

the place

SINGAPORE

LION CITY ROAR

DESPITE its diminutive size, the city-state somehow keeps on growing. Here, a guide on what to eat, drink and do now. **BY MELANIE LEE**

Luxe life at the iconic Ion Orchard.



FROM LEFT: Peranakan pastels light up Joo Chiat Road in Katong; the Study in Keong Saik; at Tea Bone Zen Mind.



PLACES WITH PERSONALITY

Singapore's neighborhoods are as distinct and varied as the bloodlines pulsing through the city's multiethnic populace.

KATONG

This Eastern suburb has much to offer: picture-perfect colorful Peranakan shophouses along **Joo Chiat Road**; Singapore's best rice noodles in spicy coconut milk soup at **328 Katong Laksa** (51 East Coast Rd.); and **Chin Mee Chin Confectionary** (204 East Coast Rd.), one of the rare *kopitiams* (old-school coffee shops) left in town.

ORCHARD

The shopping hub of Asia doesn't need much of an introduction. **Ion Orchard** (ionorchard.com) is a must-stop for all luxury brands; **Far East Plaza** (fareastplaza.com.sg) has a wide variety of edgy street fashion popular with the young and young-at-heart. Need a break? Stroll up pretty **Emerald Hill Road** and have a leisurely afternoon tea at **Tea Bone Zen Mind** (teabonezenmind.com).

KAMPONG GLAM

Once a Malay-Arab enclave where the Sultan of Singapore lived, this area is remarkably comfortable with contrasts. Visit the old palace, which

is now the **Malay Heritage Centre** (malayheritage.org.sg), and browse quirky shops in Haji Lane such as local boutique **Soon Lee** (soonlee.sg) and home store **Mondays Off** (mondays-off.com).

LITTLE INDIA

While this neighborhood still suffers from a slightly poor reputation, it is one of Singapore's most culturally vibrant. Earn shopping cred by surviving a spree at 24-hour **Mustafa Shopping Centre** (mustafa.com.sg), where you can find practically everything under the sun. If you're in Singapore in October or November, a walking tour of all the streets' festive Deepavali lights and decorations is a must.

TIONG BAHRU

Pegged as a hipster haven with indie bookstore **BooksActually** (booksactuallyshop.com) as its main ambassador, the café-filled 'hood centered around one of the country's oldest housing estates is an architectural delight with its Art Deco shophouses and retro public

housing flats. Get all-day breakfast at **Flock** (78 Moh Guan Ter.), croissants at **Tiong Bahru Bakery** (59 Eng Hoon St.) and of course coffee at the famous **Forty Hands** (40handscoffee.com). **Tiong Bahru Market** (tiiongbahru.market) has the widest and tastiest range of hawker food.

KEONG SAIK

Among the boutique hotels and fine-dining restaurants popping up are still plenty of fun places for a bottoms up. **Potato Head Folk** (pttheadfolk.com) has Studio 1939 lounge on its third level: vintage seats and an intimate marble bar make for friendly interplay with the bartenders. **The Library** is a secret bar hidden by a bookshelf, and you can only get to it with a password through its sister bistro **The Study** (the-study.sg). For "healthy" cocktails, try **Afterglow** (fb.com/afterglowsg) where their vegan-friendly concoctions are made from fresh herbs, flowers and fruits.

Insider Tips
Michael Chiang,
playwright of
Beauty World



Take public transportation.

Resist Uber, and instead hop on a bus or train. It's not just cheap, but also efficient and easy to navigate.

Catch a sunrise at Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Share the dewy tranquility with joggers, qigong devotees and dog-walkers at this 157-year-old UNESCO World Heritage site.

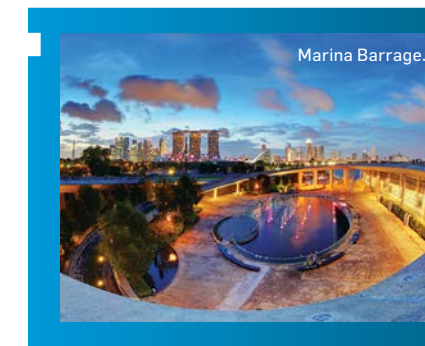
Catch a sunset at Aura Sky Lounge.

Though only on the 6th floor of National Gallery Singapore, Aura is my favorite place to grab a lychee martini and take in Singapore's skyline anchored by the iconic Marina Bay Sands.

Listen to...

...music by young Singaporean musicians such as Charlie Lim, The Sam Willows and Gentle Bones. Their stuff is heartbreakingly beautiful.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WEIXIANG LIM; COURTESY OF THE STUDY; COURTESY OF TEA BONE ZEN MIND; COURTESY OF MICHAEL CHIANG; COURTESY OF NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD; OPPOSITE: WEIXIANG LIM



HAPPY WALKING

If you can bear the heat, the eight-kilometer **Jubilee Walk** trail (map and guide can be downloaded at nhb.gov.sg) is a leisurely way to get acquainted with Singapore's most iconic buildings, monuments and public art. The trail starts with the **National Museum of Singapore** and ends at the **Marina Barrage**. Look out for the gold SG50 markers that line this trail—or download the Singapore Time Walk app: users just have to point your smartphone camera at certain landmarks to pull up information, archival images and animations for an interactive history lesson.



DYNAMIC DINING

Just four of the newest eateries powering the fast-paced food scene.

▲ CHEEK BY JOWL

Chef Rishi Naleendra (formerly of Sydney's Tetsuya's) has concocted a multicultural rainbow of a menu with such dishes as ocean trout with cucumber, yuzu and butter milk, and duck confit with five-spice and chili caramel served with crispy waffles. cheekbyjowl.com.sg; five-course set S\$88.



▲ MAGGIE JOAN'S

Don't be daunted finding the Mediterranean tavern's nondescript entrance in an empty back alley. Once inside, you're enveloped by a bustling crowd clamoring for tasty plates such as roast Jerusalem artichoke and Manchego, and grilled Iberico pork jowl with cauliflower and prunes. maggiejoans.com; meal for two S\$80.



▲ REDPAN

A refreshing collaboration between DP Architects and restaurant group Grub results in this aesthetically-pleasing bistro serving up comfort food with a local twist. Witness the béchamel and Chinese sausage-bursting *leap cheong mac 'n' cheese*. redpan.sg; meal for two S\$60.

▲ CAMP KILO CHARCOAL CLUB

It feels like you're hanging out in someone's (big) backyard party at this chill outdoor eatery dishing out a slew of hearty meats, carbs and desserts. A 30-kilogram pig is usually roasting on their self-made spit. kilokitchen.com; meal for two S\$80.



The city's hottest trends
HOTELIER AND RESTAURATEUR
Loh Lik Peng



Hawker food with a modern twist

"Try **Candlenut** (candlenut.com.sg; *omakase* S\$65), a modern Peranakan restaurant that embraces old Nyonya recipes from grandmother. Their *buah keluak* (traditionally cooked with chicken) is also offered with Wagyu beef ribs."

Instagram makes the ordinary look extraordinary

"The latest Instagram-friendly hangout is **Chong Wen Ge Café** (168 Telok Ayer St.; meal for two S\$20), in an old 19th-century Chinese school. Photo opportunities abound since their table tops are laid with vibrant vintage Peranakan tiles while their local grub is served in cute floral, retro plates."

COCKTAILS WITH CHARACTER

Starting with the Singapore Sling, the mixed drink has always had a special seat at the table in this island-state.

► HOPSCOTCH BAR

specializes in Singapore-influenced craft cocktails with ingredients such as lemongrass, pandan and hibiscus. Especially memorable is their Osmanthus Penicillin drink: Osmanthus-infused Kakubin whisky with ginger honey, citrus zest and goji jelly. hopscotch.sg; drinks for two S\$50.

► **LAUGH**'s graffiti-plastered walls and kitschy mod furnishings perfectly

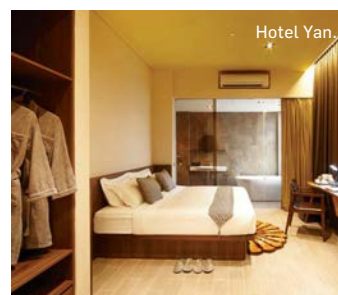
match their playful signature cocktails, especially Laugh Laugh, made of vodka, butterscotch, lime juice and raspberry. thesouthbeach.com.sg; drinks for two \$40.

► **SMOKE & MIRRORS** offers not only a sprawling balcony with stunning views of Singapore's skyline, but also a selection of artsy cocktails inspired by its location in National Gallery Singapore. The vodka, butterfly pea flower cordial

and grapefruit bitters-blended Lotus in a Breeze 1970 pays homage to painter Georgette Chen. smokeandmirrors.com.sg; drinks for two S\$45.

► **URBAN SALOON** is a mod take on a Wild Western joint, mixing an interesting range of reinterpreted cocktail classics such as Mimosa & Friends blending chamomile, elderflower, orange juice and champagne. urbansaloon.com; drinks for two S\$60.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF UNLISTED COLLECTION; COURTESY OF MAGGIE JOAN'S; COURTESY OF UNLISTED COLLECTION; COURTESY OF HOPSCOTCH BAR; COURTESY OF SMOKE & MIRRORS; COURTESY OF THE UNIFORM; COURTESY OF REDPAN



HIP HOTELS

There's no shortage of new, super cool spots to bed down for the night.

HÔTEL VAGABOND This is French designer Jacques Garcia's first boutique hotel in Asia—and what a vibrant, colorful one it is. Housed in an Art Deco heritage building with Parisian-chic rooms and an artist-in-residence mingling with guests, it's the perfect place for the bohemian-at-heart. hotelvagabondsingapore.com; doubles from S\$259.

HOTEL YAN Industrial chic is all the rage in Singapore, so it was only a matter of time until a hotel decked in rustic iron and wood would emerge—and from the warehouse part of town no less. Its rooms are small, but its retro, utilitarian

aesthetic complements the nearby artisanal coffee joints and the rest of this micro-neighborhood between Kampong Glam and Little India. hotel-yan.com; doubles from S\$157.

THE SOUTH BEACH The ultimate designer experience, this massive hotel's trippy, playful interiors were conceptualized by Philippe Starck. It's also big on customization, so you can choose accommodation based on your needs. For example, Showcase Her, a women's-only room, comes with a facial steamer and hair straightener. thesouthbeach.com.sg; doubles from S\$450.

SOFITEL SINGAPORE SENTOSA RESORT & SPA This recently refurbished resort is a luxurious respite from the main island's hustle and bustle. Perched at the top of a cliff above Tanjong Beach and surrounded by 10 hectares of tropical woodlands, this serene seaside resort also houses a huge spa that comes with a mud pool filled with volcanic mud from New Zealand. sofitel-singapore-sentosa.com; doubles from S\$340.

HAWKER FARE

Chef Janice Wong dishes on her favorites



HENG KEE CURRY CHICKEN NOODLES

"I grew up eating these noodles, as my grandmother used to live near here. I am amazed at how consistent it is even after all these years. The combination of curry, chicken and yellow noodles is delicious and comforting." **Hong Lim Food Centre, Stall 01-58, 531A Upper Cross St.**

GHIM MOH CHWEE KUEH

"This is one of the few stalls where the *chwee kueh* (steamed rice cake) is fresh every morning (most are from factories). Their *chye poh* (preserved radish) topping, what usually makes or breaks this dish, is from a traditional recipe of garlic and pork lard. It is so simple, but so good." **Ghim Moh Food Centre, Stall 01-54, 20 Ghim Moh Rd.**

SIN CHEW SATAY BEE HOON

"To me, *satay bee hoon* (rice vermicelli drenched in satay sauce) is the most interesting Singaporean dish but it can't be found in many places these days. The sauce here is just the right balance of sweet, savory, spicy, nutty and creamy." **Bukit Timah Food Centre, Stall 02-162, 116 Upper Bukit Timah Rd.**

SINGLIT PICKS

These recent books immerse you in the human side of Singapore.



The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye by **Sonny Liew** Hailed as a masterpiece by Publishers Weekly and winner of Book of the Year for Singapore Book Awards 2016, this graphic novel follows the life and work of fictional comics artist Charlie Chan over five decades.

The Epigram Books Collection of Best New Singaporean Short Stories: Volume Two edited by **Jason Erik Lundberg** A diverse spectrum of imagination and perspective from some of Singapore's most evocative voices. Definitely read Jeremy Tiang's "Toronto."



Inheritance by **Balli Kaur Jaswal** An intimate family drama about Singapore's Punjabi-Sikh community with universal themes: cultural traditions, societal expectations and finding a sense of belonging. Set in the rapid economic growth of the 1970s-90s.

Sarang Party Girls by **Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan**

Taking its title from a local term for Asian girls who date white men, the book follows 27-year-old Jazzy in her rom-com quest to find a rich *ang moh* (Western expat) husband. A fun and breezy plane read.



ABOVE: Stunning views from Smoke & Mirrors. LEFT: Connect the shots at Hopscotch Bar.