

[Singapore] Top Five Places

At the crossroads of Chinese, Malay, Indian and British colonial cultures, Singapore has taken all that's best in its traditional and modern global influences and come up with a vibrant, sophisticated scene of its own. Eating and shopping are the national pastimes so you can't go wrong—but there's so much more! Here are some of the top things the staff of Canada's High Commission to Singapore like to do.



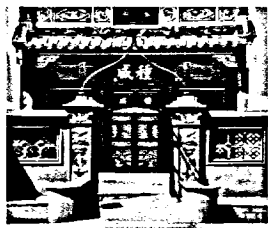
SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

Founded in 1859 and beautifully maintained, this is a serene oasis in the midst of the second most-densely populated country in the world. Come in the early morning, when you can watch the tai chi and line dancing (yes, line dancing) clubs do their stuff. An evening visit offers the chance of a free concert at the spectacular lotus-shaped bandshell "floating" on Symphony Lake. (www.sbg.org.sg)



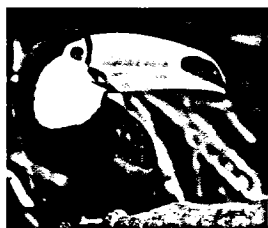
THE NIGHT SAFARI

As the sun sets, a different world comes to life at this zoo-with-a-difference. See a hundred exotic species "in a different light"—awake and on the move. Strike out on your own on one of the walking trails (where you'll be close but not too close to the attractions) or relax on a gentle tram ride. (www.nightsafari.com.sg)



PERANAKAN CULTURE

Explore the rich heritage of the Peranakans, whose unique culture reflects the region's Chinese-Malay mix. The Peranakan Museum (www.peranakanmuseum.sg) offers a glimpse of their history and traditions. Baba House (www.nus.edu.sg/museum/baba/index.html), one of the last intact traditional Peranakan terrace houses, has been restored to its original opulence.



JURONG BIRD PARK

A wonderful place to wander through landscaped gardens and trees (literally: there's a treetop-level walkway). But you can also take in a bird show featuring a multilingual parrot, learn to be a falconer or cool off in the Splash N Slide playground. From penguins to parrots, birds of prey to birds of paradise, you don't have to be a "twitcher" (rare-bird spotter) to enjoy the Bird Park. (www.birdpark.com.sg)



HAWKER CENTRES

For a real taste of the multicultural wonder that is Singapore, head to one of the many "hawker centres"—open-air food courts serving up spicy, delicious and reasonably priced Chinese, Malay, Indonesian and Indian food. Chili-and-pepper crab, chicken rice and roti prata (a variation of nan bread) are local treats. Wash it all down with a cold Tiger beer and watch the ebb and flow of local Singapore life. A couple of our favourite centres: Newton and Lau Pa Sat.

A team at the High Commission, including Judy Lim, Jovina Tan, Claire Millar and Elizabeth Baldwin-Jones, contributed to this article. See www.visitsingapore.com for more ideas.

photos: Singapore Tourism Board

photo: Chris Yap