upstairs terrace with elegant upholstered armchairs and botanical art and décor, put us both at ease. Even the menu, designed to look like a botanist's leather-bound journal, adds to the atmosphere.

THE CUISINE: "Gastro-botanica" is how Chef Jason Tan describes the cuisine; he has taken inspiration from botanist EJH Corner's life to create unique menus that balance beautiful meat and fish with the tastiest vegetables and edible plants, creating gastronomic art on each plate.

THE MENU: We tried the five-course Menu Gastronomique (\$178), which showcases the chef's signature dishes - and, ever since, I've been raving about this incredible menu to anyone who would listen. Among the highlights are the amuse bouche. designed to excite the palate; it's a trio of tasting dishes, all surprising and wonderful in their own right - a cucumber and yellow mustard seed jelly that bursts with flavour, a white-and-black sesame ball coated in coconut and an oyster-flavoured leaf with yuzu and kumquat. The Carabinero prawn starter, a signature of the restaurant, includes seasonal tomatoes as vou've never experienced them before - a tomato cloud of soft mousse with pearls of suspended olive oil, tomatoes marinated and poached two ways, soft-as-velvet tomato skin swirl and a heavenly tomato sorbet.

Each course is presented on a customised plate with edible botanical garnishes to complete each dish.

Psst...Corner House will feature a special Valentine's Menu; look out for what Chef Tan has prepared, as it's bound to be spectacular!

THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING: The food is the real standout here. While the service and atmosphere add to the romance, my husband and I chattered like excited children about each new taste, dissecting each dish to decide what we liked best and which flavours were the most surprising. Plus, the walk back through the Botanic Gardens arm in arm was the icing on this very romantic date night!

Be sure to take a pre- or post-dinner stroll through the Singapore Botanic Gardens with your sweetie. And, if you're up for another drink, head to the beautiul **Halia**, located by the ginger garden. Halia's special Valentine's Day cocktails include the Cupid's Potion (\$30) – a blend of Absolut, Chandon Brut, strawberry and raspberry – and A Man's Tale (\$18), made with Grant's whisky, cherry brandy and Martini sweet vermouth.



ROMANCE LEVEL: VVVV

Katie Peace



MORTON'S THE STEAKHOUSE

5 Raffles Avenue, Level 4 Mandarin Oriental Singapore 6339 3740 | mortons.com/singapore

THE ATMOSPHERE: Situated on the fourth storey of the Mandarin Oriental Singapore, the ambience is stunning and chic with lovely booths – and you know you're in a top quality establishment by the discreet way in which restaurant manager Edwin and his staff pander to your every whim.

THE CUISINE: Succulent steaks, seafood and desserts to die for – it's a foodie heaven.

THE MENU: A Morton's dinner always starts with their freshly baked complimentary onion loaf – this is one thing you must resist trying to finish (it's hard, I admit), as you won't have room for anything else. For starters, we chose the baked **prime ocean platter** for two (\$85) – there's a chilled version too – which consists of sea scallops wrapped in bacon, jumbo lump crab cakes, oysters Rockefeller and shrimp Alexander. This was washed down with a lovely, ice-cold sauvignon blanc, as recommended by our amazing captain, JJ.

The main menu is a steak-lover's dream. We ordered the six-ounce **centre cut filet mignon** (\$80) in a well-executed medium rare, which was tender and succulent. It was flavourful, juicy, and didn't have too much fat – a perfect, melt-in-your-mouth steak. For sides, we plumped for **mixed sprouts and mushrooms** (\$22), and **sour cream mashed potatoes** (\$24), which came with an additional chosen sprinkling of crispy bacon bits and butter.

We were glad we made room for their specialty dessert: Morton's legendary **hot chocolate lava cake** (\$30) – it's definitely a sharing portion, and comes topped with raspberries and with a side of vanilla ice cream.

For Valentine's Day, the restaurant is offering a special set menu at \$188 per person, including an appetiser, main, side dish and dessert.



If you're not too full for afterdinner drinks, head to **Orgo**, the open-air rooftop bar at Esplanade Theatres on the Bay. It has great skyline and marina views, and it's just a couple of minutes' walk from the Mandarin Oriental Singapore.

ROMANCE LEVEL: ▼ ▼ ▼

SALT GRILL AND SKY BAR BY LUKE MANGAN

2 Orchard Turn, #55-01/56-01 ION Orchard 6592 5118 | saltgrill.com

THE ATMOSPHERE: Restaurants don't get much more spectacular than this one, perched in an atrium on the top of ION. The incredible panoramic views hit you straight in the face as you step out of the lift, and the low-lit restaurant lets the twinkling lights of Singapore do the talking. The restaurant is contemporary and classy, and perfect for an evening with that someone special.

THE CUISINE: High-end, delicious Australian cuisine, focused on fresh ingredients from Down Under such as oysters from Coffin Bay and high-quality cuts of grass-fed beef from Queensland.

THE MENU: No romantic dinner would be complete without oysters, and the **oysters**, **coconut dressing and nam jim** (\$37) is the perfect start to your feast; the tangy edge of the *nam jim* sauce is appeased by the freshness of the coconut, creating a real treat for the palate. Another favourite was the **wagyu rump**, **AACO Queensland**, **garlic mushrooms and smoky barbecue sauce** (\$72); this melt-in-the-mouth steak has a deep, smoky flavour that's set off by a red wine *jus*.

For Valentine's Day, the restaurant is offering a sumptuous six-course menu at \$398 per couple, with Australian wine-pairing for an additional \$58.





THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING: The panoramic views will have you in awe throughout your meal. Get there early to watch the sunset with a glass of bubbles, and then enjoy a stunning dinner crafted by some of Singapore's best chefs, using top quality Australian ingredients. If you're a wine lover, be sure to speak to the wonderful sommelier, who will guide you in the right direction.

ROMANCE LEVEL: ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Natalie Whittell

With views this good, why go anywhere else? Stick around after dinner for some more cocktails if you're not ready to call it a night.

RESTAURANT ABSINTHE

72 Boat Quay 6222 9068 | absinthe.sq

THE ATMOSPHERE: You could dine alfresco at the water's edge, but we prefer the cool upstairs dining rooms with their exposed brickwork, framed pages from *La Mode Illustrée*, white linen and soft lighting. Formal enough to feel like a special occasion, but not at all stuffy. Ask for our corner table by the window.

THE CUISINE: Traditional French.

THE MENU: Chef Maxim (from Le Mans. via a stint with Paul Bocuse) starts us off with a generous combination of foie gras terrine and foie gras poelé seared to a turn (\$29 each); little details like onion jam spiced with French espelette chilli make it unforgettable. After a perfectly classic cognac-scented lobster bisque (\$17), comes Chef's recommended specialty: whole sea bream from Brittany (\$120 for two) baked in a salt crust that he ceremoniously lifts in our presence and serves in tender chunks over wilted baby spinach, tiny sautéed potatoes and sundried tomatoes, all drizzled with olive oil. If it's your lucky night, he might bake you a golden-domed saffron soufflé (off-menu, \$24 for two) like the one we ecstatically wolf down scalding-hot.

THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING: A certain je ne sais quoi – that and the absinthe ritual! Like other aniseed-based rocket fuels, this 53 percent proof Green Fairy starts off clear in the bottom of the glass, turning cloudy as iced water is dripped into it through a lump of sugar balanced on a special spoon. Speaking of lucky nights, couples hoping for some romantic action might be advised to stick to the champagne – tonight there's a jolly good price of \$12 for a coupe of Laurent-Perrier.

ROMANCE LEVEL: V V

Verne Maree



Pssst... Grab a pre- or post-dinner drink at rooftop bar, Southbridge (80 Boat Quay), which is just a stone's throw away. Or hop aboard the Singapore River's floating bar to take in the city's spectacular skyline over drinks and music. Board at the Raffles Place stop along the river (in front of UOB Plaza), or arrange a pickup at another pier by calling 9777 8442. For more details, head to floatatthebay.com.sg.





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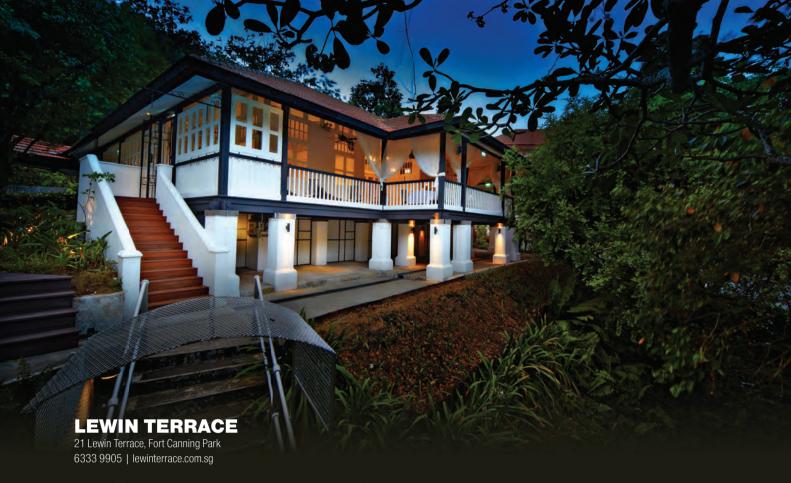
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THE ATMOSPHERE: Lewin Terrace is housed in a beautifully restored colonial black-and-white bungalow overlooking the Central Fire Station on Hill Street. In fact, it was the residence of the fire station chief before being transformed into a restaurant. Sit on the relaxing terrace area or in the beautiful, air-conditioned dining room – both have romantic vibes.

THE CUISINE: Billed as Japanese-French fusion, the menu is dependent on seasonal finds from Japan. Dishes change seasonally, giving you an excuse to visit again and again.

THE MENU: I couldn't resist the Hokkaido crab meat cocktail (\$32), which was light and fluffy and came with a *foie gras* medallion. Another big hit was the soup of the day, cream of cauliflower (\$14); both starters were paired with a glass of Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut Champagne (\$28).

For mains, we tried the wagyu sirloin hot plate with original sauce (\$88): 120 grams of sliced wagyu, which we grilled at the table on our own small hotplate – a few seconds on each side, and it just melted in our mouths. The fish of the day was a beautiful fillet of cod in white sauce, which we washed down with a light, crisp sauvignon blanc.

Lewin Terrace has a special Valentine's Day promotion in the form of a seasonal ShoMi degustation menu. Priced at \$348, the dinner includes the ShoMi menu, plus "Love Sharing

Platters" for both the appetiser and dessert courses. There will even be a photo booth wall where couples can have their photos taken by a professional photographer.

THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING: In addition to the fantastic service, the Japanese influence is echoed throughout the venue with impeccably presented food by Chef Keisuke Matsumoto and his team. They have an extensive selection of rare vintage wines and Japanese sakes, too.

ROMANCE LEVEL: ♥ ♥ ♥

Jacqui Young

How about taking a romantic stroll through Fort Canning Park before or after your luxurious Lewin Terrace experience?





CICHETI

52 Kandahar Street 6292 5012 | cicheti.com

THE ATMOSPHERE: Set over two levels in an Arab Quarter shophouse, Cicheti is a warm and friendly mix of old and new, its massive wood-fire pizza oven a big part of the charm.

THE CUISINE: Italian, highlighting Venetian and Neapolitan regional cuisine.

THE MENU: Chef Yew Aun Lim will be adding some Valentine's Day specials to the menu, based on what's in season. Some delights he has in mind include an un-Italian entrée of *foie gras* on toasted bread smeared with Nutella – a rich and surprisingly complementary pairing, a main course of chilled sea urchin with angel-hair pasta, and decadent panna cotta with rhubarb *granite* for dessert. Or you could dive into the regular à la carte menu. You can't go wrong with the **Cicheti burratina** (\$29), a stunning salad of soft white cheese, Parma ham and rocket, followed by any of the **wood-fired Neapolitan style pizzas** – we liked the **Diavoli** (\$23) with salami, basil and chilli oil adding a cheeky zing. Reasonably priced drinks include **Peroni** bottled beer (\$9) and the quaffable house red, Prosecco and *pinot gris* (\$12 per glass, \$55 per bottle).

THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING: Close your eyes and pretend you're in Venice, one of the world's most romantic cities, or head out to the quaint balcony on the second level – a quiet spot for a stolen kiss, or even a proposal?

ROMANCE LEVEL: ▼ ▼

Katie Roberts

After dinner, walk down the street to craft cocktail haven **Maison Ikkoku** (20 Kandahar Street) for a tipple or two. Tell the bartender what you like and he'll whip up something especially for you. It wont be cheap, but hey, it's date night, right?

Or...stay in with your sweetie

Fancy swapping a posh dinner for a date on the sofa? We don't blame you. Put the kids to bed, throw on your PJs, fire up the Apple TV and get some takeaway for a relaxing night in. Better yet, order from **Foodpanda** and get it delivered right to your doorstep. This online food-ordering marketplace has over 500 restaurant partners island-wide, so there are plenty of options to choose from. In fact, Foodpanda recently added numerous new restaurant favourites to the mix – including District, Amber Nectar, Kinara and Tony Roma's – plus healthy gourmet options like Well Dressed Salad, Sushi Burrito, Sumo Salad and Eight Treasures Vegetarian, among others.

The best part? Ordering in means you don't have to compromise with your honey; if he wants a brisket sandwich and craft beer from Meat Smith, but you're in the mood for Motorino pizza, you can both get exactly what you crave – and fast. In fact, Foodpanda recently launched a new and improved delivery service, meaning your food will arrive in just 30 minutes; simply click on the "express delivery" filter on the mobile app or website. Guaranteed date-night success, if you ask us! foodpanda.sg 3



Cheers to Date Night

Looking for a hot date-night hideaway to cosy up over cocktails? Here's your guide to some of the sexiest spots in town.

THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Hidden in the basement level of Forum The Shopping Mall, this izakaya-style bar serves up bespoke cocktails and Japanese bar bites (or, if you're

feeling really hungry, you can order from Uma Uma Ramen upstairs). Decked out in warm wood and origami-inspired light fixtures, it's a seductively lit, speakeasy-style bar that's the perfect haven for a tipple or two with your honey. Though the menu changes every month, you can expect mainstays like the Granny's Kettle (\$25), made with Kettle One vodka, Blanche de Normandie, lime juice, house-crafted Granny Smith syrup and peppermint. Look out for a special Chinese New Year menu for February. 583 Orchard Road. horsesmouthbar.com



SMOKE AND MIRRORS

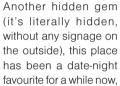
This recently opened rooftop bar is situated at the highest point of the National Gallery Singapore and features both indoor seating and an alfresco terrace that looks across the Padang to the Theatres on the Bay and beyond. Sip beautifully presented cocktails – the Tiger Blood Daisy (\$20), made with tequila, lime, sour plum grenadine and ginger beer, is a signature – and, if you're hungry, order food from Yàn, the upscale Chinese restaurant one level below. 1 St Andrews Road, #06-01 National Gallery Singapore. **smokeandmirrors.com.sg**



L'AIGLON

Snuggle up to your sweetie over craft cocktails at this sexy, Parisian-inspired bar in Tanjong Pagar. It has plush velvet and leather seating, and a food menu that includes French nibbles like steak baguette (\$21), slow-cooked beef cheek (\$12) and crème brûlée (\$8). Fun cocktails include All Shook Up (\$18), a red wine milkshake made with Sangiovese, maraschino cherry, cocoa syrup, condensed milk and red wine-flavoured whipped cream, and Tickle Your Navel (\$24) – spiced whiskey, lemon, orange and egg white. 69 Neil Road. **barlaiglon.com**

28 HONG KONG STREET





thanks to its low lighting, atmospheric vibes and a strong list of potent cocktails: fan favourites include the Bird Machine (\$22) made with Hum Botanical Spirit liqueur, Four Roses Yellow Label, pineapple oolong and mint, and Blow a Kiss, Fire a Gun (\$24), made with Alipus San Juan Del Rio mezcal, chartreuse, hibiscus, Luxardo Maraschino and lime. They've also got delectably sinful bites like panko-crusted, three-cheese truffle mac-and-cheese balls (\$14) and mini corn-bread muffins with whipped honey butter (\$8). 28 Hong Kong Street. **28hks.com**

MANHATTAN

This place is all about Golden Age glam, with Art Deco details, mirrored walls, marble tops, old-fashioned sofas and Gatsby-esque glassware – if that doesn't scream



romance, we don't know what does! The craft cocktails here are divine, and complemented with American-inspired bar bites like mini-burgers and lobster rolls; add in some fun, vintage tunes for the perfect date-night destination. Or, visit the adults-only, free-flow brunch on Sunday for a special treat (\$150 for brunch, cocktails, beer and wines; \$195 with the addition of champagne). 1 Cuscaden Road, Regent Hotel, Level 2. facebook.com/manhattansg

Psst! If you're a fan of Manhattan's old fashioned flair, you'll also love Studio 1939, located on the third level of Potato Head Folk (36 Keong Saik Road).

This February, fall for Morton's new seasonal menu.

PRIME SELECTIONS

Bone-In Filet Mignon 14 oz of double cut broiled filet



Seared Sea Scallops Rossini Sea Scallops, Truffled Leeks, Foie Gras Butter



Lobster Stuffed Roasted Mushrooms Rosted Mushrooms, Garlic Butter, Lobster, Parmesan Cheese, Parsley



Bacon Steaks 12 oz Thick Cut Slab Bacon, Honey-Bourbon Glaze



Mashed Black Truffle Cauliflower Creamy Cauliflower Puree, Black Truffles, Parmesan Cheese



White Chocolate Bread Pudding White Chocolate Chips, Pecans, Bourbon Caramel Sauce, Vanilla Ice Cream, White Chocolate Confetti

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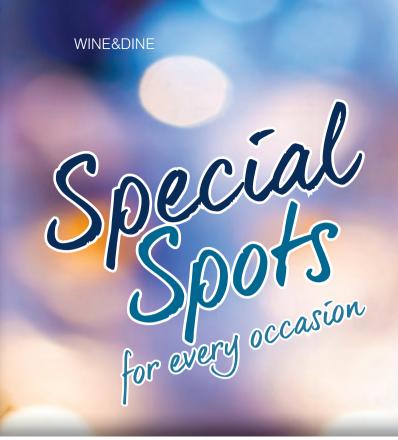
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If you've been tasked with organising a party here in Singapore, whether it's a small birthday gathering or a big office celebration, not to worry – there are tons of options when it comes to event spaces. From rooftops with views to quirky spots in the jungle, the island is full of great bars, restaurants and private rooms, along with a host of other venues to consider for a do with a difference. Here are some of our favourite party places.

By Amy Greenburg

Venues with a View

Loof (**) 331 North Bridge Road, #03-07 Odeon Towers 9773 9304 | loof.com.sg

Located at the top of Odeon Tower, this eclectic rooftop bar's got an urban garden vibe, great skyline views, fun Southeast Asian-inspired cocktails (with great happy hour deals) and a selection of local-inspired bar snacks like sambal chicken wings and chilli crab dip; a great place if you're looking for a rooftop setting. The expansive alfresco deck, which includes a covered area with high tables and an open patio with colourful furnishings, can hold up to 150 people seated, or 200 standing; and, if the weather's not on your side come party day, there's an extendable roof that can be used to cover the event space.





Zafferano (A) 10 Collyer Quay, Ocean Financial Centre, Level 43 6509 1488 | zafferano.sg

Located on the top floor of the CBD's Ocean Financial Centre, this place offers a sleek-chic restaurant space and rooftop bar with unbeatable panoramic views, and contemporary Italian fare. They have a private dining room for 14, a secluded wine room that seats 12, plus a wine lounge and an outdoor terrace that can hold up to 36 and 46, respectively; of course, the main dining room can be rented out (it seats 120) if you're looking to host a more large-scale affair. Choose from a variety of set menu, buffet and canapé options, or customise your own menu – you definitely have options here.



Bob's Bar 🖪

1 The Knolls, Capella Singapore 6591 5047 | capellahotels.com/singapore

Located at Sentosa's Capella resort, this indoor-outdoor Cuban bar reminiscent of the 1950s and 60s is a great place to chill out and watch the sun set over the South China Sea with bar bites and tropical cocktails in hand. Havana-inspired, there's an emphasis here on rum-based drinks (the Bob's Fresh Press Mojito made with freshly pressed sugar cane and lime juice is a fan favourite); in fact, they've even got their own brand of rum. On Fridays, a live band plays for Havana Night, which features an outdoor Cuban-themed barbecue; and, if you rent out the entire bar, you can hire the band to play for your party.



Empress (A)

1 Empress Place, #0103 Asian Civilisations Museum 6238 8733 | empress.com.sg

Situated right on the Singapore River, the recently opened Empress restaurant at the Asian Civilisations Museum is a great new option for wining and dining party guests. With a vast array of seafood and roasts, noodle dishes and dim sum, there are plenty of à la carte items and set menu choices to pick from. In addition to the main dining room, there's a spacious alfresco deck looking out on the colourful Boat Quay shophouse façades that's great for kicking back with Asian-inspired cocktails; plus, the beautiful, private Canton Room can accommodate up to 14 guests.

Coastes 9 50 Siloso Beach Walk 6631 8938 | coastes.com

How about a beach party for you and the gang? Whether you want a couple of tables in the sand or the whole bar, Coastes offers a day or night out with a difference and fabulous view across the bay. With cheerful food and live music on certain nights, you'll feel a bit like you're on holiday. There's an open-air deck area that can hold 150 guests and a sheltered boathouse that can accommodate 80; or if you're planning a big beach blowout, book one of the two beach areas, each of which can hold over 150 people.



Also look into

LeVeL33 level33.com.sq

The Mad Men Attic Bar madmenatticbar.com

Orgo orgo.sg

Tanjong Beach Club tanjongbeachclub.com

LADIES' LUNCHEON

Not sure what to do for a friend's baby shower or a girly birthday lunch? High tea is always a fun option. For a complete guide to afternoon tea and ladylike lunch spots in Singapore, head to expatliving.sg/wine_dine.

Casual-Cool

Tin Hill Social 🕅

100 Turf Club Road 6591 5047 | tinhillsocial.com

This place offers a great party setting, thanks to its stunning garden scenery and five different event spaces. Indoors, it's all about industrial-chic décor, with a spacious kitchen area that can hold up to 70 guests, and a bar that can hold up to 20 – perfect for small gatherings and intimate cocktail parties. As for outdoors, there's plenty of party space, so take your pick – a covered verandah that holds 70 guests, a sheltered courtyard patio that accommodates 60 and an outdoor garden area that can seat up to 20. Or, rent out the entire venue to seat 180 guests across all five sections! They've got a huge menu – everything from meats, pizza and pasta to all sorts of casual bites like chilli crab sliders and truffle chips, plus brunch and platter options.





The Green Door A
13A Dempsey Road
6776 0777 | thegreendoor.com.sg

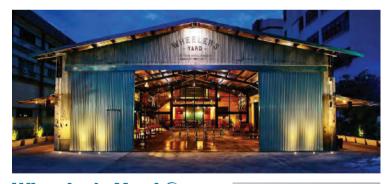
This verdant, outdoor garden bar at Dempsey Hill features whimsical décor – think old gramophones transformed into oversized flower light fixtures, a vintage chest of drawersturned-herb garden and drawers repurposed into shelving and table tops – and a beautiful green setting for any type of event, big or small; book a table for 10 or rent out both the sheltered and non-sheltered sections, which together can hold up to a whopping 400 guests! Choose from different menu options such as a live barbecue, buffet, canapés, platters, cocktails and free-flow drinks.

Spruce Ristorante at Phoenix Park (*)

320 Tanglin Road 6836 5528 | spruce.com.sg

Set in lush greenery, this is a beautiful space to host any occasion. Serving Italian-American fare – from braised beef short ribs and burgers to pastas and fish – the restaurant has various party options to choose from, including buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner packages, and set menu and canapé choices. The space itself is large, with an indoor area that holds 66, an alfresco area that can accommodate 115, an outdoor lounge portion that holds 30 and a private dining room for 14 – plenty of possibilities!





Wheeler's Yard (A) 28 Lorong Ampas 6254 9128 | wheelersyard.com

This industrial-chic warehouse space is an awesome events venue. Its bicycle-adorned walls, concrete floors and vintage touches lend loads of fun flair, and there's plenty of room to party both indoors and out. And, though it may seem like it, you don't have to be a hipster to host a shindig here. It's laidback and casual, with bar bites, burgers, pastas and desserts to choose from, plus cocktails, craft beers and wine.

Also look

Café Melba cafemelba.com.sg

Lime House limehouse.asia

Soi 60 soi60.com.sg

Supply and Demand facebook.com/ supplydemandsin

Unique Private Rooms

The Black Swan 😯

19 Cecil Street 8181 3305 | theblackswan.com.sg

Set in a threestorey historic Art Deco space that once housed the Kwangtung Provincial Bank's headquarters in the CBD, The Black Swan is all about 1930s glamour, with marble and brass details and a deep.



dark colour scheme. Serving craft cocktails and modern European fare, the main restaurant and bar area can hold up to 130 people. But if it's a more intimate affair you're after, book the 12-seat private dining room located in the original bank vault of the building – with dark furnishings and rich green and burgundy touches, it's über-elegant and has a masculine, old-world charm. Or, if you've got around 60 guests, book The Powder Room cocktail bar on the mezzanine level for a good time that's every bit as glam.

Psst... this place is great for a romantic date night, too!

Long Chim ©

10 Bayfront Avenue, #02-02 The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands 6688 7299 | longchim.com.sg

Long Chim's aesthetic is all about urban Bangkok, with edgy, playful décor that includes shophouse tiles, Thai street art and surface textures similar to those of cracked building exteriors, making it a memorable occasions spot. The private rooms here hold up to 20 people, but can be booked for smaller parties too. Or, reserve the main dining room for a party up to 200. The food also makes the experience memorable – guests can munch on pad Thai, papaya salad and other delicious Thai favourites from Chef David Thompson, while sipping fun, Thai-inspired craft cocktails.





You'd never know from the outside that Senso, hidden among the historical shophouses on Club Street, was such a large venue, with its very own alfresco courtyard hidden within. Known for Italian fine-dining favourites like pan-fried buffalo mozzarella wrapped in Parma ham, and ravioli stuffed with braised veal shank, the restaurant offers a spacious vet cosy setting for any type of dining experience, whether it's a party for ten or a much larger function. In fact, the elegant, versatile venue has hosted events on every scale, from wedding receptions and anniversary dinners to corporate parties and product launches. While the main dining room can hold up to 90 guests, there are two private dining rooms and a beautiful, romantic courtyard that can comfortably accommodate up to 80 guests for a more intimate gathering. And, hosts who are looking to enjoy Senso's delectable specialties at home can opt for the restaurant's catering services. Choose from classic Italian dinner and buffet menus that can be personalised to suit your needs, plus an array of tried and tested canapés like foie gras mousse on toast, and scallops with pumpkin and green apple. And for an extra touch of luxury, Senso offers personalised butler and executive chef services for home parties, or even a shindig on a private yacht. For events and catering enquiries, email reservations@senso.com.sg.



Oxwell & Co. <

5 Ann Siang Road 6438 3984 I oxwellandco.com

This hip four-storey restaurant in Chinatown is all about eccentric British flair, and so is its third-storey private room, The Study. Featuring bespoke oil paintings, a wall-mounted stag head, and stuffed squirrels scampering across the wall, we'd say it's a room with a difference – a great talking point, indeed! Whether you book it for a sit-down birthday dinner for 14, or a standing cocktail party for 30, the room is great for any group gathering. Guests can tuck into British fare such as roast beef and fish and chips while sipping house-made gin and tonic on tap, craft beers and wine. A rooftop (home to the organic herb garden from which Chef Nic Scorpion gets his leaves for dishes and cocktails) provides additional space for gatherings of up to 10 people, and a second-floor dining room can also be reserved.

Also, peek into these private rooms

Flutes | flutes.com.sg
Gattopardo Ristorante di Mare | gattopardo.com.sg
National Kitchen by Violet Oon | violetoon.com
The White Rabbit | thewhiterabbit.com.sg

Something Different

Hire a Yacht ♥

Throw an adult bash with a difference by hiring a boat and sailing around Singapore. There are lots of options to consider, from group size and boat type to specific routes and catering. From mooring on Lazarus Beach during daytime to watching the fireworks on Sentosa by night with cocktails and canapés, hitting the water is a very cool option. Lloyd Marine, for instance, has over 10 yachts that can be chartered for all types of occasions, from a two-hour romantic cocktail cruise or a team-building trip along the Southern Islands – complete with kayaking – to a kids' pirate party, or even a weekend away in Malaysia or Indonesia. Visit **Iloydmarine.com** for package details and pricing.





An Artsy Affair

Looking to throw an artsy-fartsy function? There are several art studios around Singapore that offer arts spaces for private parties. At restaurant and art studio **Museo at Sentosa Cove** (mu-se-o.com) for example, guests can sip and nibble while creating acrylic paint masterpieces; **ARThaus** (arthaus.com. sg) in Bukit Timah can also hold customised painting and drawing parties, or art workshops for groups large or small. Additionally, **Art Jam Studio** (artjam. asia) has four different rooms that can be rented out to groups of anything from six to 48; all art materials are provided for two hours, with food and beverage catering options available.

Garden Party with a Twist

Gather your group and head over to Open Farm Community (OFC), a farm-to-table restaurant from Chef Ryan Clift (of Tippling Club fame) and the urban farmers of Edible Garden; dishes here are made with ingredients sourced from local farms and farms within 400 kilometres of Singapore. Sitting on 5,000 square metres of land, there's a herb and vegetable garden, an outdoor deck and garden area, and an airy dining room that holds up to 80 guests. Whether you host a casual picnic or more formal affair, there are several party packages on offer - from multi-course set menus to canapés to free-flow alcohol options - plus wine appreciation and gardening workshops, and other activities for parties up to 20; the Urban Farming Masterclass (\$2,000 per class; \$125 per head) introduces the basics of urban farming and teaches how to make herb-based products at home, while the Brunch Tipples Masterclass (\$2,000 per class; \$125 per head) gives guests a chance to create drinks with herbs and spices from the garden. There's even table tennis and lawn bowling to keep the party going! 130 Minden Road. openfarmcommunity.com



Expat Kitchen Cooking School

9 Norris Road, #02-01 6299 4221 | expat-kitchen.com

Located within a historic building in Little India, Expat Kitchen's large, fully equipped commercial kitchen is the ideal space for all kinds of events, from birthday parties to hands-on cooking classes and interactive workshops – great for corporate team-building parties, too. In fact, the Expat Kitchen team can help create a competitive environment for individual team members to challenge each other in a fun atmosphere, while learning great cooking tips and techniques from the professionals – the perfect way to live out those *MasterChef* fantasies!

Another party option is the "Cook and Feast", where you create the menu, and have a demo-style cooking session followed by a soirée-style sit-down, during which Expat Kitchen serves the food while guests mingle and relax. The Expat Kitchen team can also provide food and beverage catering services on site for any event you might wish to hold. Kids' cooking parties are also popular – three- to eight-year-olds can bake pizzas and decorate cupcakes at "Cupcake and Crafting" parties, while nine- to 13-year-olds can compete in "Mini Master Chef" parties. Additionally, the kitchen space can be rented out on its own for private parties, with full use of kitchen equipment and utensils.

For more venue ideas, head to expatliving.sg/wine_dine.

THE GREAT RECIPE SWAP

Most of us have our go-to recipes, be it for a mid-week lunch, a dinner party pleaser or a sumptuous cake that Nigella Lawson would be proud of. In case you're stuck in a food rut, however, here are some of our readers' fail-safe recipes from around the world to add your repertoire. **Bon appétit!**



ANGIE THAN, SINGAPOREAN

"This creamy vermicelli fish soup is a popular dish in Singapore and is a particular favourite among ladies. The fragrance of the soup, which is made from fresh fish stock, plus the sesame oil and evaporated milk, makes me drool just thinking about it. It's a dish that fills my tummy and warms my soul. Try it!"

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 whole red garoupa, approximately 800g (ask your fishmonger to debone and slice the fish, keeping the head and bone for the soup stock)
- 1 carrot
- 2 chicken carcasses
- 200 grams soya beans
- 1 box of silken tofu (cubed)
- 12 cherry tomatoes
- 1kg thick vermicelli
- 8 drops sesame oil
- 100ml low-fat evaporated milk
- 20ml XO or Shaoxing wine (optional)
- 4 spring onions (cut into 3cm lengths)
- Lettuce (cut into bite-sized pieces)
- · Deep-fried shallots

DIRECTIONS:

- First make the soup stock by simmering the fish bones, chicken bones, carrots, soy beans and two litres of water for two hours, then set aside.
- In a separate pot, stir the vermicelli in boiling water for no more than 30 seconds, then drain and portion into serving bowls. (Cooking the noodles with the fish in the main soup will turn them soggy.)
- Next, bring the stock back to a boil, then add the fish slices.
- 4. After two minutes, add the tofu and tomatoes.
- Cook for a few minutes more, then add the low-fat evaporated milk, sesame oil and XO or Shaoxing wine (if using). Stir, then turn off the stove.
- Place the lettuce in the bowls and pour the fish soup on top, then garnish with spring onions and deep-fried shallots. Enjoy!





DURRIYA DOHADWALA, SINGAPOREAN

"This dessert is easy to make and comes out great every time: it's a hit with both adults and kids and is good for anything from brunch to dinner parties. It can be made with or without the meringue, and you can make it ahead of time and keep it in the fridge."

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 digestive biscuits
- 50g butter
- 325ml tin of condensed milk
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon zest
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 6 tablespoons sugar

DIRECTIONS:

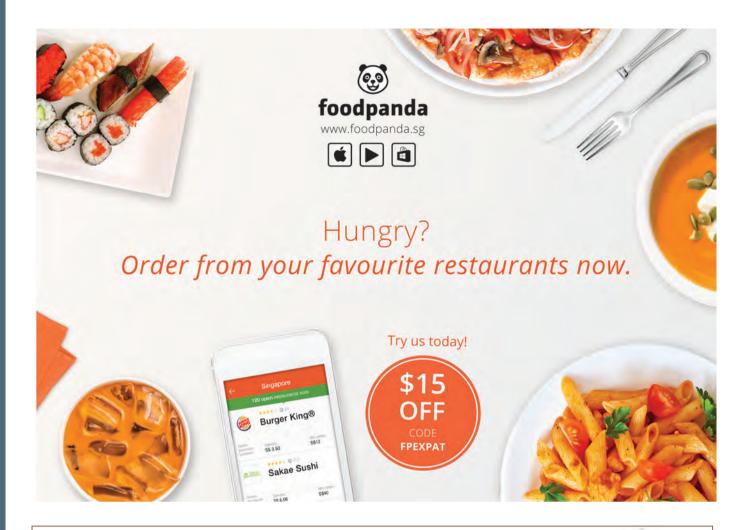
- 1. Preheat oven to 150 degrees Celsius.
- 2. Break up the biscuits and run them through the food processor until fine.
- Add the butter and mix until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Press down into a 22cm loose-bottomed tin.
- 4. Whisk the egg yolks and milk together then stir in the zest along with the lemon juice.
- 5. Pour the mixture over the base and scatter the rest of the zest on top.
- 6. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar and vanilla. Fold in sugar and seal the top of the pie with it.
- 7. Bake until the top is firm and slightly browned.



BE PART OF THE GREAT RECIPE SWAP!

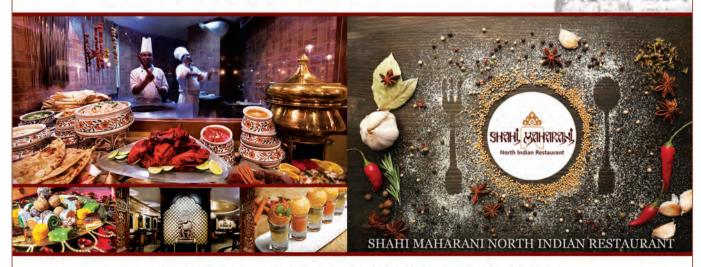
If you have a fail-safe recipe you'd like to submit for our next issue, send an email titled "Great Recipe Swap" to Beate at contribute@expatliving.sg with your recipe, a photo of yourself and a few words about your dish.

Thanks, Chef!



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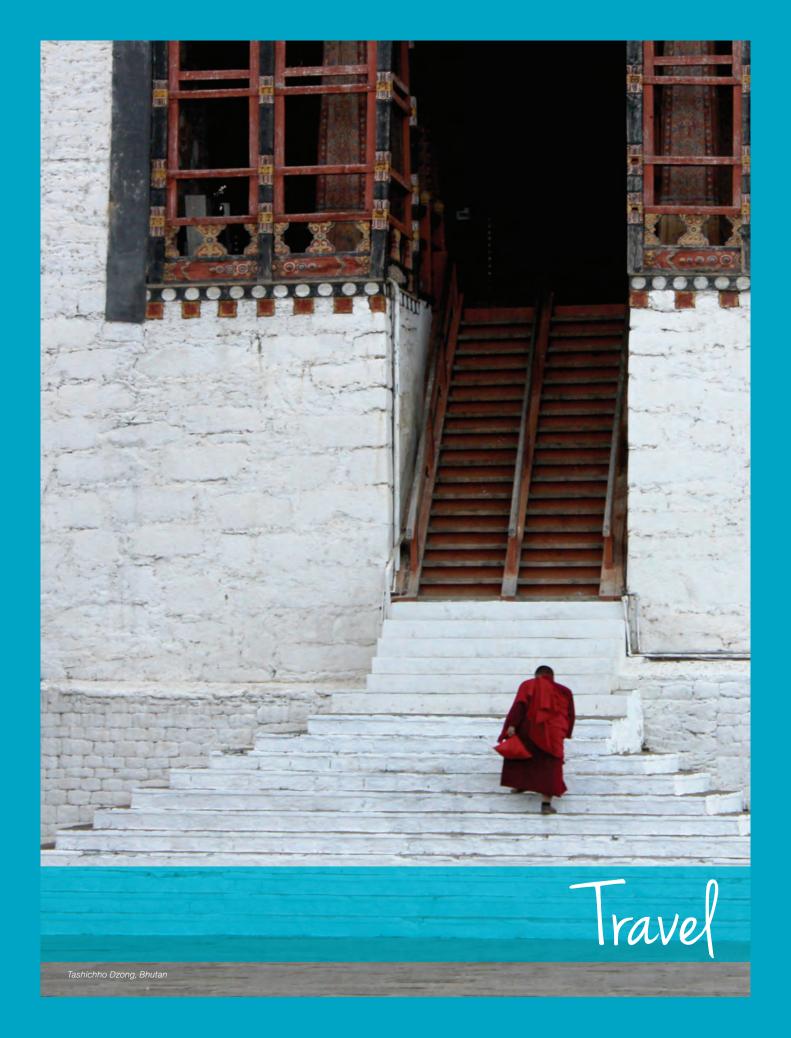
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- ↑ www.don-quijote-restaurants.com
- 🜃 Don Quijote Spanish Restaurant
- 🔽 For reservations: +65 6476 2811







WHAT'S NEW Hot destinations & great places to stay

KEEPING KIDS HAPPY

Close proximity to Singapore isn't Bintan's only huge advantage as a holiday destination; it also caters brilliantly for families, with eight independently owned resorts that each offer a wide range of accommodation, recreational facilities and dining options. Most resorts have a dedicated kids' club with activities catering to children of all ages, including archery, arts workshops, water sports and more. Also likely to pique their interest and imagination are the various tours available on the island, including an award-winning mangrove discovery tour, and a night tour where they'll witness fireflies at play, plus the chance to sample in-season fruit fresh from the harvest at the Eco Farm. The more energetic, meanwhile, can fly in an ultralight amphibious seaplane or wakeboard in Southeast Asia's first Crystal Lagoon - there's something for everyone. +65 6389 3535 | bintan-resorts.com





ROOMS WITH A VIEW

Newly opened in a 39-storey tower in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, the 286-room Reverie Saigon offers expansive views of the famous metropolis's distinctive colonial French architecture and the dramatic twists of the Saigon River from each room and suite. The luxury hotel epitomises the grandeur of Italian design - indeed, the work on the interiors was commissioned to some of Italy's leading design houses - with plenty of marble, mosaics and chandeliers, and a visually arresting fit-out that extends from its 12 types of accommodation to the five restaurants and bars. The Reverie is the highest hotel in HCMC, and also the first member of the Leading Hotels of The World in that city. Ihw.com A

SRI LANKA ESCAPE

Sri Lanka is a gem for travellers - and we're not just referring to the island's physical teardrop shape. Boasting eight UNESCO Heritage Sites, beaches lined by swaying palms, rolling tea plantations, prolific wildlife, luxurious accommodation and a cuisine of distinctive local flavours. it's a destination that is winning the hearts of more and more visitors every year. It's also ideal for family vacations, from beach retreats to soft adventures, with a diverse range of activities all packed into a small area. Travel experts Country Holidays have Sri Lanka specialists who can design a private itinerary for whatever kind of holiday you're hoping for. 6334 6120 | countryholidays.com.sg ▼





NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS

After analysing the travel patterns of 40 million people who stayed in its registered homes last year, Airbnb has come up with a list of trendy new neighbourhoods around the world that are showing considerable growth in visitor numbers. Asian neighbourhoods took the top three spots on the list, with frontrunner, Chuo-ku in Osaka, Japan – a neighbourhood famed for its artistic theatres and delicious street food vendors – heading the pack. The list of 16 Neighborhoods to Visit in 2016 also includes Banglampoo in Bangkok, Brickfields in Kuala Lumpur, and Bali's Bukit Peninsula. Other global hotspots include Capucins in Bordeaux, France, Meireles in Fortaleza, Brazil, and Kaneohe on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

WEDDED BLISS

If you plan on getting married this year and you're considering a location with a difference, how about Mexico's serene Riviera Maya? Even better, if you get married at the beachfront Banyan Tree Mayakoba, which means "village over the water" in Mayan, the resort will throw in a free five-night honeymoon in two stunning Banyan Tree properties in China's Yunnan Province, including romantic villa accommodation, a destination dining experience, spa treatment, breakfasts. transfers and an airfare credit. The offer is available for weddings held in 2016 only, though the honeymoon travel is available until the end of 2017. To find out more, email yeimy.pina@banyantree.com or visit banyantree.com. V





SWAP SEATS

App-based travel solutions continue to develop at a rate of knots, and an upcoming one to keep an eye on is SeatSwappr.

This peer-to-peer seat exchange concept allows you to negotiate a seat swap with other passengers prior to boarding a flight. Perhaps you'd like to be closer to the front of the plane, for instance, or in a window seat instead of on the aisle – or perhaps you've been separated from your travelling companions and would like to sit next to them. SeatSwappr gives you the chance to change your location. seatswappr.com

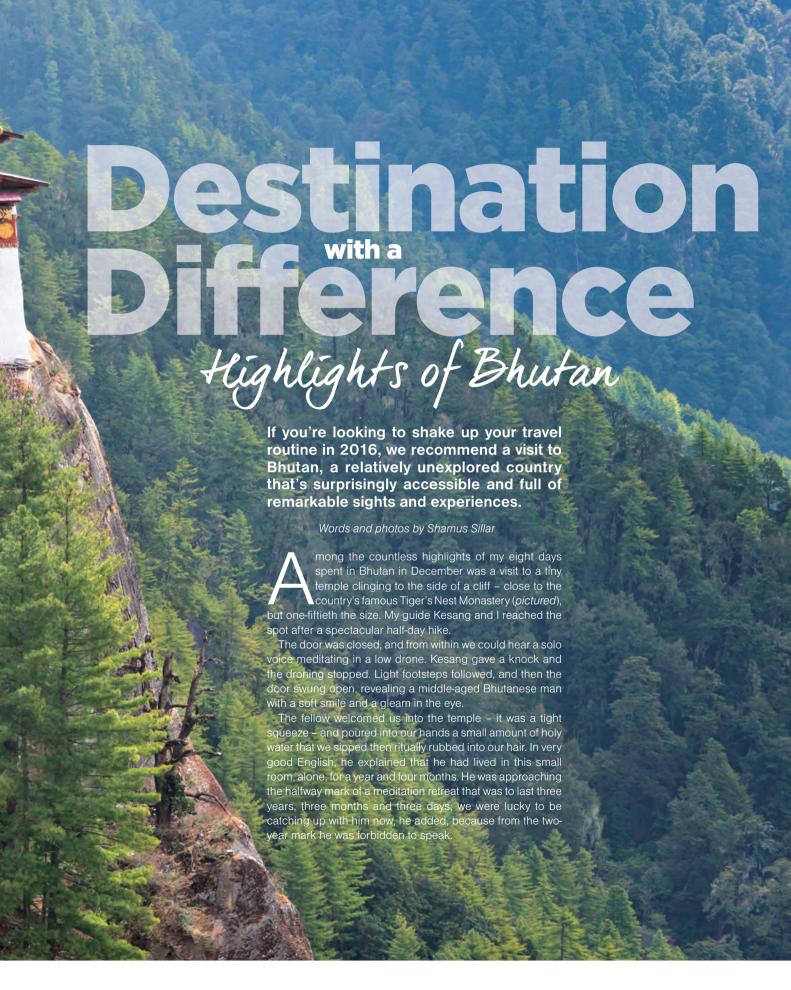
AROUND THE WORLD BY BIPLANE

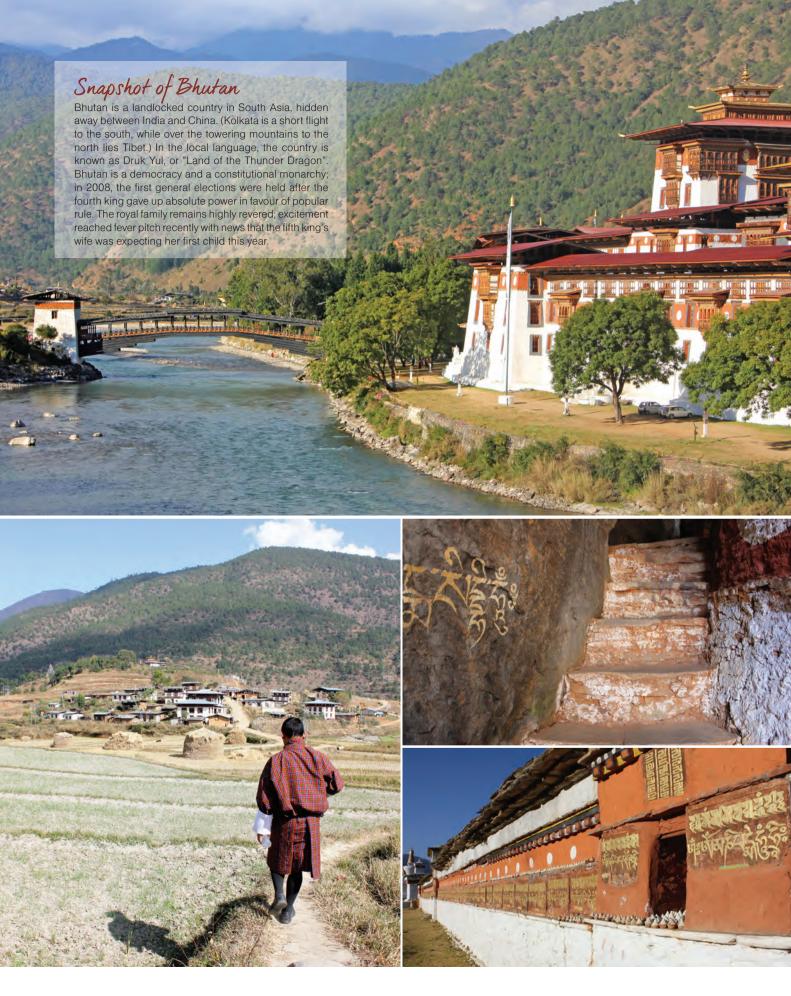


British aviator Tracey
Curtis-Taylor has
completed her 13,000-mile
around-the-world journey
across 23 countries after
touching down safely
in Sydney in her classic
1942 Boeing Stearman,
named Spirit of Artemis.
She began her journey on
1 October last year, and
made 50 stops along the

way, including here in Singapore in December. Tracey's flight, which was undertaken at an elevation of between 50 and 1,000 feet at a speed of 90mph, celebrates the pioneering days of early aviation in the 1920s and 1930s, and especially the achievements of revolutionary British adventurer Amy Johnson, who became the first woman to fly solo from Britain to Australia in 1930 before tragically dying in mysterious circumstances during World War II. During her Singapore stop, Tracey met young women from the UN Women's Girls2Pioneers programme that encourages them to consider STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) careers. birdinabiplane.com







"And what will you do when you're finished?" I inquired.

"I'll go and visit the masters and ask them for advice. They may recommend a course of deeper meditation."

Deeper? One wonders how you go "deeper" than spending a third of a decade on a rocky ledge of a Himalayan mountain, thousands of metres above sea level. Still, the man seemed utterly content. He was, I guessed, approaching 50 - an age when most of us are seeking contentment by cramming as much into every day as possible: work, family, fitness, fresh experiences - you know, ticking off the bucket list. It did make me wonder, spending time with this serene fellow, why we're always in such a hurry.

There's a similarly unhurried vibe to the rest of Bhutan, too - the appropriate adjective to use might be "mellow". Here are six more adjectives that summed up my impressions of this wonderful country.

#1 PRISTINE

The first stop on my week-and-a-bit itinerary came just a few kilometres down the road from Paro's modest yet efficient airport. Kesang, dressed immaculately in his gho, the kilt-like national dress (women wear an ankle-length skirt called a kira), led me along a short trail to the banks of the Paro Chhu, a river of startling clarity; fly-fishing is growing as a popular pursuit for tourists here, and that comes as no surprise. Our surroundings were gorgeous: a valley clad with vegetation, an old monastery on a rise, and this gleaming river traversed by a traditional iron bridge covered in prayer flags. You'd happily travel for days for a sight so rewarding; I'd been in the country for 20 minutes.

Bhutan is deeply Buddhist, which is good news for the environment. The constitution dictates that 60 percent of the land must remain forested. It's forbidden to kill animals; meat for restaurants comes from India, the stray dog population is controlled by castration, and fishing is catch and release only.

My itinerary made the most of the country's natural beauty. Especially noteworthy were the stunning views of snow-clad Himalayan mountains from the 3,100m Dochula Pass, and a 5km hike in the serene Phobjika Valley, where Kesang and I sought a glimpse (successfully) of the rare and endangered black-necked crane that spends its winters in Bhutan's marshlands.

Opposite:

Stunning Punakha Dzong: hiking through villages with Kesang: entrance to a cave temple; a colourful prayer wall

Right:

Prayer poles and a rice stack in the countryside; a monk climbing steps at Tashichho Dzong; young students practicing their chants

My Otinerary

Singapore-based travel agents Country Holidays are Bhutan experts. They offer eight different itineraries, from a five-day "Bhutan Escapade" to an in-depth 13-day "East to West Bhutan Panorama". I did the eight-day "Bhutan Insight" trip, which was an ideal overview of the country, taking in historical sights, trekking, natural beauty, cultural experiences and more. It's understandably popular.







#2 HISTORIC

With its heritage steeped in Buddhism, a Bhutan itinerary will almost always include visits to monasteries, some tucked away and others inside massive fort complexes (or dzongs). Highlights for me included the gigantic 17th-century **Punakha Dzong** perched at the confluence of two rivers, and the seat of the government until 1955, and the **Tashichho Dzong** in Thimphu – try to catch the eccentric changing of the guard ceremony held here every morning and evening.

Much newer, yet also impressive, is the gargantuan gold seated Buddha statue (the largest of its kind in the world), which looks over the Thimphu valley.

The most famous structure by a long shot, though, is the aforementioned Tiger's Nest Monastery – Bhutan's dominant cultural icon. This cliff-hugging building is reached via a steepish climb through a forest. Like the Taj Mahal, it's a structure that doesn't disappoint when you gaze at it in person, no matter how many photos and postcards of it you've seen beforehand.

#3 LUXURIOUS

Though it's said to be the second-biggest industry, behind hydroelectric power, tourism is still in its infancy in Bhutan. As recently as 2005, there were only 10,000 tourist arrivals in the year; Singapore's annual figure is around 15 million.

Consequently, the place isn't heaving with hotels, and most accommodation is in three-star local lodges. There is a small handful of luxury hotels, however, and I had the pleasure of staying in two of the best. Both **Uma by COMO Punakha** and **Uma by COMO Paro** might be modest in scale (just 11 and 29 rooms respectively) but they're world-class in style and service.

The Paro property is set in a pretty forest just a short drive from the international airport; it's a favourite retreat of the Bhutanese royals – especially for the food at restaurant **Bukhari**. Uma at Punakha, meanwhile, is more remote – breathtakingly so; the valley views from my balcony were memorable. The food at both places is brilliant – as much as I loved Bhutanese cuisine (see below), my dinner of tagliatelle with lamb ragù at Uma at Punakha was a knockout. There's also a COMO Shambhala Retreat at each property for sublime massages, facials and therapies.

Country Holidays' Bhutan itineraries are separated into different categories of accommodation based on price point, from more modest lodges to the aforementioned Uma properties and other high-end options. The choice is yours.









#4 SPICY

I'm a sucker for spicy food; I'd happily sprinkle chillies on my breakfast cereal. And that's pretty much what the Bhutanese do. It rains chillies in this place – at least, that's the impression you get from the farmhouses, whose roofs are covered in piles of little red peppers drying in the sun.

The national dish is called **ema datshi**; it's a bowl of large green chillies, more floral than fiery, cooked in a cheesy sauce. Every restaurant offers it. (I know because I ordered it – cheese 'n' chillies is like culinary nirvana to me.)

Of course, you don't have to eat spicy food in Bhutan; in fact, you could avoid it entirely on a visit and still feast superbly. My non-chilli intake included: steaming bowls of **buckwheat noodles**, plump *momos* (dumplings) filled with pork or veggies, mild curries of chicken or beef, and various delicious potato dishes (British explorers planted spuds here in the 18th century). The staple is a nutty **red rice** that is great to eat even on its own.

For a local tipple, try the **beer** – some of it is very good. Just be wary of the popular variety labelled "Druk 11,000". The number may well represent the alcohol content – this stuff is lethal!

Top:

Breakfast with a view, Uma at Punakha; the impressive Uma at Paro; Uma's Bhutan porridge with chillies; eggplants drying in a farmhouse

Opposite:

Phallic symbols on village walls; festival masks; gold detail at the National Memorial Chorten in Thimphu; golden face atop a nunnery stupa; mother and daughter crossing the crystal-clear Paro Chhu









#6 DIFFERENT

As the title of this feature implies, Bhutan is a country that does things a little differently. Consider, for starters, the concept of **Gross National Happiness**. GNH is how Bhutan measures its "health" as a nation, rather than by GDP. This isn't a gimmick; it's an official policy based on the pillars of sustainable development, cultural values, the environment, and good governance. Does it mean everyone walks around with smiles on their faces? Not really. (And it's a system that has its critics.) Still, more and more countries seem to be adopting some kind of happiness-related index – most recently, the UK – on the back of Bhutan's model.

Among its other quirks, Bhutan is the only country in the world to have outlawed tobacco (in 2004), so you won't see anybody smoking (except perhaps the Indian road-construction teams); the Bhutanese do, however, enjoy chewing *doma* (areca nut wrapped in betel leaf). Plastic bags have been banned since 1999 – the same year that television was introduced for the first time. Thimphu is the only world capital without traffic lights; officials did try to install a set but the people objected! The highest mountains in Bhutan are forbidden to be climbed because they're considered sacred. (In fact, it has the highest unclimbed peak on the planet, the 7,570m **Gangkhar Puensum**.)

Even the national animal is quirky: it's the **takin**, best described as a cross between a goat and an antelope. Kesang took me to a wildlife park where we tried to get a glimpse of the beast, but we didn't have any luck.

Still, I won't say this made me unhappy – let alone grossly unhappy. After all, it gives me a great reason to return.

#5 COLOURFUL

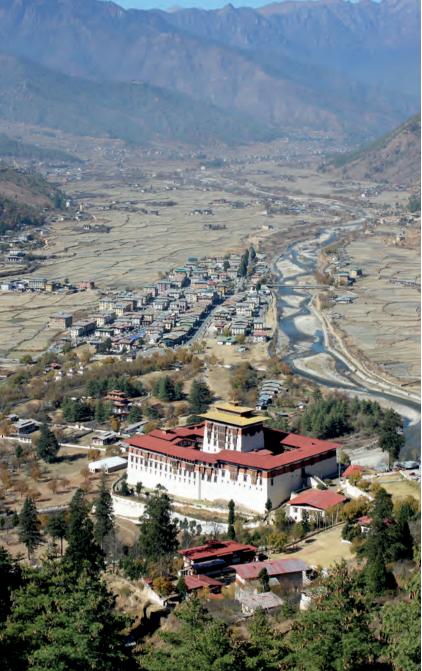
From the chillies on your plate to the prayer flags fluttering on the top of every rocky outcrop, there's nothing drab about Bhutan. Even the petrol station in the capital Thimphu is done up in the fetching local architectural style.

Especially colourful are the country's many religious festivals – called *tshechu* – featuring dancers in gargoylestyle masks and whirling, multi-coloured costumes. (Country Holidays can help you plan the dates of your trip to coincide with one or more of these famous festivals.)

While the monasteries are notably vibrant, with their striking wall paintings in gold and red hues, Bhutanese villages tend to be colourfully adorned, too – and sometimes in unexpected fashion. Among the noteworthy decorative elements on the walls of many homes is the phallus. Representing fertility and good luck, the symbol was an integral part of Bhutan's early ethnic religion, and later became associated with a popular and unorthodox 16th-century Buddhist saint known as "the Divine Madman". Kesang and I took a stroll in the village next to the saint's monastery, **Chimi Lhakhang**, and found erect phalluses painted on almost every wall; there were shops selling a wide range of knickknacks in the shape of the symbol too. (It keeps the tourists coming, so to speak.)









Clockwise from left: View of Paro with its famous fort in the foreground; views of the snow-clad Himalayas from Dochula Pass; the author and the meditator

Fact File

Trips with Country Holidays start from S\$2,700 per adult traveller, including not just accommodation, guides, private air-con vehicles, transfers, entry fees and meals, but also return international flights from Singapore. (This figure is inclusive of a US\$250 daily tariff that Bhutan imposes on tourists.) You'll pay quite a bit more to stay at luxury hotels like Uma, but trust me, at least a few nights in these is worth the splurge.

For more information about the various itineraries (to Bhutan or many other countries in Asia and beyond) or to book a trip, visit countryholidays.com.sg or call 6334 6120.

How to get there: Druk Air is Bhutan's national carrier and it provides an excellent service – reliable and clean, with tasty food and some incredible views of the Himalayas out the window. There are three direct flights weekly from Singapore to Paro (just over six hours, including a brief refuelling stopover in Kolkata). Economy and business class seats are available. drukair.com.sg

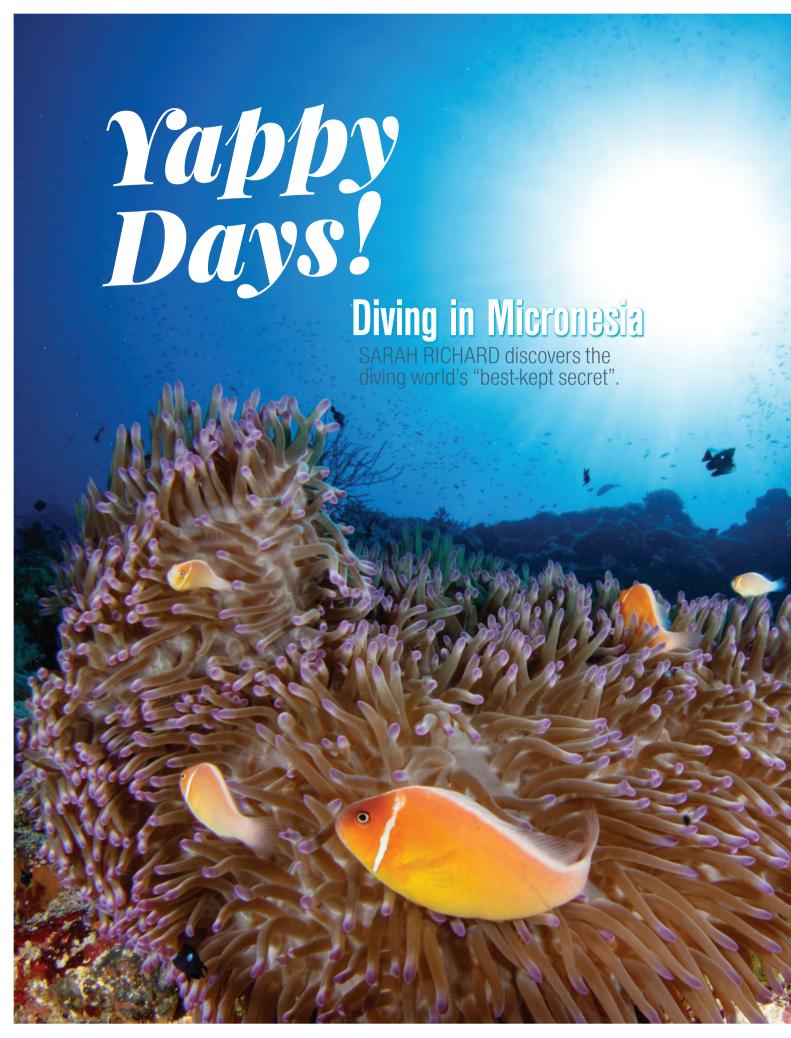
When to go: I was there at the start of winter. It meant that I missed the spectacular rhododendron displays of the warmer months, but the weather was crisp and the tourist numbers sparse, making me feel almost like I had the place to myself. Bhutan is pushing to be recognised as a year-round destination, which seems fair enough judging from the quality of my "low season" experience.

countryholidays.com.sg comohotels.com/umaparo comohotels.com/umapunakha



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Photos by Sarah Richard and Manta Ray Bay Resort



ou've probably already asked yourself (and the person sitting next to you), "Where's Yap?" So let's get that sorted first.

Yap is located in the Caroline Islands of the Western Pacific Ocean, and is a part of the Federated States of Micronesia. Micronesia is made up of approximately 2,100 islands, the largest of which is Guam.

Flights are easy enough: ten hours, including a quick stop at Hong Kong, Nagoya or another regional hub. Arriving in a relatively short period of time in a country that's part of the US felt very strange. However, the American pancakes and bottomless coffee were a much-appreciated treat during my one-night layover in Guam's Santa Fe Hotel.

The next day, after an additional 70-minute flight, we were greeted at the airport at Yap with a traditional flower garland or *lei*. Swiftly escorted to Manta Ray Bay Resort by the complimentary shuttle (10 minutes), I was one step further – though I didn't know it yet – to fulfilling a lifetime dream of diving with manta rays.

My room looked out onto the ocean and although the sun had set I could just tell that there was something different about this place; my first dive would be starting at 8am and I contemplated not even sleeping and waiting on the harbour with my fins on, ready to dive in. But jetlag had it's own ideas.

When the day dawned I saw a huge boat moored next to the resort; "Why is there a 55-metre schooner right here?" I wondered. Moving closer, I heard a voice say, "Miss Sarah, that's where you will be eating breakfast". And she wasn't joking; before I knew it, I was enjoying a freshly made omelette on the bottom deck of an Indonesian schooner, named *Mnuw*, watching the sun come up while coffee was brought to my table. I guess I've had worse Wednesdays.

Brad, the resort's underwater photographer, sat with me and explained the week's itinerary. He had me at "shark dive"; the rest was a blur of "Sorry, when are we going shark diving?" and "Okay, that sounds great" and "When are seeing the manta rays?" I'll admit when it



comes to diving I'm like an over-excitable puppy – and I have been since I first put a regulator in my mouth eight years ago. To me, scuba diving is the most fantastic thing on the planet, and it seemed everyone at Manta Ray Bay Resort agreed.

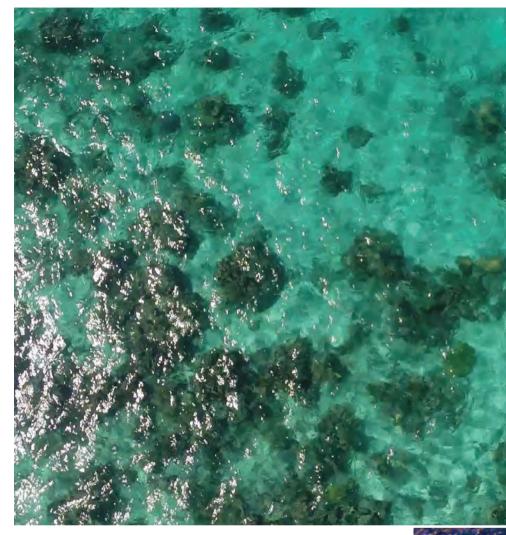
Boats go out everyday at around 8am, 10.30am or, for a night dive, 7pm. You can choose whether you want to do a two-tank or a three-tank day. If you choose three tanks, lunch is also provided on the boat.

With around 50 dive sites in Yap, you're spoilt for choice. You can choose which sites you want to go to on which days, and a schedule is put up every evening for you to see. Inevitably, one boat heads to the manta cleaning station each day. Although they can't guarantee mantas, there are only distant memories of days without sightings. It's safe to say, within your week at Manta Bay Resort, you are highly likely to see them.

And when you do, you won't believe your eyes. For me, they're the most beautiful creatures in the ocean; nothing can prepare you for the euphoric feeling of being in their presence.

There was more excitement in store: my next dive was at Vertigo, a drop-off dive that's home to dozens of black-tip and white-tip reef sharks. While not as majestic as mantas, sharks are fascinating to watch – and, happily, they're more scared of you than you are of them. They kept their distance as we floated through their world, and our mutual respect was rewarded by a display of 25 sharks going about their everyday lives. Yap is a great place to try shark diving for the first time as the conditions are perfect and the guides extremely experienced.

I did at least two dives every day, seeing a variety of wildlife and corals; the water was warm enough that I didn't need a wetsuit. Not a day went by without a pod of dolphins following the boat, and we were even fortunate enough to see pilot whales. On one occasion, we jumped into snorkel with the dolphins, and we followed a pod for a good half hour in the open ocean. This was one of my most magical



experiences in Yap - and completely unexpected.

With my dives over, I would relax back on the Mnuw, drinking coffee and talking all things scuba with other guests. One day, I went to check out Manta Ray's own private beach, with picture-perfect white sand and hundreds of palm trees shading me from the afternoon sun. The resort owns a cute section of the beach, where it has added a sitting hut, restroom and barbecue spot, along with optional hire of kayaks and snorkels and not another soul for miles. Another day I decided to treat myself in the Taro Leaf Spa: I opted for a full body massage with coconut oil and came out smelling like an exotic goddess.

Among the most enduring features of my time at Manta Ray Bay Resort were

the little added extras. When you think about going on a diving holiday, you rarely think about the hotel itself – more about what awaits underwater. However, Manta Bay has created a sanctuary that's not only the perfect place for divers, but also non-divers. I could've easily entertained myself wandering around the local villages, kayaking out to the mangroves and reading a book by the infinity pool for the whole week without even picking up a tank.

From the freshly baked cookies, home-brewed beer and locally made coconut oil, to the way the towels are folder into mantas and the banana bread on the boat, it all added up to the ultimate holiday – one that allowed me to live out a childhood dream and left me with precious memories.









Underwater photographer Brad Holland (originally from LA, working with Manta Ray Bay Resort for the past three years)

What drew you to Yap and what made you stay?

It completely appealed to my adventurous side; I found it alluring that no one really knew about it – most divers had been to the Philippines or Thailand, but hardly anyone had been to Yap. Once I got here, I realised it had everything the modern world had and everything I needed, but in a perfect harmony with nature. I feel very lucky to have found such a great place to work and live, and I get to meet people from all over the world.

Best thing about working and living in Yap?

The diving! The waters are uncrowded and the interactions with the animals are very personable – it's unlike anywhere else in the world. I have mantas swimming above my head on a daily basis. Also, once you're out of the water, the traditional community is so welcoming and open to foreigners. Ninety percent of people here live a traditional life, sustained by the land and ocean; I love being a part of that

Tell us more about the mantas.

Yap is the world's first government-backed manta ray sanctuary; this has ensured the manta population has stayed the same, year after year. We have a manta ID database to track their lives, so we know their social behaviour, and whether or not one of them is pregnant or has been bitten by a shark. Regulations stop boats and divers from disrupting the behaviour and habitat of the mantas, which means divers get a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It isn't a sighting but an interaction – one that's unlikely to be possible anywhere else in the world.

What else can guests expect to see on dives?

Well, if you're getting bored of the mantas (you won't!) there are beautiful hard and soft corals on all of our dive sites, along with schools of fish, moray eels, eagle rays and turtles. Another popular dive site is Vertigo, where you can be surrounded by dozens of white-tip and black-tip sharks at any point. We even had a whale shark sighting last month. Dolphins ride along with us all year round, and orcas have shown up, too.

What kind of diver should come to Yap?

All of them! From novice to expert, we've had them all. The diving is easy, making it perfect for beginners, but it can always be made more challenging by going to deeper sites. Our boat captains and dive guides know the sites inside out. You tell us what kind of diving you want and we'll strive to give you want you want.







FACT FILE

GETTING THERE From Singapore, it's just over 10 hours to Guam, including one stop; numerous airlines fly there via Japan, Hong Kong and other hubs. United Airlines is the sole carrier to Yap (70 minutes; Tuesday, Saturday). Manta Ray Bay Resort then escorts you to the resort. For flight deals, contact the resort directly (yapdivers@mantaray.com).

COST Manta Ray Bay Resort's standard package costs US\$1,419 and includes seven nights accommodation, with buffet breakfast, five days' diving (two dives per day), airport transfers and taxes. Extras include Nitrox, shark-feeding dives, a third tank and night dives. Room-only rates start from \$149 per night.

DINING The *Mnuw* is the most unique restaurant in Micronesia, if not the world. She's a 55m Indonesian *pinisi* schooner with three dining decks, two bars and a kitchen. Breakfast is included in all packages, and you can unwind after a full day of activities with a cold homebrew or a coconut. Freshly caught fish is served every day, and there are vegetarian options and a kids' menu. Head upstairs to the rooftop bar to end the day with a cocktail or another glass of beer.

SPA The Taro Leaf Spa takes the best of everything that is Yapese to bring you an experience that will leave you relaxed, invigorated and harmonised. The décor is based on island themes, and all the products use locally sourced plants. A range of treatments is available, and they can fit in around your diving schedule.

WHEN TO COME Mantas can be seen all year round; however, the best manta diving is in the mating season, from December through to April. The climate in Yap is hot and humid – annual average temperature is 27 degrees Celsius, and the average water temperature is 28.

DIVING COURSES Yap is a perfect place to learn to dive or to advance your diving career. Junior Open Water courses are available for children from age 10. Open Water (your first scuba dive certification) costs \$495 and can be completed within your own time frame (minimum three days); Advanced and Rescue are also available, and you can even complete your DiveMaster training. getting you on the road to working in the dive industry.

FAMILY OPTIONS Kids' Sea Camp, 18-25 June 2016
Manta Ray Bay Resort has put together a summer dive and culture package for divers and non-divers, catering to family members of all ages. Parents dive with adults in the morning while kids do junior dives in concert with PADI Seal Team and SASY (snorkelling) activities. Afternoons involve family dives for both parents and kids. (All these activities can also be arranged outside the scheduled camp in June.) Childcare is provided if your young ones don't dive or if you need some relaxation time. The resort's double suites sleep up to six people; extra beds are available.

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Manar Manar Manar - a weekend in Yangon

VERNE MAREE drops into Yangon for just long enough to get a taste of Myanmar's rapid resurgence.

t's an exciting time to be visiting visit Myanmar (Burma). In November 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy swept the board in the country's first democratic elections in half a century, winning 77 percent of the parliamentary seats.

A lot has changed in in recent years. Though still effectively in charge, the military junta no longer makes it difficult for journalists to visit; getting my online visa (US\$50) for a press trip to Yangon was a breeze. Its biggest and commercially most important city, Yangon (Rangoon) used to be the only gateway to Myanmar; now you can fly direct to the cultural city of Mandalay or to the ancient heritage site of Bagan on a number of airlines.

Five Fast Facts

- Burma (or Myanmar) was a British colony from 1852 to 1948. Its capital Yangon, called Rangoon by the British and laid out in grand colonial style, became the capital of British Burma around 1885; the city was renamed Yangon by the military junta in 1989.
- Many colonial buildings were destroyed before 1996, when a Yangon
 City Heritage List of 200 notable edifices was drawn up. Downtown
 Yangon still has the highest number of colonial period buildings in
 Southeast Asia.
- In 2006 the tyrannical junta declared and built a new capital city called Naypyidaw, 700km away. Still, Yangon remains the country's largest and most commercially important city; its population grew from about 1.3 million in 1950 to over 5 million today, and dramatic growth is projected as democracy takes hold.
- Known as "The Lady", Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Myanmar's Independence hero General Aung San who was assassinated in 1947, was kept under house arrest by the ruling junta for most of the period 1989 to 2010.
- In the country's first democratic elections in 25 years, in November 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party achieved a landslide victory.



Downtown Yangon

Downtown Yangon comes as a pleasant surprise – especially as I'd heard it described as "a bit of a sh*thole, five years ago". Laid out in grand British colonial style – Burma was coloured pink on world maps from 1855 until it won its independence in 1948 – it boasts generous parks, wide roads and solid Victorian architecture.

At its centre is the expansive **Mahabendula Park**, now sporting a gigantic monolith to independence. Around the park is a phalanx of grand Victorian buildings, the majority in various stages of mouldering decline; happily, though, quite a number have been restored in recent years, often funded by international private enterprise, explains our guide, Aye.

From **City Hall**, built in 1927 and refurbished in fetching blue around 2006, we pick our way along pavements crowded with tiny culinary enterprises. One US dollar (around 1,000 kyat, pronounced "chat") gets me five big, crispy samosas stuffed with fried

cabbage, onion and potato. **Vendors** perched scant centimetres above pavement level on tiny plastic chairs toss together salads of noodles, papaya, tofu, fresh coriander leaves and more, served with bowls of fish soup. Street-side **teashops** are everywhere, and popular as meeting places.

Pansodan Street is famous for its second-hand bookstalls – an eclectic mix, to say the least. The **Telegraph** Office is seemingly unchanged in a hundred years, except for the addition of a fax counter adjacent to the one where you would have sent – or perhaps still can send? – telegrams.

Where Pansodan and Strand Street intersect, a pedestrian bridge offers a splendid view of downtown to the right and the muddy **Rangoon River** to the left; behind us is the famous Strand Hotel (1896), said to be the most expensive accommodation in town.

No Asian city tour is complete without a couple of hours' shopping, right? In Yangon, it has to be **Bogyoke Market**.



Silks, lacquer-ware and jewellery seem to be the main focuses, if you're in the mood. Today I'm not, and end up paying two vendors (of postcards and monk sketches, respectively) several dollars each to go away.

Shwedagon Pagoda

This is by far the main thing to see and do in Yangon. However many impressive temples and other religious sites you've seen, this massive complex of Buddhist edifices is something to behold. It's best visited in the evening, as shoes are not allowed and the marble underfoot becomes unbearably hot during the day.

It's completely acceptable to join in the public devotions, and unexpectedly enjoyable to stroll around the pagoda to find your own corner of worship, based on the day of the week you were born on. (Wednesday, for some unexplained reason, has two corners, one for those born in the morning, the other for those born later in the day.)









Each day is associated with a zodiacal animal: tiger, lion, tusked and tusk-less elephant (for Wednesday children), rat and guinea-pig; for mine, Sunday, it's the mythical garuda. When you get to your corner, you're supposed to pour water over the Buddha statue there to bring you good luck.

Where to Stay

Thirty minutes from the airport (depending on traffic) and 20 minutes from the downtown area, **The Sedona Yangon** is well located on lovely **Inya Lake**. The original 12-storey structure was the city's first five-star hotel; now called the Garden Wing, it's been supplemented by the new 29-floor Inya Wing, where I and the rest of our media group stay in the utmost comfort of Premier Deluxe Rooms. They come complete with L'Occitane toiletries, a fruit-bowl, cookies, a hoard of cashews, a complimentary minibar – and daily delivery of *The Straits Times* (Myanmar edition).

Superlatives abound – it's now the city's tallest and biggest hotel; it has the largest swimming pool and the biggest and best-equipped gym (one-year membership US\$3,600); it's also proud of having the fastest (and free) Wi-Fi connection.

Aimed largely at the business traveller, it has numerous meeting rooms, plus a ballroom. Happily, though, a Burmese character shines through the gloss, reflected in cultural motifs such as the *pathein* (umbrella) and the harp-like soung used throughout the rooms and public spaces.





A FEAST FOR THE





















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Visit Okinawa Prefecture Museum & Art Museum. For seafood lovers, we recommend to go to Makishi Kosetsu Market.

Makishi Kosetsu Market - You can find variety of fresh fish and seafood some of which can only be seen in Okinawa. Fish picked up in the market can be cooked in the ways you like at restaurants on the second floor of the market.



OKINAWA SMILE HOTEL



DAY 2 • NAHA CITY - ITOMAN - NANIO - NAHA CITY

Trip highlights include Himeyuri Peace Museum, Okinawa World & Shurijo Castle Park. Shurijo Castle is one of the nine sites designated as World Heritage by UNESCO in December 2000. These sites are essential for understanding the history of Okinawa.



OKINAWA SUNCOAST HOTEL



DAY 3 • NAGO - KITANAKAGUSUKU - CHATAN TOWN

Enjoy a day trip to Ryukyu Village, Aeon Mall Okinawa Rycom, Mihama American Village where you can catch the most raved about sunset.



OKINAWA SUNCOAST HOTEL



DAY 4 • MOTOBU - NAKIJIN-SON

Visit Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, Kouri jima Island and don't miss the beautiful bridge of Kouri and Ocean Tower.

Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium - Located in Ocean Expo Park, is one of the largest aquariums in the world. For the first time in the world, they have succeeded in keeping multiple whale sharks. Currently, there are three. Another "first time in the world" is the breeding of Manta rays.



OKINAWA SUNCOAST HOTEL

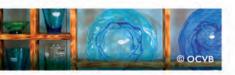


DAY 5 • ONNA - CHIBANA - NAHA CITY

Take a road trip down to Manza Cliff, Onna Village, Southeast Botanical Garden, Kokusai Street where you can shop for souvenirs and over here, there are plenty of dining options too.



OKINAWA SMILE HOTEL



DAY 6 • TOMIGUSUKU CITY - SINGAPORE

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Around Inya Lake

Pluck up the courage to cross the busy road to the narrow park that borders Inya Lake – far less hairy, though, than Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City's terrifying thoroughfares – and you can join the morning throng of walkers and joggers on the path that runs around the largest natural lake in the country. Note the "No Sex" signs: useful reminders for students from the nearby university who might otherwise forget themselves.

Directly across the lake, you can see the red-roofed home of Aung San Suu Kyi. Leaving the lake path and walking along University Avenue's rather erratic sidewalk, I come across The Lady's big front gate, boldly marked with signs for her NDL party and touchingly topped with a sun-faded portrait of her famous father. Now and then, visitors in private cars and taxis stop informally on the roadside to pose for selfies or group photos.

Adjacent to the hotel is Yangon's newest and largest mall, **Myanmar Plaza**, touted as the country's "first international retail experience". Though the bulk of its tenants – from Furla and Zegna to Nike, Mango, Gloria Jean, MarketPlace and Ya Kun Kaya Toast (really!) – have not yet opened for business at the time of my visit

(December 2015), locals are posing for selfies with a gaggle of Christmas trees in the winter-wonderland-themed lobby, and KFC upstairs is bursting at the seams with ecstatic finger-lickers.

Eating and Drinking

Fast food is an exotic newcomer to Yangon: the KFC in Myanmar Plaza is only its second ever, and there's a single big, shiny Pizza Hut downtown, but that's it for now. (One of our group remarks on the general slimness of the local population; but with the current pace of development, that could change faster than it takes to say "Supersize me".)

Mohingar is the national dish, and I'm told that people take it seriously – each region has its own version. Served at the breakfast buffet of the Sedona Hotel's all-day restaurant, **D'Cuisine**, it's thick, slightly spicy and coconut-tinged fish soup ladled over fine rice noodles and hard-boiled egg and garnished with coriander. Utterly delicious!

We enjoy dinner there on our first night, too – a wide selection of Asian and Western dishes, from sashimi and other seafood to regional curries, an excellent



prime rib and a patisserie-rich dessert spread featuring the divinely decadent, rich and sweet *umali*, a sort of bread-and-butter pudding made from croissants instead of bread.

Choosing an outdoor table means you can also watch the outstanding **cultural dance performance** by a government-endorsed troupe. Though it has elements of Indian and Thai, Burmese dance is unique: it seems to defy gravity. Luckily, it's hard to discern any rhythmic patterns so one is unlikely to feel moved to join in, even after several cocktails.

Other in-hotel restaurants include **Orzo**, where people come for the pizza oven; for dim sum they go to **Dufu**.

Keen to try some traditional Burmese food, we head for the **Green Elephant** in University Avenue, a fancooled alfresco restaurant that's just five minutes from the hotel. We're parched after a full day of sightseeing, and the quart bottles of chilled Myanmar beer barely touch our sides. Though the diners are mainly tourists, the food is fresh and authentic: piping hot tempurastyle vegetables, a light lentil soup, and tasty chicken and potato curry with side-dishes of steamed rice,

stir-fried morning glory (a green vegetable) and an utterly delicious Thai-like salad.

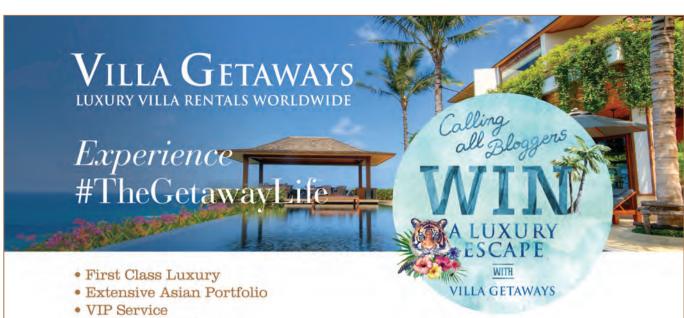
For Next Time

We are so lucky to be able to explore a variety of Southeast Asian countries over a series of three- or four-night long weekends. Having had this first taste of Myanmar, I'm looking forward to flying to its cultural heart, Mandalay, and then sailing overnight up the Irrawaddy River to float high above Bagan's expansive stupa-dotted plains from the vantage of a hot-air balloon. It's high on the list.

Getting there:

November to February are when Myanmar is at its coolest and driest, and so the best time to visit. SilkAir's 12 noon flight from Changi takes three hours, getting you to Yangon airport at 1.30pm – there's a rather odd 90-minute time difference. We cleared immigration and customs fairly quickly, but hear that's not always the case.

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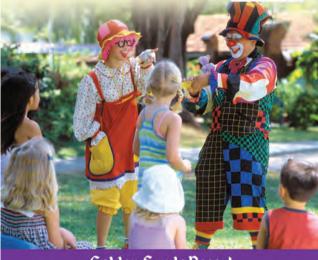
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- Graduated from the University of New South Wales, Australia (1998)
- Senior Clinical Fellow in Vascular and Endovascular Surgery, Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney (2007)
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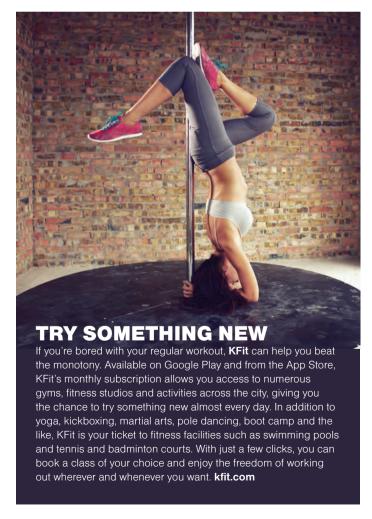
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WATCH YOUR WEIGHT

Make 2016 your fittest year yet with the help of the FitBit Blaze. In addition to tracking your sleep cycle, daily steps and calories burned, the smart fitness watch also offers guided workouts, auto-tracks aerobic activities and provides all-day information about your heart rate for more accurate readings. And thanks to its five-day battery life, you can be assured it won't miss a step. The device has a sleek design with interchangeable straps and frames to match your personal style. Connect it to your Android, iOS or Windows mobile and share your workouts, or access GPS, text messages and calls to stay motivated and connected through your fitness routines.

Now available for presale, the FitBit will retail at \$318 when it hits stores in March.

NIGHT RIDER

If you struggle with night driving, you're not alone. It may be less of a problem in brightly lit Singapore, but ill-lit rural roads back home or on a driving holiday can sap your confidence. That's why optics giant ZEISS has developed a new Luminance Design Technology (LDT) that takes into account different light conditions and pupil sizes to improve lens design for natural vision at all times - even in low-light conditions. ZEISS's DuraVision DriveSafe coating partially reflects light wavelengths, reducing perceived glare up to 64 percent compared with previous Anti-Reflective (AR) coatings. It's suitable for non-spectacle users, too - just ask for plano lenses with the DriveSafe coating. From \$280 for plano or single-vision lenses, and from \$890 for progressive lenses. Ottica Zeiss Vision Centre, #03-30 Shaw Centre. otticasg.com ▼







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In this month's edition of our regular column, VERNE MAREE gets and gives a timely reminder of the importance of magnesium.

hy don't you write about magnesium?" suggested my clever cousin Laura: "It's vital for just about every bodily function you can think of, and most people are dangerously deficient in it."

"You could say that about vitamin D, vitamin K, vitamin B12 and a dozen more," I countered, adding slightly smugly that my recent blood test showed a good level of magnesium. I'd only asked for the test because I'm a small-time runner who's aware that magnesium is lost during exercise and sweating – and, according to runnersworld.com, this is one of the most common deficiencies in athletes, causing reduced performance, lactic acid build-up, muscle cramping and poor recovery.

Unfortunately, as Laura reminded me with just the teeniest hint of one-upmanship, only one percent of the body's magnesium is distributed in the blood, making blood serum tests highly inaccurate. Meaning that even if I had any laurels (and I don't), now would not be the time to be resting on them.

Why do we need magnesium?

According to bodyandsoul.com.au, magnesium is an essential mineral required by every organ in the body for a range of activities including bone, protein and fatty acid formation. It is also essential in activating vitamins B and D, relaxing muscles, regulating calcium levels and helping blood to clot, and is required for the secretion of insulin.

Research shows that adequate levels are required for treating and managing conditions as varied as asthma, diabetes, fibromyalgia, high blood pressure, migraines, pre-eclampsia, premenstrual tension, restless leg syndrome and osteoporosis. In fact, it's been shown that magnesium deficiency increases the risk of postmenopausal osteoporosis, and that increasing magnesium intake may prevent the bone loss that leads to osteoporosis.

Where do we get it from?

Plant sources include seaweed and leafy greens like spinach and Swiss chard. Also good are beans, nuts and some seeds like pumpkin, sunflower and sesame. Avocados contain magnesium, too. It's also present in whole grains, bran, potatoes



and baked beans; and in fish and meat. The problem is that a reasonable intake of these foods may not be enough to maintain the levels of magnesium that we need.

So, what's causing such widespread magnesium deficiency?

It's a woeful tale. To start with, soil depletion means there's much less magnesium in the food that's grown in it. Then there's the removal of magnesium from drinking water: we're not getting what our ancestors did from their natural springs. (You could try a good mineral water, such as Gerolsteiner, that's said to be particularly high in magnesium.)

None of this is helped by nasty herbicides such as glyphosates; and fluoride, which binds to magnesium to effectively strip it from your body. Prescription drugs leach magnesium from our bodies, too; and too much stress, alcohol and caffeine, processed food and even a heavy period can work to bring your levels down.

Last but most certainly not least, calcium supplementation that's not properly augmented with vitamins D3 and K2, especially, upsets the fine balance that's needed for healthy bones, heart function and more. (That's why it's vital to look at this subject in detail before you even consider a calcium supplement.)

What are the symptoms of deficiency?

It's been said that if you even think you might be deficient in magnesium, you most probably are. Early signs include loss of appetite, headache, nausea, fatigue and weakness (mercola. com), but such generalised symptoms are unlikely to point most people to this specific cause. Other symptoms can develop, such as numbness and tingling, muscle contractions and cramps, seizures, abnormal heart rhythms, coronary spasms – even personality changes. It's also been linked to Type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and colon cancer.

Back to my cousin, Laura, whose found out more about magnesium after her daughter Zoë developed a gastric disorder. Laura suspected a link to nutrient malabsorption and a particular deficiency that could be affecting Zoë's behaviour: angry, tetchy, intolerant, unresponsive to physical contact, not physically affectionate, physically restless – the little girl ticked all the boxes for magnesium deficiency, so her mother embarked on a programme of supplementation.

Should we all be taking magnesium supplements?

As with all nutrients, first try to get as much as you can through food, especially organic food if at all possible. After that, the answer is probably yes, especially as supplementation can do no harm in judicious amounts.

Anything from 300mg to 700mg per day is recommended. I'd go with the higher end of the range, suggested by mercola.com. Magnesium isn't available in a pure state, however – it comes in a variety of compounds with different properties that deliver different effects – so it may be more effective to try two or more sources simultaneously, suggests Dr Carolyn Dean, a leading researcher in this field (*The Miracle of Magnesium*, revised 2014).

In the case of cousin Laura, she started her daughter on various forms of supplementation – including an Epsom salts bath several times a week – and Zoë's response was immediate and positive. Coincidentally (or not), Laura herself has restless leg syndrome, described as an irresistible urge to kick when she's supposed to be still – while at the movies or in bed, for example. Through magnesium supplementation, she (and her long-suffering husband, no doubt) has also found relief and the way to a better night's sleep.

Magnesium oxide supplements may be the cheapest, but they're poorly absorbed. The chelated magnesiums – ending in "-ate," like citrate, glycinate or taurate – tend to be the best absorbed, according to marksdailyapple.com.





There's only so much that can be fitted into a two-page magazine article. To find out more about this vitally important subject, which touches on so many aspects of our health, I recommend that you go to some of the websites quoted.

As for me, my chat with Laura was a timely reminder to soak in a salty bath, stock up on mineral-rich spring water and keep on nibbling those raw organic nuts and seeds.

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Not in Vein

Varicose and spider veins can really cramp your style in Singapore. Whether you noticed them while strapping on your sandals or applying body lotion, you know you're going to think twice before pulling on another pair of shorts. The good news, though, is that they can be treated. To find out more, we posed a reader's questions on the topic to DR JOHN TAN of **The Vein Clinic**.

What's the difference between varicose veins and spider veins?

The former are dark blue or purplish and bulge above the surface of the skin, while the latter are smaller, closer to the surface, and resemble red or blue spider webs – hence the name.

Why have I developed them?

While you could have inherited your weak veins, prolonged sitting or standing could also have caused the veins in your legs to swell and dilate. Staying in the same position for a long time also adds stress to the valves and prevents blood from flowing in the right direction, causing it to pool and distend the veins, making them bigger. Even wearing high-heeled shoes that restrict calf muscle function and circulation can cause spider veins.

Another cause is pregnancy. Hormonal changes, as well as the growing foetus adding pressure on your pelvic veins, can cause spider veins to surface. However, doctors advise waiting at least three to six months before seeking treatment as these disappear in almost 80 percent of cases.

It's important to note that while women are more susceptible to developing varicose veins, men can get them, too. While spider veins and varicose veins are largely harmless, if you feel pain or numbness, it's best to have them checked. If you're among the 10 percent who suffer from spider veins that are associated with varicose veins at a deeper level, you must make sure

to have them treated. Of course, you can

always have any unsightly veins treated

Should I get them treated?

What can I do to prevent veins becoming enlarged?

for aesthetic reasons, too.

Stay active. Work out regularly to keep the blood flowing throughout the body. When working out, make sure to incorporate running and leg exercises into your routine, and walk whenever you can. When sitting down, try not to cross your legs. Avoid wearing heels higher than four inches, or tight clothes that constrict blood circulation.

What are my options for treatment?

Depending on the severity of

Depending on the severity of your varicose and spider veins, you can consider the following treatments.

• Endovenous Laser Therapy (EVLT): A fibre-optic wire fires laser pulses to shrink the vein. This is a highly effective treatment with no downtime.

- Radiofrequency ablation: This uses RF energy to eradicate veins.
- Injection sclerotherapy: A fine needle is used to inject a solution that causes veins to spasm and close permanently.
- ClariVein: A combined mechanicalchemical ablation technique that gets rid of damaged veins.
- Ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy: Guided by ultrasound, the surgeon delivers the solution precisely to diseased veins that can't be seen externally, but can be viewed on an ultrasound monitor.
- Foam sclerotherapy: A chemical foam is used to seal large varicose veins.
- Vnus Closurefast: Similar to EVLT, a catheter is used to shrink the vein with radiofrequency.





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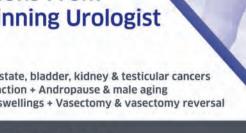




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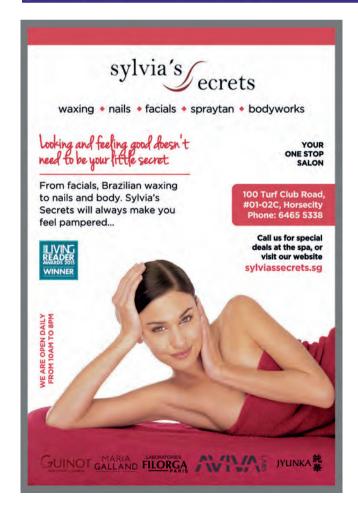
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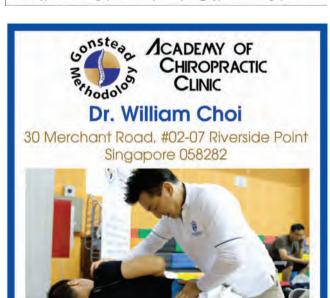
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2016 TAROT FORECAST

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AOUARIUS JAN 20 - FEB 18





THIS MONTH

You've got all the right ingredients to make this a very powerful month for yourself. You have your sharp instincts, the ability to take risks, problem-solving capabilities with a calm demeanour, and the desire to create something out of nothing. When the above are put together in the right proportions, you could either make it, or break

it if you choose not to make the most of what's before you. It's rare to have everything so perfectly laid out for you, so the advice is make the most of it!

YEAR AHEAD

It's going to be quite a full-on learning experience in 2016, Aquarius. You can expect news relating to finances, relationships and your goals and ambitions. A moderately paced year will allow you plenty of time to absorb and understand the events that will take place.

The year begins with you having to make a decision about which of two passions to pursue. You already know the one, but because both options are equally good, you delay the decision-making in the hope that by doing so you'll make the best possible choice.

To get the ball rolling, quit procrastinating and make that decision by the end of this month. Whatever ambition you pursue, it's important to keep things simple and not to start on too many plans and overburden yourself. Check things off as you go before starting on the next project – you're only going to weigh yourself down unnecessarily if you don't. You'll be bursting at the seams with excitement about your future plans, so do try to contain yourself and avoid sharing too much before anything really materialises; you don't want to end up in a situation where someone else gets there before you do.

As you move into the second quarter, you realise how important it was to set things in motion so you can begin to place importance on what you desire in life, and living life on your own terms. You find yourself listening to your inner voice as you deepen this connection with the purpose of your being. Loving yourself has never felt more beautiful!

In the third quarter, you'll notice relationships with dear ones are much closer and more harmonious as your deeper understanding of yourself trickles into those relationships. Instead of feeling disconnected and moving away from relationships that don't "fit" any more, you develop a more empathetic outlook towards them and realise it may have been you all along who created these rifts.

Towards the end of year, expect to meet with financial issues or a situation fraught with tension. None of this is the result of your past actions, so try not to take it personally. It will be a test of whom you can truly trust in times of need. Hence, try to stay calm and trust your inner guidance.

PISCES FEB 19 - MAR 20



It's going to be a disappointing realisation as you make a decision

to move on from people or circumstances that, in your opinion, have not met your expectations. It may not be their fault that they are no longer the right fit for you. It could be that you've outgrown the conversations and don't share the same perspectives anymore, and so you feel the need to look elsewhere for inspiration.

ARIES MAR 21 - APR 19



A very transformational February awaits you, Aries. You'll find your

psyche and instincts pulling you in unfamiliar directions that will have you experimenting and dabbling in new things. Like a butterfly leaving the cocoon, you'll say goodbye to the old, play-it-safe you. If you were too proud to accept help in the past, you definitely will do so this month, realising that the exchange of giving and receiving is essential if you wish to attract money and opportunities. The new you is buzzing with excitement about the endless possibilities, as 2016 begins to take shape.

TAURUS APR 20 - MAY 20



It's a new year and you want something new to drive and inspire you. You waste no

time in beginning your search. For some, it might already have been sitting at the back of your mind; for others, you'll engage in the pursuit of finding it. If you don't get to the bottom of your mission this month, it's really going to be OK – there's no reason to crawl back under your sheets and feel like a failure. It's just a very trying February for you, Taurus, but persevere. Your eureka moment will come!

GEMINI MAY 21 - JUN 20



The month is a very positive one in terms of making changes and moving forward with plans that you might

already have in place. It may come as a surprise when things end up moving faster than you expect, which leaves you unprepared. Keep your temperament in check so as not to rub people up the wrong way. Feeling overwhelmed might spark erratic mood swings. Don't allow your underlying fear and lack of confidence to consume you, though, as luck is on your side this month, so trust that all will be well and hold your chin high.

CANCER JUN 21 - JUL 22



Like every other zodiac sign this month, you can expect to see steady growth and development in

all areas of your life. Things are certainly moving in your favour when it comes to health, career and finances. With a spring in your step and a smile on your face, things could never feel better. However, do read the fine print that comes with February. Be on your toes when it comes to sharing information and your intellect. You might want to keep your new ideas for a venture or investment under wraps, so that others don't get there before you do.

LEO JUL 23 - AUG 22



Although the Mercury Retrograde is well behind you this month, you're still uncertain about

making major decisions. If that's the case, put off any important decisions till after the end of February, if you can afford to. For the time being, this brain fog may be frustrating and may contribute to your irritable nature. Best advice for you, Leo, would be to put your head down and keep the socialising to a minimum. You have to keep the mind-set that anything is possible here, and move with care but also determination. If something doesn't work, try, try and try again.

VIRGO AUG 23 - SEP 22



Relationships take centre stage this month. Past arguments and disagreements are put to rest as you decide to move

past pettiness and immaturity to make amends with family and close ones. You make an attempt to empathise with the other party and understand why such hurtful exchanges took place between you in the first place. Practising giving the benefit of the doubt never fails to make a situation better. This forgiving outlook will lead to many pleasant times moving forward. And soon you will find yourself being the most popular kid on the block!

LIBRA SEP 23 - OCT 22



It's not a time for making any major decisions. The best advice is to lie low and listen to your

inner voice so as to analyse any situation before you. It might be wise to spend some time alone, as emotions could be rather erratic with the Black Moon elevating negative emotions for Air signs. Doing this will help you avoid unnecessary conflicts. Working on yourself and for yourself would be the best gift you could give yourself this month. Financially, you will reap the rewards of your past efforts – but avoid overindulgence, as the cash may come in handy in the upcoming months.

SCORPIO OCT 23 - NOV 21



It's a very good month to achieve results in whatever you set out to do.

Scorpio, as luck is on your side. Issues and problems are easily solved as they arise. If you're in business, be aware of how much information you share, as well as with whom. There's a chance that your ideas could be stolen. It's a time of introspection and analysis regarding the direction you'd like to take this year. There's not much socialising going on this February, as most of it will be spent in solitude, drawing up plans for achieving your goals and ambitions.

SAGITTARIUS NOV 22 - DEC 21



It's good news all around this February in the areas of finances, work, health and

emotional wellbeing. You decide to move past petty grudges to making amends with close ones who have upset you in the past. Everyone around you seems to applaud these moves, and in turn you feel really positive about yourself. However, don't feel upset if not everyone seems to appreciate your actions. Life is too short to be wasting your energies on people who don't value your efforts, so the best thing to do is to save them for those who do.

CAPRICORN DEC 22 - JAN 19



With Jupiter on your side this month, you won't go wrong with dabbling in some business for yourself. It's been on your

mind for some time to be your own boss, but it's important that you feel strongly and passionately about the idea that you pursue. It's unclear whether you'll have found that one venture to launch into by the end of the month, but you're likely to be at the beginning of something. If you're already in business for yourself then expect to see success with decisions you make this month. Be sure to stick with your instincts – they seem to be in top form. Emotions may be erratic, though, so choose a time when you're at your calmest to make any important business decisions.

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AESTHETICS & BEAUTY		The Winstedt School	134	In Situ Design	68
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& Laser Clinic	33	Titans Football Club	33	Make Room	79
The Vein Centre	87	VivaLing	129	Natural Living	9
The Vein Clinic & Surgery	13	White & Black Trading	115 & 127	Ni-Night	78
The vent entire a eargery	10	Winstedt Integrated Therapy	134	OHMM	48
ART				Originals	11
	FC & 1	FASHION		Piccolo House	79
TIEBOL/T dallery	1001	Mohan's Custom Tailors	15	Ruby Slipper	78
ARTS & LEISURE		Sam's Custom Tailors	130	Sofzsleep	41
Boutiques Fairs	47	Trimmings & Spa	145	Taylor B Fine Design Group	2 & 3
C+S Art Prints	78			Teak & Mahogany	38
Cabaleiro Atelier & Art School	134	FINANCIAL & LEGAL SE	RVICES	The Children's Showcase	75
Cabalono / Ronor a / Rt Corroor	104	Charles Art Insurance	78	Woody Antique House	89
CARPETS		Chartwell Associates	133		
Hedger's Carpet Gallery	60	Consilium Law Corporation	132	HEALTH & FITNESS	
riedger 3 darpet dallery	00	Engelin Teh Practice	132	Academy of Chiropractic Clinic	217
FAMILY & EDUCATION		Expat Insurance	51	Andrea's Digestive, Colon,	
Australian International School	25	Gloria James-Civetta & Co Ad	dvocate	Liver And Gallblader Clinic	215
Baby Slings & Carriers	131	& Solicitor	131	Complete Healthcare International	29
Canadian International School	118	Jenny Lai & Co	134	Clarity Eyecare	213
Dover Court International School	123	World First Asia	127	Dennis Lim Surgery	215
				Dr Catherine Lee Orthodontics	93
Dulwich College	OBC	FOOD & BEVERAGES		Gerald Tan Urology + Robotics	214
EtonHouse International School	108	1-Altitude	149	Health & Fertility Centre for Women	
German European School	102	Cold Storage	146	International Medical Clinic	121
Go-Go Bambini	132	Don Quijote	174	Orange Orthodontics	
Hillside World Academy	125	Expat Kitchen	173	& Dentofacial Orthopaedics	217
Integrated International School	101	Foodpanda	172	Pacific Vein & Endovascular Centre	
JH Kim Taekwondo Institute	128	Mitzo	153	Quah Hak Mien Colorectal Centre	207
JSSL Arsenal Soccer School	113	Morton's The Steakhouse	163	Regional Hypnosis Center	217
L'Académie de Danse Singapore	134	Natural Springs	174	SITA	216
Little Mandarins Language Centre		RedMart	159	Smile Focus	213
Maidwell Hall	131	Senso Ristorante	173	Sylvia's Secrets	216
Marsden Swim School	133	Shahi Maharani Restaurant	172	TFL Training Consultants	217
Melbourne Specialist		Shiraz Restaurant	197	The Counselling Place	216
International School	90	Straits Marine Supply	174	The Harley Street Clinic Heart	210
One World International School	99	Straits Marine Supply	174	and Cancer Centre	207
Pegasus International Preschool	131	FURNITURE & HOME DI	ÉCOR	and Ganeer Gentie	201
RainTrees Kindergarten	128	Artful House	27	HOME SERVICES	
Singapore American School 107	7 & 116	China Collection	19	A-Team Amahs & Cleaners	78
Sir Manasseh Meyer		Danish Design	IBC	Comfy Homes	78
International School	6 & 7	Design Intervention	17	SD Air-con	79
St. Joseph's Institution		•	77	SD All-Coll	78
International School	111	Ethnicraft Online	31	LIV	
Stamford American International		European Bedding			L 4
School	21	EDD+	77 55	Amedes Jewellery	51
Swallows And Amazons	129	Gallery 278	55	An Cee Chantelle	51
Tanglin Arts Studio	132	Hacienda Blue	79	Expat Hair Studio	51

Legend: (*) IFC - Inside Front Cover

IBC - Inside Back Cover OBC - Outside Back Cover (L) Also has leasing options

GloAesthetics	45	PROPERTY	
Haute Swiss Cosmetics	11	Castlewood Group	80
Kadambari Jewellery	51	Leisure Farm	84
Saint Chapelle	5		
Shopping at Tiffany's	34	TRAVEL & LEISURE	
SSK Prosperity Holdings	34	Bintan Resorts	185
Stones That Rock	51	Country Holidays	202
SWUK Aesthetics	45	Culture Bites	203
Team Salon	26	Ever Asia	2 & 3
The Aesthetics Centre	IBC	Flight Centre	198
The Big Blow	6	FlyMya	20
The Lifestyle Clinic	OBC	Golden Sands Resort	203
Visage The Salon	6	Orca Scuba	203
Willow & Huxley	IFC & 1	Peppers Sentosa Seminyak	191
WWF	26	Rawa Island Resort	202
		Villa Getaways	20
MOTORING SERVICES			
Evergreen Rent A Car ^L	65		
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felt like Gretel standing in front of the gingerbread house: ION Orchard looked so beautiful, so tempting – the clean glass façades, the extravagant design; even a cheaper retail spot like H&M looked like the palace of the Snow Queen.

Such were my feelings when I first landed in Singapore after flying from Kampala in Uganda, Africa. Walking for hours through the streets, using the spotless MRT, and counting so many Swiss watches and Lamborghinis, the feeling became even stronger.

I felt like I'd come from another planet, a bit like Mork in *Mork & Mindy*. And yet, I didn't grow up as a little African girl in a remote hamlet without electricity, having to risk my life every day while fetching water from the Nile because of the threats of crocodiles or some nasty protozoa. No, I'm a middle-aged woman from another remote village, this one in Southern Germany, who had also lived in Munich, Berlin and many other German towns, and elsewhere in Europe, South America and Africa. Yet there was nothing comparable with Singapore.

As my husband and I stood there on Orchard Road, a Singaporean girl approached us, doing research for the Ministry of Tourism. How much money had we spent today, she wanted to know. We did our calculations and explained that we'd only spent about \$25 (a hawker lunch and the MRT). The young lady was visibly disappointed; she was standing in front of Paragon and must have thought that we'd bought some

Gucci bags or at least a little Armani dress - a watch perhaps? No? (Not possible! Those selfish tourists!)

And there it was again, that feeling that we'd come from another planet. We simply weren't used to fancy shopping malls, because they didn't exist in Kampala. Back there, we would buy our clothes and shoes in the notorious Owino Market. Sometimes my friends and I – on a quest for treasure – would wade up to our ankles in sewage and rainwater (thank God I have a good pair of Wellingtons!), risking getting lost in the maze of stalls, or among its heaps of old T-shirts from Oxfam and fur coats from a Red Cross container.

Often we would be overwhelmed by the mix of intense smells and colours. It was funny trying dresses on in the middle of all the hustle and bustle, with only a kikoy wrap to serve as a makeshift changing room door, curious black men peeping at these pale, giggling ladies. Nobody can describe the feeling when, among the market's worn-out pieces, we found a wonderful dress (the kind that might have been presented at King Oyo's birthday party, for example), looking almost new, no one caring about its label. Once, when the temptation was too strong, I checked on the internet and discovered that I'd paid just \$28 for a pre-loved dress that cost \$1,200 new, because that was all the voung sales lady wanted for it.

So I would come home dirty, sweaty and hungry from our shopping tours at Owino Market, but always happy - especially if I'd acquired a "new" princess evening gown. (The first thing to do was to throw it in the washing machine with loads of soap!) I'd have won a new African friend who could feed her children with the money she'd earned; I didn't have to use my credit card, or accumulate loyalty points, or buy something extra that I didn't need just to redeem those points; I didn't catch a cold because of the 16 degree temperatures inside and 33 degrees outside; and, yes, I wasn't frustrated that I couldn't squeeze into even the biggest size of clothing available.

Orchard Road, no offence, but I really do miss Owino Market.

Well, sometimes.



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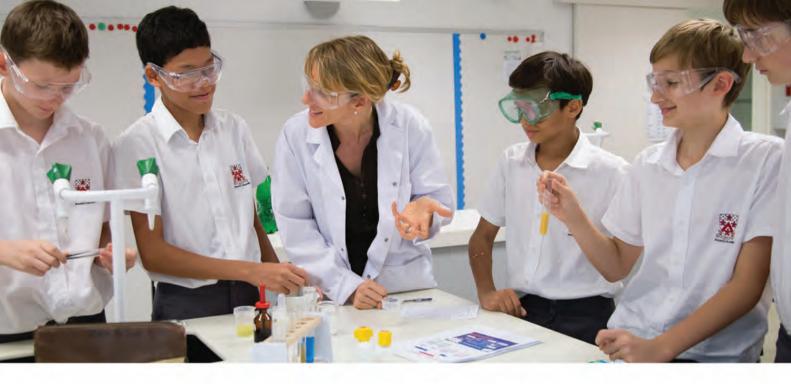
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