

# SINGAPORE: An Island Done Sunny Side Up

by Nazerene Ibrahim

The tiny republic of Singapore has often been described in purely economic terms: one of the Four Dragons of the East; an economic fairy tale come true; the developing country that made it, etc. Yet, there is another side to this little nation that rarely gets much media attention: its rich cultural fabric and great culinary delights. Unknown to many tourists, Singapore offers an ideal mixture of the old and the new. It is truly the point where East meets West, where rustic charm blends easily with ultra modernity to form a tropical haven for a balanced lifestyle.

Tucked away in the middle of Southeast Asia, Singapore flourished as an important port-of-call for several centuries. And in the process, its society was moulded by the infusion of some major cultural influences. Today, what seems most intriguing when one visits the island is the close and casual interaction between the four main cultures, which are Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian (through intermarriage between Europeans and Asians). Hence, it is not uncommon to find gold-domed mosques in all their splendour nestled right next to a Buddhist shrine or a Hindu temple. All major ethnic

and religious festivals are honoured as national holidays and celebrated across the island. Although English serves as the country's official language, the ethnic tongues are still widely spoken and taught in school as a second language. Of late, the government has made a sincere effort to promote cultural development. Consequently, Singapore has carved its own niche in the international cultural scene as a patron of the arts, often playing host to various galas and festivals.

In addition to its cultural richness, Singapore can best be described as a true food paradise. With countless fast food joints, open-air food centres, exotic restaurants and quaint cafes, it caters to every palate with gastronomic delights from all corners of the world. One could easily settle for some Chinese Dim Sum in the morning, tuck into a plate of Pasta Primavera for lunch, and feast on exquisite Moroccan cuisine in the evening. It is no wonder that eating is a favourite past time among

most Singaporeans!

With a population of a mere 3 million and devoid of any natural resource, Singapore continues to thrive in a highly competitive international arena where large nations with tremendous political clout dictate the game. Yet, its road to success was not without pitfalls and tragedies. From a backward former British colony with little hope and few prospects, it transformed itself into a bustling city-state through sheer determination and much hard work. It has built a name for itself as an important telecommunications center and a viable free port. Today, Singapore comes across not as a melting pot of different peoples. Instead, it is a patchwork of vibrant cultures which together form a vivid picture of ethnic harmony.

In celebration of this fact, the Singapore Students Association of UNB will be holding an extravaganza called the "Surprising Singapore 1993" on Saturday, the 2nd of October 1993, at the SUB cafeteria from 6:30 pm to 10 pm. Unlike previous years, this event will be a night affair, promising a hearty meal followed by a great show. To impress the audience, the SSA will recreate famous streets from Singapore with some very lively and typically Singaporean characters. Tickets are \$8 or \$10 at the door, and are available at the Student Help Centre. Don't wait until you win the lottery to visit Singapore. Come join in the fun and discover the delights that Surprising Singapore has to offer!

