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Technology has been redefining the use of everyday items for centuries. Technology redefines technology. The smartphone only really took flight less than a decade ago and it changed the way people connected in every way. Today there are apps for our smartphones that can create presentations, that are tools for the development and processing of photography and videography, and can even make available to you an unbelievable range of instrumental sounds, including your very own tracks and voice to create complex musical compositions.

You know what I'm talking about. You've sent a custom 'postcard' to a friend across the world with a few simple taps. You've translated a scary looking word in a foreign language while you were in Rome just the same way, and you know we've barely scratched the surface here.

Our children grew up chewing on PlayStation controllers and drooling over our laptops. Their generation is chided for being glued to their gadgets; do we often think that they spend far too much time taking selfies for Facebook or playing what seems like the 134th edition of AngryBirds?

How do you view technology in your kids' lives? There's no denying that it's becoming relevant to their survival in the digital age. Perhaps it's time we become more involved and encourage productive use of what may be their ticket into their dream job.

Nexus International School, Singapore, a fervent believer in taking all of those amazing and cute gizmo-watchamacallits and guiding kids into realising the potential of these tools, presents... no surprise here, our very first digital expression competition. Kids, we're not trying to cramp your style, but there are some ground rules.



The Digital Art Contest, for the little ones (Primary)

If you're between the ages of 7 and 11, this is for you. Create for us an art piece with any digital tool you can think of that illustrates your favourite activity on campus. That's in the classroom, on the sports field, in the library, in the cafeteria with your friends or wherever your cozy little nook might be! Your masterpiece is yours to dream up, as long as it's digital!

What do you get?

The Winner gets iPad mini with Retina Display, wi-fi, 16GB (worth \$548)
Each of the TWO runners up get 2 adult and 2 child one-day passes to Universal Studios Singapore (worth \$256)

The Photo Essay Contest, for the big kids (Secondary)

If you're 12 to 18 years old we think you're going to enjoy working on the concept for this one. Create a photo essay (a series of images that tell a story) with 'a day in your life at campus' as the core subject. Think macro, think micro; perhaps it's a story about your best buds or how you're grabbing a snack at every opportunity you get. Even recreate one of the funniest days you've had. Feel free to put those images through some cool processing techniques. You can also include captions or a short paragraph (100 word limit) if you like. Between 6 and 15 images please and the layout is yours to decide.

What do you get?

The Winner Gets iPad mini with Retina Display, wi-fi, 16GB (worth \$548)
Each of the TWO runners up get Canon PowerShot SX170 IS (worth \$248)

Submission Dates

Entries must be received by 15 February 2014 5.00pm (GMT +8)

Making an Entry

- All submissions must be in JPG or PDF format
- All submissions must fall under 20MB in size
- Any captions must fall under 20 words in length
- Submit your entry within the submission dates to events@nexus.edu.sg with the subject title: *My Digital World - Primary/Secondary* with the following details -
 - Name
 - Date of Birth
 - Parent's/Guardian's Name
 - School
 - Age
 - Contact Number
 - Year in School
 - Email Address



Terms and Conditions

- The 'My Digital World' Competition is organized by Nexus International School, Singapore
- The contest is open to all students from international schools in Singapore, aged 7 to 11 for the Primary category, and 12 to 18 for the Secondary category (age on 15 February 2014)
- The competition begins on 15 January 2014, 8.00am (GMT +8) and will end on 15 February 2014, 5.00pm (GMT+8)
- Entries received after 15 February 2014, 5.00pm (GMT+8) will not be accepted
- Entries will be judged by a panel of four judges, including one judge from Nexus International School, Singapore and three independent judges
- Entries rendered "by hand" (i.e. not "drawn" on a computer) will be disqualified
- By participating in the Competition, participants hereby opt-in, and agree and authorise Nexus International School, Singapore to use without further compensation to the contestants/users, any of their names, photographs, or any likeness of them for packaging, promotional, advertising, marketing and/or publicity purposes (where not prohibited by written law), unless parental consent for the entry has not been obtained. If parental consent is not given, the entry will be considered withdrawn and will not be eligible for prizes
- All winners will be notified by email or telephone

Editor's Letter

"There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living."

– Nelson Mandela

I wanted to mention Mandela in this New Year issue as he touched many lives, including mine, and also because I was reading some of his quotes recently and the one above struck a chord.

Going to school and later living in pre-Mandela South Africa, I was witness to what he was fighting to change. I remember standing in a different line (a shorter one) at the post office and sitting on a park bench that had a "Whites Only" sign nailed to it. I didn't like it – but I didn't do anything about it. I just left and moved to England.

It's easy to get caught up in lower expectations both from yourself and life in general. But as Mandela said, why settle for a lesser life? As an expat, the world really is your oyster. Having the qualifications or experience that enables you to travel to other countries to make a living is a huge opportunity that you should try to maximise in whatever way you can – even if it's just being nicer to yourself or to your partner, or making thoughtful choices.

Why not make an impact – cast your footprint on the Broadway of life? (Goodness me, that was profound – it must be the effects of last night's Christmas office party...) Be interested; be better. What's the downside?

I also want to mention my team as I don't thank them enough. They are fabulous; they are interested in what they do and they make an impact in my life every day.

Our aim is for the magazine to continually be better, be more interesting and look better – we might not get it right all the time but we do try! So thank you too, for all your support.

Wishing you all a happy New Year and a happy Chinese New Year and we look forward to hearing your stories about how you are living life fully.



Rebecca

REBECCA BISSET
Editor-in-Chief

"We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, handsome, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

– Nelson Mandela

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NEWS – WHAT'S GOING ON?

Keeping you updated with the latest news and views from around town

EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming parties, promotions and happenings. Send details to calendar@expatliving.sg

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A list of retail outlets where you can buy the latest copy of *Expat Living*

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COFFEE MORNING:

Thursday, 16 January

TIME: 10am to 11.30am

Registration from 9.30am

THEME: Boost your Luck in 2014 with Feng Shui

VENUE: Ni-Night, 7 Joo Chiat Place, Singapore 427742

COST: \$10, includes refreshments and goodie bag. Online booking is essential.

WINE CLUB:

Thursday, 23 January

TIME: 9.30am to 11am

THEME: New Year, New Wines

VENUE: Wine Glass at the Marina at Keppel Bay, Singapore 098382

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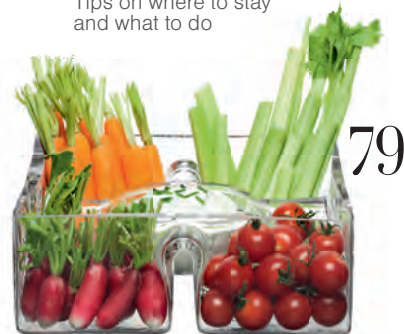
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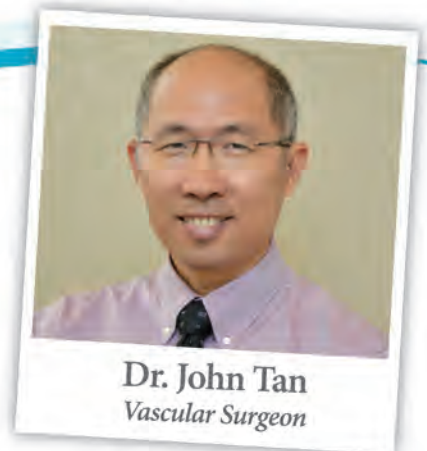
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CALENDAR

JANUARY 2014

NOTRE DAME

1 – 5 JANUARY

This musical spectacular tells the story of the unfortunate Notre Dame de Paris cathedral bell-ringer, the hunchback Quasimodo, and his hopeless devotion to the beautiful gypsy Esmeralda. **Marina Bay Sands, Grand Theatre. MarinaBaySands.com/ Ticketing**

TO BE A LADY

1 – 5 JANUARY

An international selection of works by female artists that show women's pivotal roles in global change. **Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 7pm; Sunday 11am to 6pm. Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 5 Lock Road, #01-05 Gillman Barracks. Free. 6694 3378. sundaramtagore.com**

HISTORY OF TELEVISION

1 – 19 JANUARY

50 Years of Television: An Exhibition celebrates the arrival and development of television and how it has shaped entertainment and lifestyle habits in Singapore from 1963 to today. **National Museum of Singapore. Free. nationalmuseum.sg**

CHANGE IN SINGAPORE

1 JANUARY – 16 MARCH

A Changed World explores the development of Singaporean art from 1950 to 1970 and charts the artists' responses to changes in Singapore's political, economic and social landscape. **Exhibition Gallery 2, Basement, National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road. Free. nationalmuseum.sg**



KidsFest

LIGHTSEEKER

1 JANUARY – 23 MARCH

A multi-million-dollar fantasy musical featuring stars from London's West End, with a mesmerising plot, epic battles and special effects. **Resorts World Sentosa Theatre. Tickets from Sistic. rwsentosa.com**

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

4 JANUARY

Jake Ellenberger and former Strikeforce Champion Tarec Saffiedine clash in the first of ten fights on the bill at the first-ever Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) event in Southeast Asia. **7.30pm. Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Halls E and F. marinabaysands.com**

NO-FRILLS RUN

5 JANUARY

No medals, no give-away T-shirts, no rah-rah fanfare. Only yourself and the road ahead, just like the good old days. 10km competitive and 5km fun run. **6.30am to 9am. Punggol Park. nofrillsrun.blogspot.sg/p/race-infomation.html**

FRENCH FLICK

7 JANUARY

Radiostars is a French film about the trials and tribulations of a radio breakfast show. French with English subtitles. **8pm. Alliance Française de Singapour, 1 Sarkies Road. Tickets from Sistic.**

TAKE ME OUT

8 – 15 JANUARY

This play, which won the Tony Award for Best Play in 2003, is about a star baseball player who comes out about his sexuality. **DBS Arts Centre, Merbau Road. Tickets from Sistic.**

FRINGE FESTIVAL SINGAPORE

8 – 19 JANUARY 2014

Celebrating the festival's 10th anniversary, this year's programme is jam-packed with 15 items from six countries. **singaporefringe.com**

STAMFORD OPEN HOUSE

10 JANUARY

Learn about the world-class education at Stamford American International School. **Call 6607 7247. Register at www.sais.edu.sg.**

DIALOGUES IN INK

10 – 20 JANUARY

Acclaimed Chinese artist Qin Feng's solo exhibition showcases a blend of centuries-old ink painting and modern abstract expressionism. Opening night 10 January at 7.30pm. **Ode To Art, 252 North Bridge Road, #01-36E/F Raffles City Shopping Centre. 6250 1901. odetoart.com**

KIDSFEST

15 JANUARY – 9 FEBRUARY

Young book and theatre enthusiasts will enjoy a feast of nine live theatre adaptations of best-selling books including *Horrible Histories* and *The Gruffalo*. **Drama Centre Theatre and DBS Arts Centre. kidsfest.com.sg**

MY DIGITAL WORLD

15 JANUARY – 15 FEBRUARY

The Nexus International School digital art competition is open to all international school students. Split into primary and secondary categories, students can produce art using software, apps or photos to tell a story about school life. **Visit the website for more details: www.nexus.edu.sg or call 6536 6566.**



Lightseeker

I don't really know how to teleport...

...but in the iLEarn, it feels like I do!

Using the iLEarn's video conferencing, we can learn from guest speakers from anywhere in the world. I've gotten to speak to famous authors, scientists and even a student activist in America and ask them questions just as if they were in the room!

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EL COFFEE MORNING

16 JANUARY

Feng shui consultant Lucy Richardson explains what's ahead in 2014, while Majella Skansebakken from Ni-Night demonstrates how to use feng shui practically to bring luck and success. **10am to 11.30am. Registration at 9.30am. Ni-Night, 7 Joo Chiat Place. \$10 includes refreshments and goody bag. Online bookings essential. expatliving.sg/upcoming-events**

CURRY CLUB

16 JANUARY

Learn about the spices and ingredients in an authentic curry, then prepare butter chicken, coconut beef curry and lots more. **10am to 1pm. Expat Kitchen, 9 Norris Road. \$150. Call 6299 4221. expat-kitchen.com**

ART STAGE

16 – 19 JANUARY

Art Stage Singapore returns with 600 artists and 130 galleries showing the best of Asian contemporary art. This year there'll be exciting new works from headline and emerging artists from 28 countries, plus ten curated sales exhibitions. **Marina Bay Sands Exhibition Centre. artstagesingapore.com**

EMBRYONIC

16 – 26 JANUARY

An exhibition of works by young and emerging artists. **Maya Gallery, 666 North Bridge Road. Call 6291 1760. mayagallery.com.sg**



Live Music
(Image: Laneway Festival Singapore / Chugg Entertainment)

ART APART

17 – 19 JANUARY

Singapore's only hotel art fair for art enthusiasts and collectors offers a diverse line-up of 100 international contemporary artists from over 30 renowned galleries. **ParkRoyal on Pickering, Pickering Street. 11.30am to 9.00pm. Purchase tickets on the website. artapartfair.com**

PRUDENTIAL ART AWARDS

17 JANUARY – 5 FEBRUARY

An exhibition recognising excellence in photography, painting, sculpture, installation, and digital and video art. **Suncent Room, Level 2, Suntec City Mall. Free. Open 10am to 10pm. prudentialeyeawards.com**

SSO CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

18 JANUARY

Singapore Symphony Orchestra celebrates 35 years with a Strauss-themed Anniversary Concert. **7.30pm. Pre-concert talk: 6.30pm. Esplanade Concert Hall. Tickets from Sistic. sso.org.sg**

TURQUOISE AND RUBY

22 JANUARY

Chic boutique Rouge is showcasing Turquoise & Ruby, a lifestyle business that brings pop-ups to our homes. Find out more at a cocktail party, with some retail therapy included. **From 5pm. Rouge, Block 16 Dempsey Road, #01-01. rouge.com.sg**

EL WINE CLUB

23 JANUARY

Join us as we tour million-dollar yachts and mingle with world-class yachtsmen before settling down to sample Clessidra's fine wine selection. Enjoy our popular quiz and be in with a chance to win a trip on a luxurious yacht. **6.30pm to 9.30pm (registration at 6pm). Wine Glass at the Marina at Keppel Bay. \$40 includes a fabulous goody bag, wine tasting and canapés. Online booking essential. expatliving.sg/upcoming-events**

LIVE MUSIC

25 JANUARY

Eighteen bands including Chvrches, The Observatory, Haim, Frightened Rabbit and James Blake hit the stage for this year's Laneway Festival. **The Meadow, Gardens By The Bay. Tickets from Sistic.**

DINOSAURS ALIVE

OPENS 25 JANUARY

Step back 600 million years. With more than 400 fossils and models, plus over 50 original artworks, the new Dinosaurs: Dawn to Extinction exhibition is going to give the kids plenty to think about. **ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands. Tickets at the door. marinabaysands.com/ArtScienceMuseum**

GREAT AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ

26 JANUARY

Celebrate Australia Day with your mates in true Aussie style. Fill the Esky and pack a picnic, or enjoy the food and drink on offer as well as live music and entertainment for the kids. No need to RSVP. **2pm to 6pm. Australian International School, 1 Lorong Chuan. anza.org.sg**



Prudential Art Awards



Dinosaurs Alive
(Image: Marina Bay Sands)



LASER AESTHETICS

Laser Hair Removal

Laser Tattoo Removal

Laser Vein Removal

BODY AESTHETICS

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Non-surgical Cellulite Reduction

Thermage® Tummy Tightening

Botox® Therapeutic for Sweating

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Non-surgical Skin Tightening

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CALENDAR

Plan Ahead



Loud Fast Planes

FEBRUARY 2014

ROMEO AND JULIET

13 – 23 FEBRUARY

The tragedy of star-crossed lovers who are determined to be together, even in death. Presented by Toy Factory in a bold and modern style. **Drama Centre Theatre.** toyfactory.com.sg

LOUD FAST PLANES

15 – 16 FEBRUARY

Asia's largest air show: aircraft tours, aerobatic flying displays and meet-the-pilot sessions. Your ticket includes a two-way MRT transfer from **Singapore Expo, Changi Exhibition Centre.** Tickets from **Sistic.** singaporeairshow.com

TERRY FOX RUN

16 FEBRUARY

Bring the whole family to celebrate the life of Canadian hero Terry Fox. Run, walk or push a stroller while raising money for the Singapore Cancer Society research programme. **Flag-off at 8am. Big Splash at East Coast Parkway.** canadians.org.sg

GEORGE WASHINGTON BALL

22 FEBRUARY

The American Association's 81st George Washington Ball is a black-tie Moonlit Masquerade of dining, dancing and much more. Proceeds benefit charity. **7pm. W Hotel, Sentosa Cove.** Register at www.aasingapore.com/events/212/ or emailevents@aasingapore.com.

THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

26 FEBRUARY – 15 MARCH

A bright, breezy musical based on Aesop's famous fable, with colourful characters, puppets and catchy songs. For ages three to 12. **Raffles Hotel, Jubilee Hall, 1 Beach Road.** itheatre.org

MAGICAL MOZART

28 FEBRUARY, 1 AND 3 MARCH

Enjoy the foibles of romantic love with Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*, roughly translated as "Women Are Like That". This opera has stood the test of time. **8pm. Esplanade Theatre.** Tickets from **Sistic.**

MARCH 2014

ERIC CLAPTON

4 MARCH

The guitar legend who needs no introduction performs live in Singapore for the fourth time. **8pm. Singapore Indoor Stadium.** Tickets from www.sportshubtix.sg.

FREE CLASSICAL MUSIC

8 MARCH

Singapore Symphony Orchestra plays a free concert for classical music fans. Perfect for a picnic. **6.30pm. Gardens By The Bay.** Tickets from **Sistic.** sso.org.sg

FUTURE MUSIC

13 – 15 MARCH

The Future Music Festival Asia is a smorgasbord of activities, spectacular music and light shows with DJs Deadmau5, Paul van Dyk and Macklemore playing for an estimated 75,000 fans. **The Mines Wonderland, Mines Resort City, Kuala Lumpur.** Tickets from redtix.airasia.com. futuremusicfestival.asia

BABAR THE LITTLE ELEPHANT

15 MARCH

This Singapore Symphony Orchestra concert for children tells the tale of one little elephant's rise from rags to riches. Suitable for kids aged four to 14. **11am and 1pm. Republic Polytechnic, 9 Woodlands Avenue 9.** Tickets from **Sistic.**

ROMEO AND JULIET

13 – 16 MARCH

Singapore Dance Theatre brings to life this legendary tale of young passion and romance, through the balletic interpretation of Shakespeare's great tragedy. **Esplanade Theatre.** Tickets from **Sistic.**

Coming Up! ASSOCIATION AND CHAMBER BALLS 2014

25 January: Australian Chamber of Commerce Australia Day Ball

22 February: American Association George Washington Ball

7 March: St Patrick's Society of Singapore Ball

25 April: Australia New Zealand Association Ball

26 April: Canadian Association Maple Leaf Ball

14 June: British Association Grand Finale Show and Dinner

23 August: New Zealand Chamber of Commerce Ball

Any more to add? Please submit your event online at www.expatliving.sg.

Prep at Australian International School

Layla and Mimi exploring ecosystems in the Junior School Inquiry Centre as part of their current Primary Years Programme unit of inquiry.



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LETTERS



Readers' thoughts and comments about *EL*

BEST ONE

We want to hear from you! Send us your thoughts on the magazine, or on any subject under the sun. To drown her taxi woes, **Robyn Kent** wins a bottle of Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut.

Taxi Dis-Comfort

I love Singapore taxis. Having lived in Singapore on and off for almost a decade, travelling widely during that time, I can safely say that they rank amongst the best in the world.

But I hate Singapore taxis – because you can never get one. Yes, the tracking system is impressive, but it's overwhelmed. Booking has become the default, as your chance of flagging down a cab is pretty low. Peak time, in the rain? Forget it. But if you do not have a local telephone number, you have no chance of booking one, which is most frustrating for visitors.

Having come back after a couple of years abroad, it is noticeable how the taxi service has declined: fewer cabs, picky drivers (not just at shift-change times) and four or five rejections per call when trying to book. For the first time in 10 years, I am considering buying a car. Just to avoid the frustrations and be able to be where I need to be – on time.

Strict regulation does not make for the good service that a more competitive, privatised environment brings. Maybe it's time to let supply and demand take its course. It might bring a fairer environment for drivers and a better experience for consumers.

Robyn Kent



Ed: Yes, it's an island-wide issue. The Sunday papers recently presented some very good ideas for reform; let's hope there's a solution put in place that will suit the fare-paying public – and soon!

Great Recipe Swap Goes Global



I thought the *Expat Living* team should know how well Beate Baldry's Great Recipe Swap has been received in the UK.

Recently, I held a "potlatch supper" at my home – that's when everyone brings a contribution. One of my friends made a delicious dessert from a recipe in your November 2013 issue: the No Bake Chocolate Cake. The mixture produced 12 desserts, which were topped with fresh fruit and proved a great success. It's always good to add a new tried-and-tested recipe to the list.

*Janice Trembecki
Great Doddington, UK*

Business Matters

There is a lot of chitter-chatter on the trailing spouse front with regard to setting up sole proprietorship businesses. The rules changed in June or July 2013 and there is a *lot* of confusion. Would *Expat Living* like to research and put together a "how to" guide? We're currently applying for PR, so I'm hoping this won't be an issue for us; however, I know that many trailing spouses would find the information invaluable.

Louise Duncan

Ed: Excellent idea! We'll get onto it.



History Hit

I must commend you on Verne Maree's excellent piece on Jewish culture and history in your December 2013 issue, based on one of Geraldene Lowe's Singapore tours. It was insightful, informative and a pleasure to read!

*Sangeetha Naidu
Press Officer, Embassy of Israel*

Email us at info@expatliving.sg



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How to create a cosy Christmas Eve or Christmas Day setting, to a cocktail-drenched Boxing Day



Things to do
What's on stage this month? Our highlights of the best music,
Get stuck into the Christmas spirit with one of these performances hitting town this month



Key Events
Workshop: Perfume Discovery
02 December 2013
The GoDown, 44 Zion Road (opposite Great
Film: Rendezvous With French Cinema
05 December 2013
The Gateway Cinema, 2 Handy Road

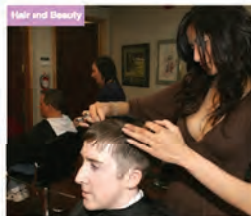
View all events Post an event

What's On?

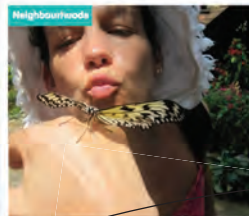
December 2013

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

View all events Post an event



Hair and Beauty
Top 5 men's hair salons in Singapore
Happy to pay more than a dollar for a quality hair cut? Check out our quick guide to decent cutters...



Neighbourhoods
Street Talk: Expat's guide to life on Orange Grove Road
Angela lives minutes from Orchard Road and offers tips on being a local on the busy



Cafes
New cafes worth ponying up pocket change for
Check out Anthesis, Common Man Coffee Roasters, Brawn and Brains

Noticeboard

For Sale Jobs Shout Outs

Bosch dishwasher for sale

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Great books stuck into the

We review the hit and around the

Calendar Competitions Noticeboard Directory About Advertis



10 things you'll love about the new ExpatLiving.sg

#1 Our fabulous new look

Your fun, like-minded and oh-so-helpful number one pal (top five, at least) has had a gorgeous makeover. ExpatLiving.sg is more stylish than ever before, with a beautiful design that we hope you'll adore as much as we do.

#2 We're easy to use

We've not tested this theory, but we're fairly certain our grandmother's blind dog could find her way around the website without any trouble. The sections are clear, the articles are accessible and you can click on just about anything and find a little treat waiting in the wings.

#3 We come in all shapes and sizes

Whether you like tapping on a desktop, laptop, iPad, smartphone, Blackberry or basically anything else with buttons and a screen (apart from an etch-a-sketch), you can do whatever you like on ExpatLiving.sg and have a wonderful time.

#4 Our snazzy calendar page

Head to our What's On calendar page and check out our totally new events section, crammed with all sorts of events around town. You can search by date or category, plus peruse our highlights according to month and year. Planning your own do? Posting your own event through the site couldn't be easier.

#5 Oh hello, trendy noticeboard

Looking to flog your old sofa, buy a pre-owned membership, announce the birth of a friend's little one or even find a new job? Head to our noticeboard section for a treasure trove of sales, jobs and shout-outs. And, just like the calendar, it's super easy to add your own.

www.expatliving.sg

#6 Can we give your inbox a hug?

A tad busy to absorb everything on ExpatLiving.sg each week? Sign up to our newsletter for the crème de la crème of content and events every week. Along with the site, our popular newsletter has had a delightful makeover and is crying out for a congratulatory cuddle.

#7 Get down to business

Looking for a store, plumber, hairdresser or other business in Singers? Our sexy directory (not words you'd normally put together, but trust us on this one) is stuffed with helpful information to give you a hand. Are you a business owner? Adding yourselves to the directory is a breeze.

#8 Can't get enough of the magazine?

The beauty of websites is that they are never-ending! We've got all of your favourite features from the magazine, plus oodles of cracking articles you can only find online. Aside from extra guides, top 10s and how-tos, get inside the team's heads over in the blog – there's all sorts of weird and wonderful insights to enjoy. *Psst...!* Look out for the online stamp in the magazine to find more photos and information on ExpatLiving.sg.

#9 Shop until you drop

Head to our shop section to make the most of our brilliant buys – we've got subscriptions, past issues, digital issues, coffee-table books, tickets to our special events and a whole lot more. And keep your eyes peeled for deals and discounts – because everyone loves a bargain.

#10 Sharing is caring

Like us! Tweet us! Pin us! While we love a nice chat, we're also huge fans of hearing what you have to say about all-things Expat Living. Want to share your thoughts or take part in the website or magazine? [Facebook.com/expatliving.sg](https://www.facebook.com/expatliving.sg). Got a question? [Twitter.com/expatliving.sg](https://twitter.com/expatliving.sg). Like our pictures? [Pinterest.com/expatlivingSG](https://www.pinterest.com/expatlivingSG).



SCENE AROUND TOWN

Recent events, openings & parties



Kick Cancer

The Sarah-Grace Sarcoma Foundation hosted a Kick Sarcoma Pacific Island Soiree at the newly refurbished Pan Pacific Singapore. The Pacific-themed soiree raised sarcoma awareness with a live painting by local celebrity artist Adeline Yeo marking the opening of an exhibition entitled "A Celebration of Life". Art pieces were auctioned with part of the proceeds to be used for creating a sarcoma support group. More information at www.kicksarcoma.org.au.



Setting Sail

The 2013 Eurocopter Ambassadors' Cup was claimed by the Cambodian team boat in a competitive but good-natured day's racing in November. This is the first time an Asian and indeed an ASEAN country has won the Ambassadors' Cup since its inception in 2000. The event saw 43 boats with envoys from 32 countries challenge in the 14th edition of the event organised by Changi Sailing Club.



Top:

- Joe Lombardo, Pierre Perrett, Derek Sharples, Ambassador of Cambodia HE Sim Serey, Anthony Lim, Francesca Freydefont, Patrick Hatton, Sopheakra Phann, Meng Siek Yoo, Ambassador of Brazil HE Luis Fernando de Andrade Serra and Florian Contini
- HE Luis Fernando de Andrade Serra, Derek Sharples, Ad Smit and Edwin Loh

Bottom:

- The winning boat Shardana skippered by Joe Lombardo
- HE Luis Fernando de Andrade Serra, Derek Sharples, Mrs Rosana Pinheiro Machado de Andrade Serra



Airline Anniversary

British Airways (BA) celebrated its 80 years operating from the United Kingdom to Singapore with a champagne reception held at the British High Commissioner's home, Eden Hall. British High Commissioner Antony Phillipson and his wife Julie were there to welcome guests, alongside BA regional general manager for South East Asia Robert Williams, and BA chief commercial officer Andrew Crawley. Attendees were treated to a fashion show that took them through the airline staff's fashionable uniforms through the ages.



Photo Opportunity

South African photographer Clinton Friedman's works are now available at Bungalow 55 in collaboration with Otomys Gallery, and storeowner Nina Beale hosted a pre-Christmas drinks party at her elegant home to celebrate the fact. Browse the full collection at www.clintonfriedman.com. Bungalow 55 is at #01-05A Cluny Court.

Clockwise from top:

- Hannah Tamela, Alena Jacobson and Susan Greene
- Sue H., Davina Stanley and Georgina Wells
- Joyin Lim and Melissa Wong
- Kimberly Latham, Nina Beale and Lisa Wallace
- Daniele Jarvis and Matt Blackwell
- Renée Loudon, Felicity Menzies and Skye Gordon



Ark Haus Launch

The John Erdos showroom was abuzz with guests who came to celebrate the launch of Ark Haus @ John Erdos, a brand new collection of modern, elegant and urban furniture and home accessories.





Great Golf

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 30th anniversary in Singapore with a great day out at the Manulife Golf Challenge held at the Singapore Island Country Club.



Year of the Horse

Feng shui master Clarice Chan celebrated the launch of her eighth and latest book with a group of distinguished guests at The British Club. *Your Fortune in 2014* offers a sneak preview of the year of the "Yang Wood Horse", along with Lunar New Year traditions, feng shui tips and zodiac predictions.



Expat Living Christmas

New and familiar faces gathered at stylish modern interiors shop Lifestorey for the first of our Christmas events. Interior designer Lawrence imparted his knowledge on how to create a festive feel in the home (our members were particularly keen to get their hands on his little black book of where to shop for decorations) while Giovanni from Elite Linguistics shared his knowledge of what to do and where to go if you are staying in Asia this Christmas.





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Home



WHAT'S NEW

Hot shops and what to buy right now



BESPOKE TOUCH

German contemporary furniture brand Domicil has introduced its new Holiday collection, including a range of sofas, coffee tables, chairs, rugs and accessories. What we really like about the new range, though, is the opportunity it allows for bespoke customisation – each Domicil sofa is built to order, so you can add your personal touch in the material, stitching, piping and legs. 56 Tanglin Road, #02-01/02. domicilishome.com ▲

CLEAN DESIGN

Lush is all about contemporary furniture and styling ideas, and its new Ziin collection features functional pieces with clean lines and simple silhouettes in neutral tones. Check out the Lush showroom at 302 Jalan Besar Road. lush-lush.com/ziin ▼



SULLIVAN STYLE

Contemporary indoor and outdoor furniture designs are what you'll find at the new kid on the block, John Sullivan Designs. Australian

furniture designer John Sullivan currently stocks homeware from Danish designers Green Gate, as well as his own furniture range. If you're looking for a one-of-a-kind piece, he also provides a bespoke design service to complement his range. johnsullivananddesign.com ▲



ECLECTIC & ECO-FRIENDLY

Furniture gallery Modern Eclectic Living is launching a new and exclusive furniture collection by design company David Ross, inspired by chic global destinations including St Barts, the Hamptons and Shanghai. Created in a diverse range of styles and textures, the individual pieces will work beautifully as single showpiece items, or combined in exciting ways. David Ross uses only recycled forestry timber and sustainable products. 120 Lower Delta, #01-14 Cendex Centre. modernelectic.com ◀



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Avondale Grammar School is registered by the Council of Private Education
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Registration Valid: 14 March 2011 – 13 March 2015



BURMESE ART & JEWELLERY

New Nirvana Gallery in Tanglin Shopping Centre features gorgeous collectibles from Myanmar, including a selection of elegant antiques, rosewood and teak furniture, fine art and gem painting and natural Burmese ruby and sapphire jewellery. *Special celebratory offer:* For the month of January, *EL* readers who mention “Burmese Art & Jewellery” in the store will receive a 20-percent discount on their purchases. nirvanagallerypte.com ◀

ALL-IN-ONE MACHINE



Here's even more reason to get cooking! The Bosch Styline MUM5 Kitchen Machine (\$749), available in four different shades, features a 900-watt motor along with seven different settings that help simplify food preparation. Attachments include a dough hook, beater and mixer, and a continuous shredder with three stainless-steel reversible discs for slicing, shredding and grating. bosch-home.com.sg ◀



LED LIGHTSHOW

The Philips Hue LED bulb range is a new home-lighting system that you can control from your smartphone or tablet via an app. Easy to set up, the app allows you to change the lighting in your home to suit your mood. Experiment with different types of light and colour, or set lighting timers to match your daily routines. **Available at Apple Premium Resellers and Philips stores.** ▲

FUNCTIONAL FURNISHING

For those with little space at home, OM is now offering compact fabric sofas of two metres in length with useful details such as removable or hidden wooden cup holders. Available in an array of bright colours, the new range is sure to brighten up your room, no matter how small it is. om-home.com



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With a presence in almost 50 countries already, French luxury furniture brand Roche Bobois has now launched in Singapore. The 1970s Hans Hopfner-designed Mah Jong sofas in the store window are indubitably its signature, although this popular brand has an extensive range of collections, from starkly contemporary to classical with a hint of modern edginess.

Based on the concept of total freedom of function and form, the iconic Mah Jong's three elements can be reconfigured in countless ways. Have it customised exactly to your taste with specially designed fabrics from vivid Missoni Home, classy Sonia Rykiel Maison or dramatic Jean-Paul Gaultier to create your own unique sofa, armchair, lounge chair or bed. Bohemian, sophisticated and comfy; we like to think of them as *very* grown-up beanbags.

Throughout the store, quality materials are key. Lacquer-look Daquacryl comes in 34 colours and can be simply sanded down to remove any scratches. The transparent Astrolab table is extended by means of the giant clockwork mechanism inside it – the perfect conversation piece.

Stunning home accents include great rugs, lamps such as the quirky Mama design made of leather and coated with reflective metal, and a range of dramatic monochromatic wallpapers, some photographic, others with trompe l'oeil effects.

Based on your own floor plan, in-house interior consultants use special software to create a 3D layout and image of your space, so you can see exactly how it will look with the furniture you have in mind. 354 Alexandra Road, #01-19/20/21 The Alexis.
roche-bobois.com/Singapore



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Show us a cooking enthusiast and we'll show you someone who appreciates a bit of Miele gear. The German manufacturer has just launched its Generation 6000 PureLine range of built-in kitchen appliances featuring elegant new designs that will harmonise with a wide variety of architectural styles. The design concept includes new colours Obsidian Black and Havana Brown, alongside familiar Miele colours. New technology features MultiSteam in the steam oven (for extremely short heating-up times and uniform cooking), CupSensor in the coffee machine (for automatic adjustments according to the size of a cup or glass – no more overflow or coffee splashes) and the Miele M Touch user interface that allows you to operate an oven like a smartphone. miele.sg ◀



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Walk-up Wonder

*By Verne Maree;
photography by
Ken Tan*

This Olina Lodge walk-up apartment isn't necessarily perfect for everyone – but it is for English teacher LINDA DE FLAVIS. I'm panting lightly by the time I get to the fourth and top floor. It's worth the climb, though. This older apartment is a series of open, airy rooms running the entire width of the block, with a hemispherical balcony at each end.

Linda shares her home with her 20-year-old son Nathan, who is currently doing an IT programme. Their helper, Diya, has the third bedroom.



What brought you to Singapore?

I came out here with my husband in 1998, and our marriage broke up quite soon after that; it sometimes happens that way. Before moving here, we'd been living in Palo Alto, California, where I lectured on English Literature at Stanford University.

I was hugely impressed by the calibre of the students who had been through United World College South East Asia (UWCSEA); there were a number of them at Stanford. So I started tracking the school on the internet, and when my teaching programme at Stanford

came to an end after two consecutive three-year contracts, I applied for a job in Singapore.

My role is a dual one: I teach English literature at the Dover campus of UWCSEA, but I'm also the college guidance counsellor, supporting our students with their university applications.

How long have you been in this apartment?

My second stint in this apartment began four years ago. But I first moved here 15 years ago, during my third year in Singapore. I had to move out in 2003,

when the owner wanted the place back, so took a flat in the opposite block for about three years. When *that* one's owner wanted to move back, *this* one had just become available again.

It's about 30 years old. It's still largely in the original condition, including parquet flooring in the bedrooms and these classic black-and-white floor tiles in the living area. I love them, because I always associate them with conservatories. The bathrooms are pretty unredeemable, but they do the job.

Ceiling fans keep the place really cool and we manage without air-conditioning.



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“We can't leave ripe bananas out at night, otherwise fruit bats swoop in to steal them”



With the through breeze and the surrounding trees, it can sometimes get quite chilly during the monsoonal months.

These balconies are something special, aren't they?

Yes, we have all our meals out here for the pleasure of being outside. Having grown up in the small market town of Devizes, in Wiltshire, England, I revel in the quietness here.

When I first moved in, none of these other buildings existed – it was all green hills and sky. I instantly fell in love with the place and had to take it, despite the four flights of stairs and lack of a lift. Sometimes, the postman doesn't bother coming all the way up; instead, he'll leave my parcels with the people who live on the second floor.

What's it like to live in a walk-up?

It was easier before, but it's become something of a problem since I've lost the cartilage in my knees through running. I'm supposed to avoid hills and stairs, but that's hardly possible living where I do!

I'm not supposed to run anymore, either, except on a treadmill, so I do that a couple of times a week and I power-walk. It's very difficult to get your heart rate properly up while walking, though, so I look for hills, and sometimes I'll break into a guilty run.

How did you go about furnishing the flat? I like the way you've created different seating oases throughout the space.

As a teacher, I have a lot of homework; and my university counselling job also entails quite a bit of administrative work. Having a dual role keeps things interesting: there's never a dull moment; but my home does need to be a comfortable working environment, too.

I did much of it right at the start, with the idea of creating a calm, tropical sort of atmosphere. The aqua bead curtains are from Lim's, which has been a treasure trove for me over the years. I find the beads very restful, and I think they work well hung against white walls that rise to high ceilings. People tell me they feel as though they're stepping into a swimming pool.





Quite a lot of the furniture is from IKEA, including the white sofa you're sitting on, and this comfortable chair. It was re-covered for me by New Décor in Holland Road Shopping Centre, together with the matching cushions on the chair next to the TV: a fair challenge because of the design, but they did a good job.

The white wicker came with me from the US; it's from Pier One, which is very popular there. I've been looking for something similar here, but without success. The mosaic-topped wrought-iron table and chairs on the balcony came from Carrefour, just before it closed down.

Diya looks after the plants; I love to be surrounded by greenery, but I'm hopeless at keeping it alive.

Do you eat out much?

More often at home. Diya does the shopping and cooks for Nathan, while I tend to be pretty spontaneous. I'm not good at planning ahead, so I'm a big eater of salads that I prepare for myself. Diya's a great help, as she knows how to pick out the fresh raspberries and avocados that aren't as hard as cricket balls.

When we do eat out, we're quite partial to Nando's – it's nice to be greeted with "Yebo!". Other times, we'll take the bus or go for a jog and end up having an Indian meal at one of the food courts with an Indian stall, such as Tanglin Mall or Wisma Atria.

Between our condo and the one next door is a little walkway that takes us down to Chip Bee Gardens in Holland Village. Da Paolo in Jalan Merah Saga is our favourite, and I like the baking supplies specialty shop nearby: Phoon Huat, it's called. I'm fond of baking, especially on the weekend; but I don't want to be

eating it all, so I do it more for my son and sometimes for my students at school. Brownies and cakes are a good incentive, I find.

Banana bread is another favourite – but we can't leave ripe bananas out at night, otherwise fruit bats swoop in to steal them. They're very bold – flying all the way through the living room into the kitchen!

Do you get much opportunity to travel?

The university counselling aspect of my job means I'm invited to visit various campuses in the US and the UK, up to several times a year; I've also been to Hong Kong. The frequency depends on the conferences and invitations that come in; budgets have been hit in recent years, but they seem to be picking up again.

Do your UWC students enjoy English literature?

Yes, they love it. Our kids are very interested in reading, not just English literature but world literature in general. And because they tend to travel a lot, they're already innately interested in other cultures and other perspectives on the world.

I teach mainly Grades 11 and 12. But this year I'm also taking a class of Grade 10 students, who recently arrived here or have joined us from other schools in Singapore and are preparing for their IB (International Baccalaureate) year.

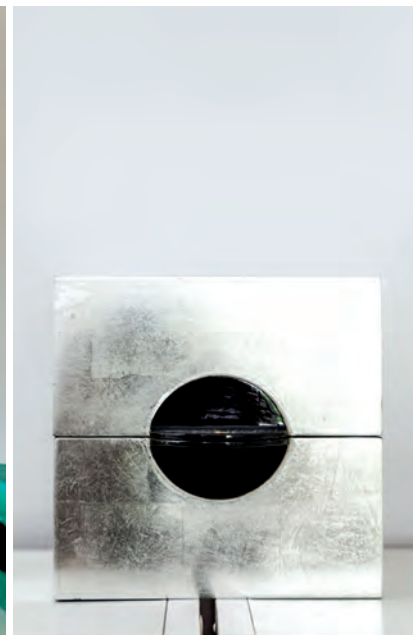
What has kept you in Singapore for so long, when you could have moved on to other opportunities?

My answer is a very simple one: the calibre of the students and the culture

of the school. Our students have open minds, and a worldview that is very sophisticated.

Whatever I ask of them, they rise to the challenge, which makes them extremely teachable and rewarding pupils. They're exceptional, and I can't imagine getting the same sort of atmosphere, enthusiasm and motivation in another high school. It would probably have to be one of the top universities, like Stanford.

There is so much about Singapore to enjoy, and I make a point of reminding myself about all the things that impressed me so deeply when I first arrived. It's too easy to get caught up in the daily grind and forget what wonderful opportunities this place offers. In short, Singapore is a great place to call home.



Recommendations

- IKEA for budget-friendly home furnishings | ikea.com.sg
- Lim's Arts & Living for interesting furniture and home accessories | lims.com.sg
- Nando's for flame-grilled chicken | nandos.com.sg
- New Décor for re-upholstery | #03-01 Holland Road Shopping Centre
- United World College of South East Asia | uwcsea.com.sg



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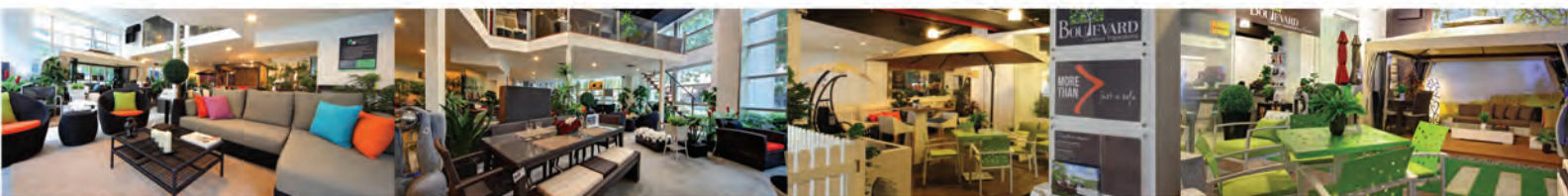
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Blast from the Past

Story by Verne Maree; photography by Ken Tan

You'd think that a city so famous for shopping would already be offering everything a homemaker's heart could desire, but that's not always true. Growing nostalgia for the craftsmanship of a bygone time, plus a yen for the quirky, the recycled and the rare have opened up a marketplace gap that savvy entrepreneurs are more than ready to fill. However, starting your own business needs more than that initial vision. It always takes some capital investment and much hard work – sometimes nerves of steel, and often a generous dollop of luck. We asked three home décor entrepreneurs how they did it.

#1 ARTFUL HOUSE

At **Artful House**, PADMAJA RAJAGOLAPAN sells colonial and recycled furniture, objets d'art and collectibles, home accents and accessories.

What brought you to Singapore?

My husband Pramod and I were in banking and financial services respectively when we moved here in 2011, having lived and worked in New York, Melbourne and London. While I turned entrepreneur, he is still in the banking sector.

What gave you the idea?

Though I loved my nine years in the financial sector, I was looking for something new, a challenge. This was an opportunity to blend my commercial and business skills with my creativity.

I've always sketched and had a passion for interior design; my mom was artistic and something of a collector, and I take after her. While working in New York, I did art courses on the side whenever I could.

After I'd furnished our historical Cairnhill Road terraced house here, other people saw what I'd done and started asking for my help in decorating and sourcing special and one-off pieces. So, I saw an opportunity to take what I had been doing to the next level.

Location is important. Why Tan Boon Liat Building?

People who are shopping for furniture often want to go to a hub. I particularly chose this building because it hosts a collection of other businesses that tie in nicely with mine, especially good furniture stores such as FairPrice Antique, The Shophouse, Mountain Teak, Jehan Gallery and Journey

66
Though you have to make your own decisions based on your individual take, it's important to keep your mind open and listen to suggestions



East. We also have The Providore and Underground Wines, giving buyers even more incentive to visit the building.

This is not your average mall: it's more individualistic, and an interesting location to showcase my products. We started with a bare slate: high ceilings and a lot of space. We kept the neutral flooring and added vibrant turquoise and red accents. I find that the right setting helps to introduce new ideas to your clients – like how to use colour in their own homes.

What makes your business special?

Right now, we are focussing on two particular lines of furniture. The first is South Asian and Southeast Asian colonial furniture. This is sourced from India and Sri Lanka, and we're also looking at Indonesia. They're special because there's a story behind each of them; what's more, the craftsmanship they display is increasingly hard to find. Each item is a piece of history you can enjoy owning, and also pass down to future generations.

Our second line is furniture made from recycled or reclaimed wood. Old painted doors and window frames, for example, are transformed into items that suit modern living spaces so well. Their time-worn colour adds distinctive beauty to a room.

Both of these lines express my feeling that history has a place in our lives and in our homes, even in the most contemporary of settings. Each piece is carefully handpicked for that purpose.

We're smitten with the crane design on your dinnerware. Tell us about that.

We design and manufacture our own dinnerware, and the black-necked crane motif does indeed have an interesting story. Some time ago, I was sketching in Bhutan's Phobjika Valley, and the people told me I was lucky it was the season for these special black-necked cranes, which fly there every winter from Tibet. There's a 16th-century monastery in the valley, and local legend has it that the cranes circle the monastery three times before they come down to forage for food.



Though our home accent products have European influences, they are all from this region, and mainly inspired by indigenous fauna and flora. We use ikats (handwoven cloth) from Indonesia and Cambodia for our soft furnishings, working with local weavers and artisans to create limited-edition designs.

How do you source your furniture?

I pick each item personally. It helps that my mom is a collector and that I've developed my eye for quality over many years. For the old colonial furniture, we work with dealers; we'll see the piece, often in indescribably poor condition, then work with restorers to return it to good condition. For example, I found a rosewood table with great stylistic details, but first it needed to be stripped of the oily pink paint that covered it.

In the store, we provide information on the provenance and use of each old

piece. We also suggest ways of using it in a contemporary setting. One client, for example, uses what was originally a dowry chest as a bar – the secret jewellery drawer has become a hiding place for a rare or special single malt.

What have you learnt from this venture?

Entrepreneurship is very challenging, but I'm blessed to have had help and advice along the way. Though you have to make your own decisions, it's important to keep your mind open and listen to suggestions. In the end, friends and family are all behind you and they want you to succeed.

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#2 Singapore Trading Post

JO HARRISON was already working at Expat Auctions when ROB PENDERGRAST bought the business in 2010. Together, they launched **Singapore Trading Post** in September last year, selling a distinctive range of homeware inspired by Singapore's colonial past.

What brought you to Singapore?

Both of us moved here as “expat wives” in support of our spouses’ careers. Jo arrived from England in 2007 with husband Chris and three children, and Rob moved here in 2010 with wife Stephanie and two children.

What gave you the business idea?

Jo was inspired by reading Noel Barber’s evocative story of forbidden love, *Tanamera*, set in 1930s Singapore; for her, Singapore Trading Post is a sort of homage to the romance of the colonial age.

Rob used to have antique shops and loves sharing his finds with others. What’s more, Expat Auctions was constantly being asked for smaller decorative pieces. Plus, when people buy a bed or sofa at auction they often want sheets, cushions or throws, so there was a clear opportunity to present a more complete offering.

Why this particular location?

We set up our store in the same location that Expat Auctions has been in for more than five years: Citilink Warehouse in Pasir Panjang Road. This minimises our overheads and also means that clients coming to the auction house for viewing and auction days can also check out the store.

We’re well aware that more than 50 percent of new businesses fail in the first year, so keeping our overheads under control is important; iwwt allows us to offer the best value for money to our customers.

With so many furniture and home accessory businesses in Singapore, what makes your business special?

We created the business with our

It's important to partner with someone who makes you laugh... and keep on laughing



customers in mind, and tried to engage them from the outset. Feedback from our loyal auction customers and Facebook followers has played a major role in shaping our range, and we are constantly reviewing and refreshing it. In response to demand, we are offering a bespoke service on certain furniture pieces. We even sold our own counter to a customer who wanted it installed in time for a company Christmas party!

Our range is our own interpretation of the rich colonial era that began when Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore as a “trading post” for the British East India Company, and you won’t see the same pieces elsewhere. We not only source them directly from a diverse range of suppliers, but have also created some designs of our own.

How are you sourcing your stock?

We made several trips to the original British East India Company locations before opening in September 2013, and then two more in the lead-up to Christmas. We have journeyed through several regions in Northern and Southern India, Java in Indonesia, and have also selected pieces from Myanmar and Vietnam. Our luxury hand-made bedding range is from Hong Kong.

How is business going?

We have had a fantastic reception from our Expat Auction client base and are getting to know lot of new people who come just for the store. Our first range of mirrors and our Burmese parasols sold out really quickly, and there is strong demand for our artwork. The sheet sets and wicker baskets sold well

over the holiday period, as people were preparing their guest rooms for visitors

What have you learnt, and would you do anything differently next time round?

Our customers have been a huge inspiration in how they store has taken shape, and word of mouth has been great for business. It’s the same with suppliers; we try to treat them more like partners, as our success is their success. Finally, we know the importance of partnering with someone who makes you laugh... and keep on laughing.

What’s the most fun you’ve had so far?

We have absolutely loved the experiences on our sourcing travels: visiting manufacturers in rural India or Indonesia and getting to know these wonderful people... not to mention dodging camels in Jodhpur! We’ve also been blessed by the generosity of the community: talented designers, photographers, visual merchandisers and advertising creatives have all become part of the Singapore Trading Post story.

What are you looking forward to for 2014?

Having already remodelled our store to increase our space and improve the layout, and we are excited about expanding our range of smaller pieces and introducing more gift items.

We’ve also started Expat Expert Talks for people who want to learn about furniture and collectibles. So far, we have focused on the various types of wood, how to distinguish genuine items from replicas, regional décor specialities and so on.

We’re also looking at establishing a Pasir Panjang Homeware Hub in collaboration with a few other shops in our area. As part of this, we have created a map for the location detailing various food and homeware outlets. And we plan to have more of a presence at the fairs, and in publications such as *Expat Living*.



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I undertake to buy back any piece of furniture sold, at the end of three years, at the price paid by the customer

#3 Treasures of the Raj

Having travelled widely over the past 20 years, HARRIET DIAS decided to combine her hobby of collecting priceless antiques, art and colonial furniture with her Indian roots and hard business skills. The result is **Treasures of the Raj**, a stunning collection of colonial furniture and antiques.

What brought you to Singapore?

Though I hail from Bombay, I am a global citizen, having lived and worked in the Middle East and Asia for 15 years. I've been here since 2003, when my investment banker husband was relocated to Singapore. Melwyn has been a Singapore citizen for the past eight years, and the rest of the family are permanent residents. So we're all firmly rooted here!

What gave you the idea for this business?

"The Raj" can be loosely defined as the colonial period in Indian history – British, Dutch, French and Portuguese, known for its graceful European-style furniture with local accents, made in solid mahogany, teak or rosewood.

Given the fast-diminishing supply of this quaint, period furniture and seeing the plethora of copies and fakes that are around, I have made it my mission to restore and retail this furniture.

What makes your business different?

In order to distinguish my business as the "real deal" and set myself apart, I do something that I believe no other furniture business does in Singapore:

I undertake to buy back any piece of furniture sold, at the end of three years, at the price paid by the customer.

This is only possible because I know the background of each piece and its intrinsic value, given that it has been painstakingly restored to protect its unique personality, character and history.

Each piece comes with a Certificate of Authentication that gives a brief history of its provenance, a photograph of what the piece looked like before and after restoration; it also comes with a Buyback Guarantee.

My goal is not to make old pieces look new, because antique furniture should be allowed to convey a sense of its history and charm. When it comes to antique furniture restoration, I follow the dictum that less is more.

How do you source your stock?

My supplier in India sources over 90 percent of all the furniture from four palaces – two in Gujarat, one in Rajasthan and another in Kerala – and the rest from old colonial mansions.

Once I have decided on the pieces I will be purchasing, having a clear idea of its provenance, I give it to my team of six experienced restorers. After critical examination, the furniture may be clarified and polished, or lightly cleaned and renewed. Good judgement and the application of antique restoration best practices are the ideal way to enhance the value of antique colonial furniture.

Why Tanglin Shopping Centre?

This was a no-brainer. An iconic mall located in the prime Tanglin and Orchard Road shopping belt, it is known for its antiques, exotic artefacts, artwork and jewellery.

The key to success in our business (or any other business in Singapore, I believe), is to own the premises where you operate. For that reason, we purchased two units at Tanglin Shopping Centre. This was an important move, given our promise of a 100-percent buyback at the end of three years, as it projects a sense of continuity and permanence.

Would you do anything differently next time round?

I opened shop in October 2013, and honestly, the response has been beyond my wildest expectations. I have been truly humbled by the appreciation of both my furniture and the business model that I have introduced; the word-of-mouth publicity has been astounding.

Though it is still early days, nothing has come up so far to make me think that I should have done things differently. One important thing I have learnt, though, is that each person has completely unique likes and tastes. So, in order to be successful I should have no preconceived notions about what people are shopping for, but instead have a range as wide and diverse as possible to meet different tastes.



Anything in the pipeline for 2014?

All going to plan, I will expand to a second unit within Tanglin Shopping Centre. Also, I would like to establish a warehouse outlet where I can display a much wider range of furniture. 📦

Treasures of the Raj
19 Tanglin Road
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Table Talk

“I drink to the general joy o’ the whole table,” said Macbeth. Of course, a nice bottle of wine always helps at a dinner party, but a stylish and comfortable table is also important. Here’s a group of *Expat Living* readers who are very happy with their dining table purchases. We hope you enjoy their recommendations.

Gah Wing Tsui, Singaporean

“We wanted to replace our old six-seat dining table with a larger one. My husband had seen suar (rain tree) wood tables on his travels; giant slabs of wood cut lengthwise from a single trunk – nothing pieced together, no laminate, very organic and beautiful. When we saw this table, we fell in love. It’s striking and it fits 10 people comfortably. I also love that the underside hasn’t been entirely smoothed out. This particular piece of wood was cut from near the outer edge of the tree, and portions of the rough, uneven texture of the tree trunk are preserved.

We have several pieces from Arthur Zaaro, and we keep going back. Aaron Foeste and Allison Rogiani make beautiful furniture, and they’ll customise each piece if you want. They are statement pieces but don’t look out of place in the home. Aaron will talk to you at length about how he crafts each piece; he knows where his materials are sourced from and how to care for them, and you get the sense just from chatting with him that he is passionate about his craftsmanship. He doesn’t want just to



sell you a piece; he wants you to really love it and to understand how each one is created.

Keep an open mind when shopping around. And make sure your purchase fits in your elevator! The Arthur Zaaro team had warned us that ours wouldn’t

fit, but they were kind enough to offer to bring it up to our apartment.”

Arthur Zaaro

5 Eunos Avenue 8A, 2/F Henry Design Centre
arthurzaaro.com



Rod Mayes, Australian

“I bought this rectangular extension table from Ethnicraft. I chose it because I loved the look of the teak and the simplicity of the design. I was also taken by the extension method, which is very elegant. When it extends, the legs move into the corners. No one has to sit in a seat with a leg in the way! The finish is beautiful, too.

The staff member I dealt with, Qinpei, was extremely helpful and explained the features of the table and the teak. The installation team also ran through the operation of the table, and the delivery and installation were extremely professionally handled.

If you're purchasing a new dining table, do your homework. Be willing to go a little out of your way. I actually spotted this piece of furniture on the internet before arriving in Singapore.

Ethnicraft Online
9272 1542 | ethnicraft-online.com.sg

Carla Randall, British

“Our dining table is a solid wood, rectangular eight-seater in a natural stain. We've lived in Singapore for almost seven years, but we never had room for a large indoor table before. When we moved last August, buying the perfect table was a top priority. I grew up in an Italian family so sitting around the table for hours at mealtimes was part of daily life. I wanted a table that would be conducive to recreating this type of lifestyle in Singapore.

When I saw this table in Gallery 278 I fell in love with it immediately. I liked the unusual shape and the different levels of thickness of the wood. I wanted something a bit different; the rectangular base adds to the uniqueness of the table. The matching chairs come in a woven material, and their contrast to the wood also appealed to me.

Joseph at Gallery 278 was incredibly helpful and his product knowledge was superb. He really couldn't do enough for us. We were so impressed, we ended up buying all our bedroom furniture from him too.



If you're looking for a table, check with the retailer if the wood has been treated in some way to make it water and scratch-resistant. We have two young children, so that aspect was pretty crucial for us. Also, the dining chairs need to be comfortable so that

guests and family can relax and enjoy themselves around the table.

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

Glenn Dittrich, American-Dutch

Our dining room table, bought at Journey East, is made of reclaimed teak. We loved its detail and rustic style and feel that the teak adds to the room's chic yet casual atmosphere. This is important, because we wanted a space where we could enjoy a long meal, or a glass of wine and a cheeseboard, along with good conversation.

The table has straight lines and a modern classic look, but the natural grain gives it variation. The quality of the construction is excellent, so it can be passed down to the next generation.

Journey East gave us the flexibility to add our own touches and customise it to our needs. The table originally combined smooth with rough-textured surfaces, but we wanted a completely rough finish. The sales consultants were friendly, knowledgeable and professional, and went the extra mile to make sure it was delivered exactly as we had requested.



Take your time and make sure you know what your goal is for the room where your table will sit. Aside from choosing a table that looks great, find chairs that are extremely comfortable but also fit in with the style you've chosen.

Journey East

315 Outram Road
#03-02, Tan Boon Liat Building
6473 1693 | journeyeast.com

Gema Blasco, Spanish

The table is inspired by the original design of the Tulip table by famous Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen. It's part of a set called the Pedestal Collection, designed in the mid-1950s.

Saarinen wanted to clean clutter from the home, so he replaced the classic legs of chairs and tables with a single pedestal.

The table is oval and accommodates six people. It's black and made from contrasting warm and cool materials: a wooden base and a marble top. The

shape creates a feeling of movement and space, and the colour gives depth to the white background.

We discovered this style of table a long time ago and it has always been part of our furniture wherever we have lived. We've also used it in our offices in different shapes, sizes and colours. When we arrived in Singapore six months ago, we found our table once again at Lush, a stylish indoor furniture shop where we bought most of our furniture. John, the retailer, helped us find and choose everything we needed. In addition to the table, he advised us on chairs, a sofa, lamps and other furniture. Lush has a huge range and provides a fast delivery service.

The dining table is one of the few places where families still gather together. And, believe it or not, it's around the table where big decisions are often made. So, spending time choosing a table you love goes towards creating special family moments.

Lush Furniture

73 Upper Paya Lebar Road
#03-01 Centro Bianco
6858 5882 | lush-lush.com



Kirsty Kasturi, Australian

“Our two-metre rectangular teak table has a natural finish and the timber was sustainably harvested. We also purchased a matching bench for one side of it, which has been a great space-saving idea.

We wanted a rustic material to blend in with the more modern furniture we brought with us to Singapore. We also wanted something that did not contribute to deforestation.

Chang at Mountain Teak helped us decide on the configuration of the table with our other furniture. She gave us good artistic advice, and was willing to help us rearrange her shop to try different combinations to help make the decision. I didn't feel pressured into a sale, as some places make you feel; gentle advice was given when asked for.

If you're buying a dining table, remember that newer apartments are generally small in Singapore. Think about skirting boards and access to



doors and windows, which can limit the space even more. Also, allow enough space for the chairs: as they take more room than you think.”

Mountain Teak

315 Outram Road
#07-02 Tan Boon Liat Building
6224 7176 | mountainteak.com



Sandeep and Sansrati Desai, Singaporean/Indian

“We bought our dining table at Origin Asia. It's made of teak and is extendable, and it's longer and broader than standard tables. We needed a table that could serve multiple purposes – from eating to art-and-craft activities for the kids. We also have family members who visit, so we wanted a table that could be easily extended. And since we have young kids, we didn't want sharp edges or a glass top.

We researched a lot of places before finally deciding to have the table custom-made. At Origin Asia, we saw several models and also experimented with different extending mechanisms before making our selection. We were also given several options for chairs.

Dining tables can last for a long time, so take time to research what you want and invest in pieces that can adapt to changes in your life.”

Origin Asia

372/372A River Valley Road
9010 3656 | originasia.com



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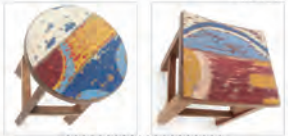
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Megan Barnett, British

Our “Executive Chairman of the Board” dining table accommodates eight to ten people; the self-stored leaves pop into place when the table is opened. Most tables open vertically for added length, but ours opens horizontally for extra width. At one metre wide, this piece has some decidedly European influences in its size and proportions.

I was first drawn to the natural grey-washed finish. The style worked perfectly for the space, plus I loved that the table opened sideways to create more room for dinner guests.

Together with Anthony at Taylor B, I tried out several table and chair combinations. We came up with the

suede grey quilted chairs and I decided to inject some more drama by adding oversized wing chairs at each end; all the chairs have silver nail heads which help tie together the whole look.

I have found some of my most interesting pieces at Taylor B. They have an ever-changing inventory, so every time I go, I can find something else to add to my collection.

Scale might very well be the single most important factor to consider when shopping for a dining table, especially if you’re furnishing a smaller space. Keep it simple! Opt for quality materials and a simple design and chances are your table will never look dated.

Taylor B
43 Keppel Road
6335 7090 | taylorbdesign.com

Geraldine Gitel, French

“Our rectangular dining table is 180cm by 90cm – the perfect size to hold six people comfortably. The tabletop is

made of light golden wood; the metal legs are painted light grey and join up in a sophisticated cross on the floor.

The table is from The Shophouse, and it had something special that I couldn't

find in other contemporary furniture shops. I thought it was uncluttered, and contemporary without being too clinical. I liked the mix of wood and metal. The table has also been nicely treated to protect against stains; we have a young daughter, so we need very resistant furniture.

The creative team at The Shophouse was extremely helpful; I would highly recommend them. They pay attention to you and your needs. Understanding that a dining table is an important part of the home, they ask a lot of questions about your existing furniture, colours, wall fittings and so on.

Pick a design that you like, but also think of practicality: what impact will such a big piece of furniture have in your house? Tables tend to look small in shops, but they actually can actually look much bigger in the limited space you have at home.

The Shophouse

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



John Lim Yeow Teck, Singaporean

“I bought a 1.5m-diameter round dining table made of solid suar wood, with a glass top to protect the tabletop. The table can accommodate 10 standard chairs, allowing for a big family gathering.

I selected this particular table because of its beautiful, contrasting-grain tabletop. Also, I was attracted by the design of the leg, made from the natural root of a mature teak tree.

I spent about two hours at The Vivant Tree while the salesperson explained the various designs of their dining sets. The shop offers a wide range of furniture products made of natural wood. Each piece has its own unique design and character.

Before you buy furniture, understand the functionality and design you want. Then work out a budget. Relax and enjoy the process of shopping according to your plan, without being too influenced by salespeople who sometimes present furniture pieces to you on the basis of their own interests, not yours.

The Vivant Tree

28B Hillview Terrace
6468 5846 | thevivanttree.sg



Veron Lee, Singaporean

Our Gilbert dining table is an oval-shaped eight-seater with a white marble tabletop and a burnished wood edge.

The table legs are burnished steel welded onto structural crossbars.

We chose this table as it complemented our apartment's contemporary classic interior design concept – the white

marble tabletop matched the living room wall. We also looked for practicality and functionality and this table is easy to maintain. We were drawn to its unconventional design.

We bought the table at Pure Interior. Jestine provided excellent customer service and was very accommodating and friendly. She goes the distance to exceed expectations and she made sure the table was polished to our satisfaction.

When considering a new dining table, ensure the size of the table does not overpower the room. It's better to look for quality and select something you like, so that table will last you longer. Don't settle for a table you do not like as much just because it's more economical.



Pure Interior

2 Alexandra Road
#01-01 Delta House
6534 9043 | pureinterior.com.sg

Beatriz Atton, Mexican

Our 2.20m by 1m dining table is made out of an old railway track, supported by a polished stainless steel frame and covered with a glass top. We chose it because we loved the combination of old wood and polished stainless steel. Because we're expats, we also chose a style that would fit any other house we might move to in the future.

Window to the Past (WTP) is my favourite furniture shop in town; it carries a very wide range of tasteful, stylish furniture. The staff are very attentive and they listen. In this case, they perfectly understood our needs. This table was a very good choice for us; we love it! WTP also has an excellent and professional delivery team that takes great care of your merchandise and installs it perfectly.

If you're looking for a dining table, remember it's going to be the centrepiece of the room, so work out



how many people you could seat in the space to decide the size and shape of the table. You'll need about 60cm per person. There are many shapes, materials and colours, so you need to find the right balance between the form, the size and the materials.

Choose a table that catches your eye. It doesn't have to be a fancy or formal piece; it should be inviting and make you feel comfortable.

Window to the Past

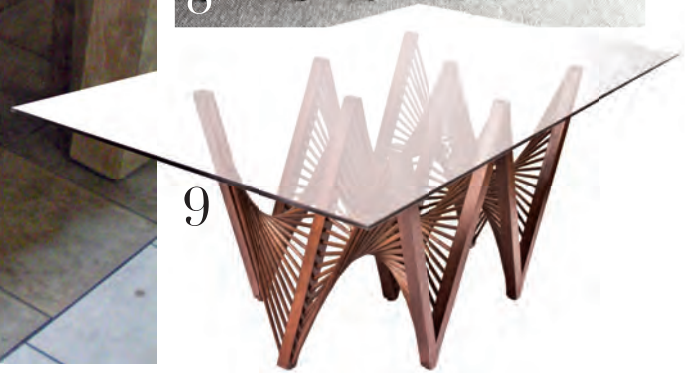
3 Kung Chong Road | 6235 2760 | wtpstyle.com

DINING DÉCOR

Tables, chairs, sideboards, lamps and accessories: everything you need to give a new, stylish look to the second most important room of the house!







1 Corian table, \$7,118, with Tiger chairs, \$1,087 each, **Danish Design**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #08-01 Century Warehouse, 6270 8483, danishdesignco.com **2** Rustic glass-top dining table, \$1,700, **Fairprice Antique**, 315 Outram Road, #01-10, Tan Boon Liat Building, 6270 2544, fairpriceantique.com **3** Rustic wood dining and punto chair, price upon request, **Galanga Living**, 211 Henderson Road #01-02, 6475 2633, galangaliving.com **4** 5-piece dining set, \$599, **BarangBarang**, #03-343 Marina Square, 6338 7040 **5** Slice extendable dining table, \$2,175, **Ethnicraft Online** **6** Turkish coffee chair, \$310, **Ethnicraft Online**, ethnicraft-online.com.sg **7** White-washed dining table and chairs, price upon request, **Origin Asia**, 372 River Valley Road, 6733 7384, originasia.com **8** Contemporary teak *kubus* dining

table, starting from \$1,500, **Originals**, 896 Dunearn Road, #02-03 Sime Darby Centre, 6471 9918, originals.com.sg **9** Geo dining table, \$4,380, **DiLegno**, 188-6 Tanjong Katong Road, 6246 2012, dilegno.sg **10** Reclaimed wood dining room cabinet, price upon request, **Artful House**, 315 Outram Road, #08-04 Tan Boon Liat Building, 62219019, artful-house.com **11** Café table, from \$495, and dining chairs, \$249, **Verandah Living**, Level 2 Shop 2C, Sime Darby Centre, 896 Dunearn Road, 9026 7061, verandah-living.com **12** Aero dining table, starting from \$3,380, **Gallery 278 by Esco Leasing**, 278 River Valley Road, 6737 2322, gallery278.com **13** Kykea custom dining table, \$3,150, **The Shophouse**, 6 Rochester Park, 6344 0100, theshophouse.com





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14 Enzo dining table in oak, \$1,698, **Lorenzo**, 27 Kaki Bukit Place, Eunos, 6846 0330, lorenzo-international.com **15** Woven copper tusk leg dining table, \$2,800, zebra ottoman, \$1,950, and James dining chairs, starting from \$850, **Modern Eclectic**, 120 Lower Delta Road, #01-14 Cendex Centre, 6273 2204, modernelectic.com **16** Marble top, solid rosewood dining table with Ivory inlay, \$6,000, **Treasure of the Raj**, 19 Tanglin Road, #03-28, 9173 5041 **17** CUT dining table, \$3,400, with chairs, \$550 each, **Domicil**, 11 Gul Circle, 6747 5050



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18 Mossim 180 dining table and grid side chairs, price upon request, **OriginAsia**, 372/372A River Valley Road, 6733 7384, originasia.com **19** Rosewood and teak dining table, \$15,800, and bench, \$4,800, **Nirvana Gallery**, Tanglin Shopping Centre #01-09, 6735 0060, nirvanagallerypte.com **20** Antique painted sideboard cabinet, \$3,600, **China Collection**, 20 Malcolm Road, 6235 1905, chinacollection.com.sg **21** Colonial Sunburst bar, price upon request, **Artful House**, 315 Outram Road, #08-04 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6221 9019, artful-house.com **22** British colonial extending dining table, price upon request, **The Past Perfect Collection**, 896 Dunearn Road, 02-01D Sime Darby Centre, 6737 3078, pastperfect.sg **23** Vintage round table, \$1,477, vintage rectangular table, \$1,819, **Mountain Teak**, 315 Outram Road #07-02, 6224 7176, mountainteak.com **24** Rossini dining set with six chairs, \$5,320, available in other colours, **Dreamweave Concepts**, 9 Raffles Boulevard, #01-34, 6333 1669, dreamweaveconcepts.com **25** Davidson dining table, \$5,500, **Finezza**, 9 Penang Road, #02-27/28 Park Mall, 6334 9972, finezza.com.sg



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26 Porada dining table in canaletto walnut and chairs, price upon request, **Lifestorey**, 1 Kim Seng Promenade #02-15, 6732 7362, lifestorey.com **27** Flamant crockery, from \$50, **House of AnLi**, 18 Mount Pleasant Drive, 6251 0410, houseofanli.com **28** Table accessories, from \$85, **Singapore Trading Post**, 102 F Pasir Panjang Road, #02-04, 6274 0511, singaporetradingpost.com **29** Mosaic dining table lamps, from \$29, **Chillal**, 9 Haji Lane, 6299 0365, chillal.com **30** Ceramic plates, \$39, **Linidea**, 81 Ubi Avenue 4, #02-16 UB One, 6538 0577, linidea.com



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DINING ROOMS



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31 Dining Room furnishing, price upon request, **Design Intervention**, 75E Loewen Road, Tanglin Village, 6506 0920, designintervention.com.sg **32** Arthur Zaaro outdoors tables, \$2,185, **Arthur Zaaro**, 5 Eunus Ave 8A, Level 2 Henry Design Centre, arthurzaaro.com **33** Duo platter, \$148, **Luxodec**, 68 Orchard Road, #05-10, 6884 7527, luxodec.com **34** Eco-friendly chair, price upon request; dining table, available in other colours, price upon request, **Roche Bobois**, 354 Alexandra Road, #01-19/20/21 The Alexis, 6734 7939, roche-bobois.com **35** Dining table, \$5,063, and chairs, \$590.64 each, **Window to the Past**, 3 Kung Chong Road, 6235 2760, wtpstyle.com **36** d-Bodhi Kasting dining table, price upon request, **Journey East**, 315 Outram Road, #03-02 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6473 1693, journeyeast.com

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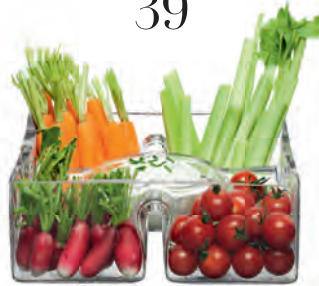
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37 HEGOA series dining sets, price upon request, **Natural Living**, 9 Penang Road, #03-01 Park Mall, natural-living.com.sg. **38** Marriot dining set, \$1,610, available in other fabrics and materials, **Roops**, 85 Defu Lane 10, #06-00, 6281 1377, skylinedesign.com.sg. **39** Handmade bowl, \$136, and square platter, \$142, **Luxodec**, 68 Orchard Road, #05-10, 6884 7527, luxodec.com. **40** Drinks trolley, \$3,000, **Carrol Boyes**, 165 Tanglin Road, #03-06, 6638 8931, carrolboyes.com. **41** Firenze dining table, \$998 with Tuscano armchairs, \$495, **Teak & Mahogany**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #07-02/03/04 Century Warehouse, 6273 8116, teakandmahogany.com



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Property

One Devonshire

Urban



LOFT



German expat ANDREAS BALZER and his Singaporean wife Siew Bee Goh live on top of an MRT station. Okay, admittedly 42 floors above it, but still, you can't really be more conveniently or centrally located than at this 138-square-metre, two-bedroom apartment in International Plaza, above Tanjong Pagar MRT on Anson Road.

The 50-storey high-rise tower in the heart of the CBD was the tallest commercial building with residential apartments in Singapore when it was built in 1976, until the Sail @ Marina Bay was completed in 2008.

Stepping out of the lift and seeing the yellowing of the walls of the huge stairwell gives you a feel for its dated conception. But walking into Siew Bee and Andreas's apartment is like entering another realm in different era. Andreas describes it as a "London loft meets Asian style", and I can't disagree. The warm, and golden hues of the open-plan living area lead into the cool, crisp-white kitchen. Making the most of every centimetre of space, this is city living at its best.

*By Amy Brook-Partridge;
photography by Ken Tan*



This large Buddha statue was purchased from Eastern Discoveries



Starting from scratch

Andreas has lived in Singapore for eight years, and he and Siew Bee had had enough of packing up and moving every two years. "We've been so annoyed by the endless moving, and with the landlords increasing the rent all the time, so we decided to buy.

"We wanted somewhere that was close to work and near an MRT," says Andreas. "We actually found this one by accident," adds Siew Bee. "We viewed a unit on the 45th floor, but the owner was asking for a higher price. We thought we'd just take a look at this unit, didn't really pay attention to it, and a week later the agent actually chased us to find out if we wanted to make an offer. We found out the owner needed to sell the property urgently, we made an offer, and it was accepted in July 2012."

Although the apartment had been recently renovated and was in fairly good condition, they decided to gut and renovate the place. "It was so funny when we asked the contractor to knock out the marble flooring; they nearly cried," says

Andreas. Most units in the block have three or four bedrooms, using partition walls to separate the areas, but Andreas and Siew Bee wanted to open the space up by knocking out partition walls, false ceilings and a huge centralised air conditioning unit.

The contractor they used was a former colleague of Andreas's, Korene Tang, who had started her own business, Atelier Tan. Overall, the couple are happy with the result. "They did fall behind with their already busy sub-contractors, and we also came up with some changes during the project's execution, so there was a big delay in delivering the flat to us."

Having taken ownership of the flat in September 2012, they'd given the contractors until 30 November, when they had to vacate their previous condo. "It was a disaster; the contractors just cleared an area for our furniture, where it sat, covered, in the middle of the apartment. We had a corner for ourselves, and the workers became our flatmates! In the end we moved to a hotel

The views are spectacular, taking in the CBD and Duxton Hill's traditional buildings juxtaposed with The Pinnacle. Currently under construction, however, is the 67-storey Guoco Tower, slated for completion in 2016, which will partially block the view.


"This is the advantage and disadvantage of the whole area being redeveloped. The construction views may not be attractive, but the beauty is that modern architectural design is much nicer than that of previous decades," says Andreas. I ask if they can see runners on the track on top of The Pinnacle, and they say yes. "We can even see kids bouncing on the trampoline on top of the building, which looks a little odd and can be worrying," they laugh.






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PROPERTY

for a week to let them get everything finished,” says Andreas. “We laugh about it now, but it was very stressful at the time.”

Working the space

The open-plan living, dining, kitchen and bedroom area is the perfect set-up for a couple. When they have guests, the floor-to-ceiling Chinese doors are a stylish way to partition the space for privacy. Exposed metal and original stonework form the frame for the doors from Just Anthony; they came from Fujian province in China.

“The story is that the two warriors are loyal generals, Qin Shubao and Yuchi Jingde, who protected the Tang Dynasty’s second emperor, Emperor Tang Taizong,” explains Siew Bee. “Legend has it that a ghost was harassing him, resulting in him suffering from insomnia, so one night the two generals guarded the house so he could have a restful night’s sleep. It is now believed that these generals can aid sleep, so they are perfect for our bedroom,” she adds.

The couple knocked down existing walls to create an integrated bathroom and walk-in wardrobe; the latter has a glass wall and air vent, a clever feature that lets light and air into this corner of the apartment. The replica pig-trough sink has a moveable mirror above it, “so you can see the view ahead and see what weather is coming in the morning,” as Andreas says.

It’s impossible to ignore the enormous Buddha statue sitting almost like a guard at the end of the bed. They bought it from Eastern Discovery, a shop their friend Darika used to run. “We felt there needed to be a centrepiece in the flat, holding it together, but also keeping it separate,” says Andreas. Due to the sheer number of Buddha representations around the apartment, I ask whether the couple are Buddhist. “Siew Bee is a non-practising Buddhist and I’m a freethinker,” he answers.

The large Buddha statue by the front door was bought in Chinatown and is more than 300 years old. “People would sit at his feet, pray and burn offerings; you can see burn marks around his



The two warriors depicted on the Chinese partition doors protect against sleepless nights

head,” says Siew Bee. Fresh jasmine hangs around his neck, the aroma of which mixes nicely with the slightly charred smell of the wood.

A Mongolian “hell door”, bought from Just Anthony and used as a wall hanging, sits behind the Buddha statue. Large wooden candleholders presenting the eight gods, purchased from Shang Antique in Dempsey, hang either side.

What’s fascinating about the space is the eclecticism of the furniture, art and sculpture combined with distinctive colours and interior style. The black concrete floor and warm wooden Buddha statues work alongside the clean lines of the more modern pieces on the console by the front door. “We made it like this because we have a lot of old things we wanted to harmonise with more modern pieces,” says Andreas.



One of the "irresistibly ugly" ceramic birds Andreas bought from Sydney



This includes the ceramic green birds bought from Sydney. "I found them so ugly I just had to buy them," he chuckles.

The retro 1960s-style sofa has been recently reupholstered with a leafy pattern called Gorgeous Green, reflected again in an elephant chair used as a pseudo-daybed in their bedroom area. Two large sparkling chandeliers were flown in from France and had to

be painstakingly remade after almost being destroyed in transit.

The perfect contrast

Andreas and Siew Bee, originally Malaysian but now a Singapore citizen, met in Singapore seven years ago. After some months of procrastination on Andreas's part, Siew Bee messaged him on the off chance he was free to

join her to visit her family in Malaysia, and he said yes.

"She has a really large Chinese Malaysian family, and I was quite overwhelmed," says Andreas. After a rocky start, the family strongly supported the relationship. "I understood their concerns," he admits. "These intercultural marriages can be super-challenging." But, just like their stylish apartment, they harmonise perfectly.

Recommendations

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Atelier Tang

8 Burn Road
#01-08 Trivex
6222 0796 | atelier Tang.com

Soon Seng Heng Furniture

(upholstery and re-upholstery service)
Blk 117 Bedok Reservoir Road
#01-56
9722 0220 | soonheng.com

Chilli Antiques and Arts

125 M. 4 Baan Waen
Hang Dong, Chiang Mai
chilliantiques.com

Just Anthony

379 Upper Paya Lebar Road
6283 4782 | 6283 4722
justanthony.com

Jewels Of The Past

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Hotel Le Méridien, New Delhi
+91 98 1 166638 | jewelsofthepast.in

Eastern Discoveries

315 Outram Road
#03-06 Tan Boon Liat Building
6475 1814 | eastern-discoveries.com
“We’d like to give special thanks to our beloved friend Darika Sauter, formerly from Eastern Discoveries, now in Thailand. Without her, many ideas would have remained undiscovered.”

FOOD

“Many restaurants in Singapore do not give much value for money, and it’s also very difficult to find owners willing to go that extra mile. Here are some that do.”

Kaixo Kulinary

(gourmet cuisine influenced by the Basque region)
Chef Lee Issachar
96 Tanjong Pagar Road
6225 0545 | kaixo.sg

Burnt Ends

(modern Australian barbecue)
20 Teck Lim Road
6224 3933 | burntends.com.sg



The chandeliers were painstakingly remade after a disastrous journey from France to Singapore

Gunther's

(modern French cuisine)
36 Purvis Street, #01-03
6338 8955 | gunthers.com.sg

Min Jiang

(for decent dumplings)
Goodwood Park Hotel
22 Scotts Road
6730 1704 | goodwoodparkhotel.com

SOUL

Ayuthaya – The Royal Thai Spa

182 Telok Ayer Street
6223 9180 | ayuthayaspa.com



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MARKET Update

Going into 2014, sellers are reviewing their expectations as the real estate market tips towards a buyers' market with more units selling below valuation price. According to SRX Property Index, prices of non-landed private residential units continue to soften on a month-by-month basis. Price levels are hovering around 4 percent, down from the price peak in February, and volume is down 62 percent. Investors, however, see the property market improving over the next 12 months. Rentals remain soft and again landlords are readjusting their prices to better reflect the market sentiment.

Wishing you all happy home hunting in 2014!



DEBORAH LAW

*Executive Director,
Expat Realtor*

Hot Properties



**LOCATION,
LOCATION,
LOCATION**

\$6,000 RENT

District: 15

Size: 2,293 sq. ft.

Bedrooms: 4

Type: Penthouse



This duplex penthouse with fabulous roof terrace and private Jacuzzi is just minutes walk to Dakota MRT and close to the restaurants and shops of Katong and Marine Parade, as well as Kallang Leisure Park. Completed in 2004, it comprises only 85 units; the penthouse commands fabulous views and is the perfect pad for people who love to entertain.

EASY LIVING

\$6,000 RENT
 District: 14
 Size: 3,000 sq. ft.
 Bedrooms: 5
 Terraced House

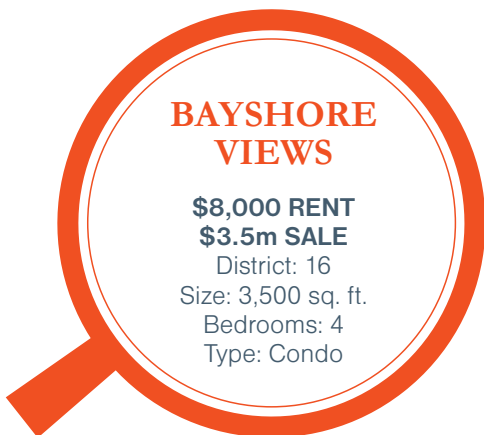
This east-facing property enjoys a great location on a quiet side road just five minutes' walk from Kembangan MRT. It has large and spacious rooms (including the bathrooms and kitchen), a generous helper's room with aircon, masses of storage and a good-sized front area with some grass, and a drive-way to park your car. This is a well-priced property and a practical and easy home to live in.



**SHOPHOUSE
 STYLE**

\$9,000 RENT
 District: 21
 Size: 3,800 sq. ft.
 Bedrooms: 6
 Type: Terraced House

This stunning architect-designed inter-terrace boasts a lap pool along the right-hand side of the living/dining and open-plan kitchen area – brilliant for entertaining. It's modelled on a traditional shophouse, with all the rooms opening onto landing areas and connected by walkways, ensuring a through-breeze and plenty of light. You really have to see the house to appreciate the generosity of size and the beauty of it. It's the kind of place that normally gets snapped up on the first viewing.



**BAYSHORE
VIEWS**

\$8,000 RENT
\$3.5m SALE

District: 16
Size: 3,500 sq. ft.
Bedrooms: 4
Type: Condo



Tucked away from the road in a quiet spot, this one-level penthouse unit has great city and sea views, with four bedrooms (two with ensuite), a helper's room, large living and dining area, spacious kitchen, media room and balcony. Bedrooms have generous storage space while the high ceilings and many windows give great ventilation and light. The resort-style condo has a mini-mart, health food store, restaurant, launderette and spa. It's close to Changi Airport, an easy drive to the city, and walking distance to East Coast beach.

Overseas Property



Prime Spa Villa at Montigo Resorts, Nongsa is offered for genuine resale and is currently the only spa unit on the market. A mere 30-minute ferry ride from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal and part of an award-winning 5-star resort, this villa oozes luxury.

Aside from your own pool, spa hut and view across the ocean towards Singapore, there's an open plan living/kitchen area, two double bedrooms and a huge roof terrace perfect for a barbecue and sun-downers at sunset. It all makes for a special retreat from the hustle and bustle of Singapore. Under a rental plan you can achieve a gross rental yield of 5 percent and still have 60 days owners stay a year.

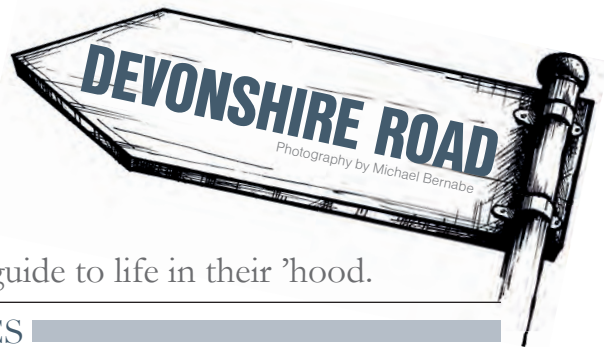


**SPA
SECLUSION**

\$699,000 SALE
Size: 3,420 sq. ft.
Bedrooms: 2

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STREET TALK

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

THE SPECIFICS



NAME: ERIN ZILIS

FROM: United States

OCCUPATION:

My friend, Lisa, also an expat, likes to say she's a student at The Southeast Asian School of Lifelong Learning, and I love that description! I suppose I'm also a student there, and have logged in enough time planning trips around the region to call myself a travel agent.

What street do you live on?
Devonshire Road.

Exact words you tell a taxi driver to get home?
One Devonshire, between Orchard and River Valley, across from the petrol station on Killiney Road.

What's the name of your neighbourhood?
River Valley or Somerset or Orchard or Killiney... everyone calls it something different!

Closest MRT station?
Somerset.

How long have you lived here?
15 months.

Why here?
Good luck and the great real estate agent who found it. It's walking distance to my husband's office, which was important to him after years of commuting in Californian traffic.



THE SCENE



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

A 24-hour FairPrice grocery store.

The closest store (of any type) to your front door is:

The mini-mart at the petrol station.

Your street would make the perfect backdrop for a remake of:

Contagion. Right now, there are 80-plus cases of dengue fever in our neighbourhood, and the National Environmental Agency has conducted two inspections of our place this week alone.

Your neighbours are great, but you wouldn't mind a little less:

Moving furniture around in the apartment above us.

The unofficial uniform of your street is:

Skinny long legs and a modelling

portfolio carried by girls heading to the modelling agency at the end of Devonshire Road.

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

An up-and-coming model.

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

Walk four doors down and admire the beautiful gold Buddha inside the gate at Tong Sian Tng Temple, or sample the local food options on Killiney Road.

If you're missing home, you:

Get a takeaway tuna sandwich from Paul at Takashimaya Shopping Centre. Oh, how I miss really good sandwiches.

Mandatory for out-of-town guests is:

A stroll along the river from Robertson Quay to the CBD, checking out the quays, the colourful shutters on the MICA Building, and views of the city

skyline, the Merlion and Marina Bay Sands along the way.

You'd swap houses in a second with:

My friend Susanne, who lives next door at St Thomas Suites.

A common myth about your neighbourhood is:

That it's full of expats. Because of the 24-hour FairPrice and the shophouses on Killiney, lots of locals hang out here.

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

Thunder and lightning... we're on the 34th floor and we really experience it up here!

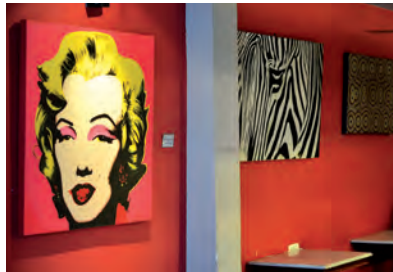
A massive late-night rager on your street is likely to be:

A party on the big deck at the new building next door.

THE SUPERLATIVES

Your hands-down favourite neighbourhood joints are:

Five & Dime for breakfast; we love the quirky atmosphere and the corned beef hash is heavenly. We also enjoy an alfresco iced latte and the real neighbourhood feel at **Baker & Cook**. **The Dubliner** is great for a Guinness and, on Friday nights, we enjoy listening to Lily and Roy sing some of our favourite songs. **Porterhouse** on Killiney does good steaks at half the price of the big steakhouses in the city, and the owner, Lawrence, is the nicest guy on the block. **eM by the River**, which we like to think was made for us since my name begins with an E and my husband's begins with an M, is a great place for a late-night cocktail on the way home from dinner by the river. We also love walking down the hill to **Bistecca** on Mohamed Sultan for steaks. And at **Shiraz Mazze** I can satisfy my craving for chicken *shawarma* regularly. You won't find better local food than at **Newton Food Centre**. Despite its reputation as the expensive expat hawker centre, the food is amazing.



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

The desolation over Chinese New Year. It felt apocalyptic to see so few people on the streets!

We love a good bargain. The best deal in your neighbourhood is:

At **Killiney Curry Puff**. A delicious potato curry puff is \$1.40.

The guiltiest pleasure in your area is:

Breakfast at **Wild Honey** at Mandarin Gallery.

One thing you'd never change is:

The row of shophouses and restaurants on Killiney Road.

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

The constant construction noise from new buildings going up all around us.

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

Put in traffic lights or a bridge over the road at Devonshire and Killiney. Cars come speeding around the corner all day long and they don't stop for pedestrians.

Why should your neighborhood be featured in a guidebook?

It's in the perfect location, right between Orchard Road and Robertson Quay.

In one direction, great shopping and dining. In the other, there are great evening strolls and cocktails to be had.

Most noticeable thing about your street:

The amount of greenery that surrounds us. We've visited cities all around the world and many of them feel like a concrete jungle. I love that we see lots of trees and flowers in Singapore, including on top of the building across from us and on the seven garden levels of our building. And I love looking across at the mix of old, red-roofed shophouses and new, modern buildings.



We want to know about where you live. Don't be shy! Send 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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GEMS World Academy (Singapore), an international school opening in September 2014 from Pre-K – Grade 8, will provide your children with an educational environment that is positive, nurturing, inspirational and more. We aim to help students become global citizens and future leaders by exposing them to varied world views and diversity in the real world.

From now until Feb 28, 2014, there is a special **one-time** transfer offer which includes a rebate of all registration and enrolment fees* when you make a school transfer to join GEMS World Academy (Singapore). This offer is open to all current international expatriate students in Singapore.

GWA Singapore intends to seek candidacy to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes from Pre-Kindergarten (3-year-olds) to Grade 12 (18-year-olds). The full suite of IB programmes comprises the Primary Years (PYP), the Middle Years (MYP) and Diploma Programmes (DP).

*The registration and enrolment fees will be offset against the annual tuition fees for the academic year of 2014-2015. There are no additional charges beyond school fees listed on www.gemsworldacademy-singapore.com, with the exception of private transportation, uniforms and optional extra-curricular activities of choice.



For more information, visit the GEMS Information & Enrolment Centre at the Forum Shopping Mall, #01-K2/#15-02 Forum, or call 6557-2702, or visit www.gemsworldacademy-singapore.com

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Life & Family

At home with Lisa Muller

WHAT'S NEW Latest updates for parents & children



Iconic shopping destination **Tangs Orchard** has reinvented itself for 2014. For one thing, Tangs Market is back: re-launched to satisfy any local or international food craving you might have, from Krispy Kreme to the famous handmade *popiah* at Kway Guan Huat. There's also a brand new Gourmet Kitchens section made up of three open-concept kitchen studios with live cooking demonstrations. And the handy new Asian-inspired Heritage Zone is a place to pick up memorable souvenirs and traditional artisan craft items. 310 Orchard Road. tangsg.com.sg ▲

TALK IT OUT



Conflict is a natural and normal part of any relationship – it's how we handle it that can make all the difference. Pioneers in couple counselling, Drs

John and Julie Gottman base their approach on decades of scientific investigation and therapeutic practice. They work to promote a mutual understanding of each partner's viewpoint in order for each party to feel better understood. All counsellors at the practice are Gottman-trained. *Special offer:* **The Expat Counsellors** is offering a 20-percent discount for *EL* readers for their first Gottman Couples' Therapy session – just quote "Talk it Out". 87 Science Park Drive, #01-01 The Science Hub. theexpatcounsellors.com



PURE COTTON BABYWEAR

New online store **Tilly Stone Boutique** specialises in beautiful babywear made from 100-percent cotton, as well as soft accessories such as bibs, blankets, bunting and toys that make perfect gifts. To complement the range, they also sell hand-finished occasion cards and gift bags with distinctively quirky designs for special occasions. tillystoneboutique.sg



With the first permanent tooth appearing at age 6, it takes 6 years for the baby teeth to shed completely.

Orthodontic treatment can be simplified through early screening during this time.

Has your child been screened yet?



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Opening in September this year, **Epsom College** in Malaysia is a co-educational boarding school for ages three to 18. Students will have the option for full board, weekly board or day school. With a reputation for over 150 years of academic excellence in the UK, the school will offer a traditional British-style education for boys and girls. Set on a 50-acre site close to Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the school aims to deliver a stimulating educational environment to enable all students to maximise their potential in both academic and co-curricular activities. **Enrolment for September 2014 is now open; visit epsomcollege.edu.my for more details.** ▲

ORGANIC TOYS

The new range of hampers at **Organic Baby Gifts** features bunnies and baby rattles from Maud N Lil, one of Australia's premier organic toy companies, which are bound to be an instant favourite with babies. *Special offer:* A 20-percent discount on all hampers, toys and toiletries is available to *EL* readers – just enter the code OBGXPL20 at the checkout. **organicbabygifts.com.sg**



GOOD FOR FEET

Sold at over 19 stores in Singapore, Pediped offers over 120 designs of children's footwear at reasonable prices – and they're all approved by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). The latest collection features three signature lines with vivid colours, quality materials and classic designs. Available in EU sizes 19 to 33. **Visit pediped.com.sg for more information and a list of stockists.**

DIGITAL ART COMPETITION



Digital technology is an integral part of campus life at Nexus International School and, in this spirit, the school is holding its first digital art competition. The **My Digital World** competition will be open to all international school students in

Singapore. The winner of each category will receive the latest iPad Mini. For primary students (ages seven to 11), the Digital Art category requires the use of digital software or apps to produce an art piece illustrating a favourite school activity. Secondary students (ages 12 to 18) who take part in the Digital Photo Essay category are tasked with creating a series of images that tell a story of "A day in your life on campus". Submission dates run from 15 January to 15 February. **nexus.edu.sg** ▲

CHILD OF THE WEEK

Aussie expat and mother of four **Rachael Cox** has created a new app aimed at helping family households run more smoothly and preventing arguments over those little things, like whose turn it is to choose a movie, or to sit in the front seat of the car. The **Child of the Week app** encourages children to work at chores and benefit from perks, giving them a sense of responsibility and leadership; it operates on a rotational basis, so that all children, from youngsters to teens, get to be the "leader" in the home, for a week at a time. **Available from the iTunes store.**



Oh, Behave!

Minding your Ps and Qs... even when others don't.



ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I received a couple of Christmas gifts that did not quite hit the mark. Is it okay to return a gift?

First, no matter what the gift, you should write a note of thanks to the giver for their thoughtfulness. After that, in general, it's fine to return a bought gift, but not anything handmade or personal. If the gift includes a receipt, it's a tacit invitation to exchange it for something more to your taste. If the package clearly indicates where the gift was purchased you could also try to exchange it. But it's inappropriate to ask for information in order to return the gift to the store.

My kids groan at the idea of having to send handwritten thank-you notes for Christmas gifts. Is it okay to let them send thank-you emails instead?

I get this question all the time. I will start by saying that sending a note of gratitude any way you can is most important. However, a handwritten note is the ideal option. Here is how I explain it to my kids. The person who purchased your gift went through considerable time and effort to select, wrap, and get the gift to you. Their time and thoughtfulness is deserving of a handwritten note of thanks. I also remind them of how much they enjoy receiving notes in the mail. Emails are generally read and deleted where notes are often read and kept. Wouldn't your children want to be remembered as grateful? Or in the wise words of my six-year-old, "If you write a thank-you note, you get more presents."



Send your questions on matters of etiquette to editorial@expatliving.sg. We'll pass them to Kristen Graff, the founder of Manners in Mind, a company providing modern-day advice on social, cultural and corporate etiquette. To sign up for an etiquette class or for more information, call 8157 3365 or visit www.mannersinmind.com.



LET'S PLAY TOGETHER

To help encourage friendships and child bonding through play, **LEGO Friends**, a product range aimed at girls aged five to twelve, is introducing a brand new friendship campaign, which will air as a pair of films on its YouTube channel, youtube.com/lego. The films show five friends around a table, sharing tips, thoughts and opinions while playing with the range. We also like the limited-edition LEGO Friends Friendship Diary, which encourages children to write down their thoughts. It contains an assortment of games and lots of fun stickers to keep their hands busy. To get your own hands on one, spend at least \$60 on LEGO Friends products in one go, and submit a photo of the receipt together with your contact details by 31 January to legofriends@legosingapore.com.

NOTICEBOARD

Births, engagements and weddings plus items for sale

FAMILY NEWS



Rhys and Joanna Pittam were delighted to welcome **Alexis Sylvia Mae** on 20 June 2013.



First-time parents Ganesh and Sridevi are enjoying double the fun with twins **Dev and Dhiya**, born on 18 January 2013.



Britz Steyn was born on 2 August 2013 to proud parents Rudo and Talita Steyn, and is much adored by big sister, Katya.



Terry and Aruna Mascarenhas are excited about the birth of their fourth baby boy, **Yohaán Jake**, little brother to Amish, Tanish and Nimish.



JUST HAD A BABY? NEWLY MARRIED? RECENTLY ENGAGED?



Moved back to Singapore and want to let people know you're back in town? Whatever your announcement, we will get the message out. Go to www.expatliving.sg, click on noticeboard and post your announcement.

CONGRATULATIONS

All readers whose babies are featured on this page will receive a photography session with Bamboo Shoots photography and a complimentary image on canvas worth \$540 (bambooshoots.com.sg) and a pair of Pediped Originals*, valued at \$63.90. So keep those birth announcements coming!



*Style may differ from image shown

FOR SALE

Jewellery storage unit

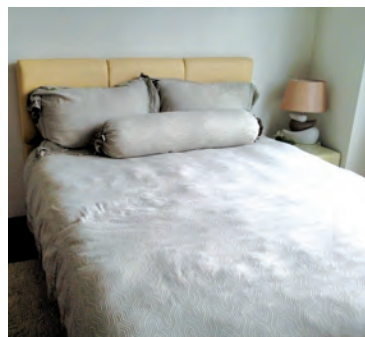
Jewellery storage unit (150cm tall), dark red, painted with Chinese imagery. Hinged lid with mirror and small storage space underneath, two side doors with hooks for necklaces, five central drawers and a small double-doored cupboard. Bought for \$750, reasonable offers considered.



Interested? SMS Beatrice on 8355 7488.

King-size bed

- Old solid teak king-size bed, purchased at Asia Passion on Dempsey Road. The bed can be disassembled entirely and is made without screws. Each piece is numbered to make re-assembly easy. The mattress comes free. Measures 225 x 187 x 50cm. Asking \$1,100.
- Cash and carry in the Upper Bukit Timah Area.



Interested? SMS Max at 9652 9648 or email bar_zotto@hotmail.com.

Outdoor furniture

- Two unused armchairs (80 x 80cm) with cushions and one glass-topped table (diameter 78cm). Asking \$500.
- Self-collect from Farrer Park, Sturdee Road.



Interested? Call Carol on 8468 0701.

Moses basket

- Brand new wicker Moses basket with wooden stand. Comes with full set of pillows and sheets. Asking \$100.
- Collection from Tampines.



Interested? Call or SMS Shalu on 9763 1483.

Spacious apartment for rent

Bright, two-bedroom apartment for rent at The Hacienda on the East Coast. Spacious living room, two bathrooms with showers, a big, fully equipped kitchen, a laundry area with washing machine and dryer, and a nice balcony. Fully furnished, top floor with exclusive entrance area, covered parking.



Interested? Contact chiara@chiaraskitchen.com.

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MUM'S *the word*

By Amy Brook-Partridge;
photography by Milla Kantola



Finnish mother SANNA MASSALA and her family have been living the expat life for 14 years. She talks to me about bringing up her sons Olli (16) and Sampo (6) in Singapore.

Over half of your expat life has been spent in Singapore; what about the rest?

We moved to the Czech Republic when Olli was two years old and lived there for three years, before moving to Jakarta for another three years. We had relocated to the second-biggest city in the Czech Republic, and I had to learn to speak the language. The difference between there and Asia is that you are fully integrated into their society, whereas here, even if you are a permanent resident, you still belong to a group of expats.

Did you enjoy your time in Jakarta?

Living there, you get to experience many nice things about Indonesia. The living standards are high, you get a big house, and everyone is so friendly and helpful. In Jakarta, everything is possible but nothing is easy; but here in Singapore, not everything is possible, but everything that is possible, is easy.

Was the transition from Jakarta to Singapore difficult?

I felt a little bit of culture shock when we moved here, as we did get spoilt in Jakarta.

Olli studied at the American School in Jakarta, so for convenience we enrolled him at the Singapore American School, which was a very smooth transition.

I got pregnant again when Olli was nine years old, and I had to learn everything from scratch as I couldn't remember anything about looking after a baby. Luckily, in Singapore we have access to excellent health care services and many essential products are easily available.

You're obviously very settled after eight years of living here. What about Singapore appeals to you so much?

We've always loved living in the Sunset area; it is peaceful, green and mature. I love the house we live in, and we also have a very good community playground around the corner from us.

One of the many reasons I love my life here is that I get to work at something I really enjoy. I'm a painter with a background in fine art and I did an online graphic design course while living here. As a freelancer I can work odd

hours, and there are many businesses needing high quality graphic design services. The wide-ranging clientele means I can work on something different every day.

Is there a strong Finnish community in Singapore?

Yes, there is a Finnish Association that has a lot of activities for kids, including a music group, soccer, Sunday school and two playgroups, all in Finnish, which has been a great benefit for Sampo. There's also the Finnish supplementary school, which has up to 70 kids in different grades. 🇫🇮

Favourite Things

Eating out: Singapore has many great restaurants, but my favourite hawker is the Vietnamese stall at Ghim Moh Market and Food Centre. Its food is heavenly, and whenever we have visitors we take them there.

Travel: My husband and Olli dive, and we have been to the Raja Ampat islands in Indonesia's West Papua province many times. The Papua Diving resort is excellent even for non-divers, and it's fantastic for experienced divers.

Family activity: I enjoy going to the library with our children; the libraries and their resources are magnificent. In Finland we have good libraries, but the ones here are amazing.

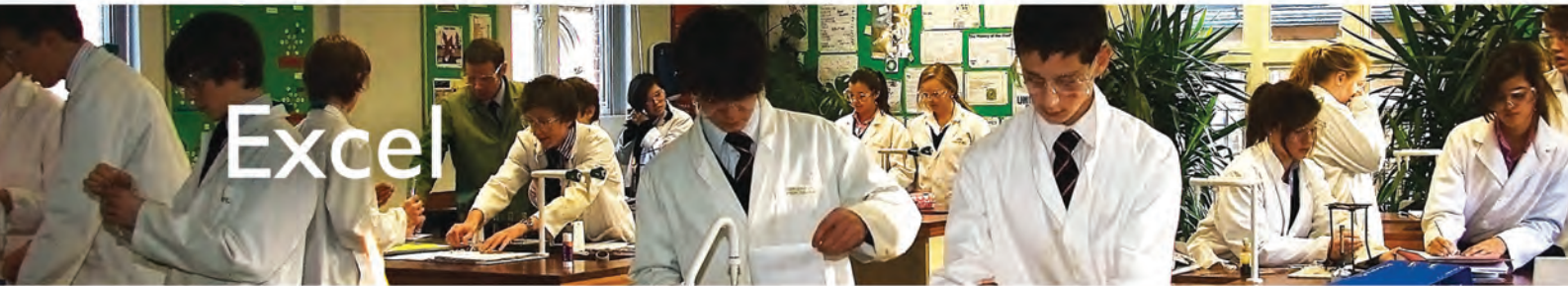
Just for me: My personal sport is stair-climbing, which I do twice a week with friends. We walk up the stairwells of high-rise buildings, 40 floors five times, which can take up to 90 minutes.



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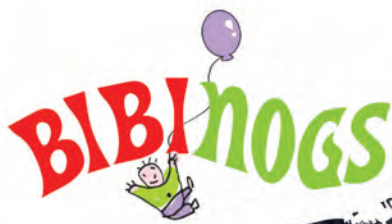
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“Putting Theo in Bibinogs is no doubt, in my mind, one of the best decisions I've made. I love how the school has created and nurtured in him a passion for learning and how he simply enjoys school and the activities. I am definitely looking forward to the next school activity where parents can participate!”

Aiwei (Theo's Mom)
Nursery, Bibinogs @ Kings Arcade



At Bibinogs, we believe that learning happens naturally when activities are fun, hands-on, multi-dimensional and related to children's lives. We believe that filling up children's hearts will open up their minds - warm, fun and engaging activities and environments will make children will learn naturally and enthusiastically.

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#02-05, Serene Centre
S (258748)

Bibinogs Play School
81 Clemenceau Avenue
#02-11, UE Square Mall
S (239917)

Bibinogs @ East Coast
48 Burnfoot Terrace
S (459836)

TAXI SAFETY

By Beate Baldry

for Toddlers

If you don't have a car in Singapore, being chauffeured around in taxis while you catch up on emails sounds ideal. But if you have a small kid in tow who has outgrown a Maxi-Cosi but is too small for an adult seatbelt, then what? How exactly are you supposed to get around safely?

Do you:

- Use a baby carrier to attach your child to you, then wear a seatbelt yourself?
- Strap yourself into the seatbelt and hold your unbelted child tightly on your lap?
- Strap yourself and your toddler into the seatbelt together?



If you would have ticked any of the above, please think again – these are not safe options. And if you need some visual proof of why option (a) is out, check out The Car Seat Lady online.



The Law in Singapore

As of 1 January 2012, anyone below the height of 1.35m, rather than of a certain age, must be secured with an appropriate restraint, booster seat or adjustable seatbelt. Those 1.35m or taller are required to wear a seatbelt, irrespective of age. Taxis are exempt from child safety seat requirements.



A portable booster seat, the **Trunki Boostapak** gets glowing user reviews. It doubles as a backpack, making it somewhat easier to carry although it is still fairly bulky to lug around. (And you know who will be the one left to carry it.)

After much research, I came across the **Ride Safer Travel Vest** from Safe Traffic System. It consists of a pink or blue padded vest which optimises the existing seatbelt system for a



small child's body. It basically secures the car seatbelt across the child's chest and across the pelvis and thighs, preventing the belt from sliding up onto the stomach.

Officially, the minimum weight is 13.6kg and the minimum age for use is three years old; these are the requirements of most booster seats. The smallest crash-test dummies used to test the vest simulated a three-year-old child in the 50th percentile for weight and height, so my personal decision was to use this for my very stocky and tall toddler who weighed 11.8kg at around 18 months. This was based on the knowledge that he would only be using the vest for short trips of 15 minutes, and that he was physically able and happy to sit upright for the entire journey with an adult beside him.

Pros:

- One of the least bulky safety devices, the Ride Safer Travel Vest weighs less than 500g and is easily portable.
- It's great for holidays, especially in taxis or when renting cars for short trips. Check the local child restraint laws first.
- Unlike booster seats, which elevate the child, the Ride Safer Travel Vest allows him or her to sit directly on the car seat, which has a lower centre of gravity, making the head less vulnerable in a car crash.
- Version 2 is "self-certified" by the Safe Traffic System to meet US Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213. Version 3 is not certified, as it cannot be tested with the lap-only belt, which is the test's (some say outdated) requirement: this version must be used with a lap-shoulder belt. However, it has the same design as Version 2 except for lacking the tether.
- Version 2 is more versatile than a booster seat as it can be used with a lap-shoulder belt or a lap-only belt if you buy the tether attachment; so it is handy for middle seats, which often don't have shoulder belts.

Cons

- The Ride Safer travel vest offers no side-impact protection; nor does a backless booster seat, however. Protection from side impact – for both children and adults – relies on vehicle technology such as the presence of side-impact airbags and the strength of the pillars in the frame of the car.
- It takes a few extra minutes to install once you're seated in the cab.

Or Try:

There are various car seats which turn into a version of a stroller, such as the **Sit'n'Stroll**, (newborn to 18kg). It's bulky and weighs 10kg, but it's versatile – you can use it as a car seat, a booster seat, in planes and as a stroller. They are not available in Singapore, but you can buy them online from the Sit'n'Stroll Malaysia website, www.sitnstrollmy.com, and other online stores.



Tips:

- Put the vest on your child before you get into the cab to minimise installation time – it does take longer to buckle up than a regular seatbelt, as you need to thread the seatbelt through the clips. You may need to ask the taxi uncle to be patient before he zooms off.
- While it's not officially recommended by the manufacturer, if you're in the grey zone between a Maxi-Cosi and the three-year minimum age for most safety devices, and if you choose to use this vest, it's wise to have someone sit next to the child at all times to be sure that they stay in the correct, upright position.
 - The safest spot for your child is the middle seat, with a shoulder-lap belt. If there is only a lap belt in the centre seat, then a side seat with a shoulder-lap belt offers much better protection, even in side-impact crashes.

Buy It

Now here's the big question: Where can you get one? They're not yet available in Singapore, but watch this space. Until they are, you can order directly from www.safetrafficsystem.com; prices start from US\$125. Delivery time to Singapore is seven to 10 business days and postage costs roughly US\$40 if you choose USPS Priority Mail. 



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At Home with Vibeke

Photography by Ken Tan

Joining an expat association may be the best and quickest way to make friends in Singapore, and volunteering for local charities is one of the more worthwhile things you can do with your time. At her 59th-floor apartment at The Sail @ Marina Bay, Danish expat VIBEKE BROCK KOLDBAEK, vice-president of the Scandinavian Women's Association (SWA), talked to **Verne Maree**.



What brought you here?

My husband Thomas's employer sent him here two and a half years ago. Having completed my Master's degree in economics and computer science, I'd been working for a Danish bank, and I joined him here a few months later.

Our son Vilhelm was born in April this year, so this is now a baby home, as you can see! At the moment, most of my time revolves around looking after our little boy.

What's it like to live on the 59th floor?

We love it – the morning light is beautiful and so is the view of the lights at night. From one bedroom we can see Marina Bay Sands, from the living room we look out over Keppel Harbour to Sentosa and the islands beyond, and from the other bedroom we have a view of Chinatown. I feel very lucky to be living here.

Tell us about the SWA.

Joining the association is one of the first things I did after arriving, and I'm glad I did. It's open to women of all nationalities – not only Scandinavian countries, with the goal of providing them with a good network. The SWA has two main aspects: one is social activities and events, and the other is making charitable donations to the needy in Singapore.

Our membership has recently grown to about 127, and we're well on the way towards reaching the goal of 150 members in the next few months.

It's important to emphasise, though, that the main purpose of our social networking is to raise funds for our charity work. Because we are a small organisation, we cannot help everyone, so we need to be quite specific in our efforts: our stated goal is to enable children and young people to continue their education in the face of difficult times or disturbance in the normal balance of family life.

At the moment, we sponsor three scholarships for needy and deserving university students; we provide support to three families with children whose education is at risk; and we also contribute funds to The Tent, a shelter for teenage girls.

How are your funds raised?

Partly through our annual membership fee of \$80; partly through the generosity of various individual and company sponsors; and also through activities such as our Walk and Talk outings to some of Singapore's favourite green spaces. MacRitchie Reservoir Park and the Labrador Park walking trail are popular options; members pay \$5 and non-members \$10 to join in. For example, a recent Walk and Talk in Bukit Timah Nature Reserve raised \$150, which covers sponsorship of a needy family for half a month.

Other popular activities include Indian cooking classes, an iMac and iPhoto course, ladies' lunches and theatre evenings. We've had a Mooncake Magic talk, and we're about to do a tour of Pottery Jungle. We know that it's important to have events that will attract new members, especially newcomers to Singapore, and that will also be enjoyed by existing members.


Our monthly newsletter keeps our members up to date with our achievements, and the calendar on our website gives an overview of what's coming up.

How do you decide who the beneficiaries will be?

For our two longstanding scholarships – the Marit Thome Scholarship (named after the woman who founded the SWA in 1976) and the Scandinavian Women's Association Scholarship, both at Republic Polytechnic – we rely on the university to nominate the recipients. Each student receives \$2,500 towards tuition fees and books.

For the next two years, we have an additional scholarship for the daughter of one of the families we supported in the past. She is now pursuing her Master's degree at Beijing University, and we're very proud of her progress!

As for our needy families, we are given leads by the volunteer association Breadline, which is a member of the National Council of Social Services. For example, we currently support a family of two high school girls who live with their two aunts in impoverished circumstances.



As expats, we live relatively privileged lives in Singapore and many of us have so much more than we need.

In addition to providing these families between \$150 and \$300 a month towards their household and educational expenses, I and our other charity officers visit them regularly in order to help them set their own goals for the period of our support, assess their progress and evaluate whether to either adjust our contribution or terminate it when the need is no longer there.


Our support is generally for the short term, while the family is in dire straits, and should not become part of the family's regular income. Most fortunately, we have a member who is a qualified social worker and used to work in that field in Denmark.

Our donation to The Tent is meant to be pocket money for the girls to spend on personal effects and clothing. The shelter itself provides them with food and a roof over their heads.

What with committee meetings, social activities, administering SWA's family subsidies and maintaining the website, SWA must take a lot of time. What keeps you involved, especially now that you also have a baby to care for?

The look on the face of a bright girl who has received a scholarship from us, or the relief in the eyes of a mother who now has the funds to send her son to kindergarten. That's what makes it all worthwhile.

In time, I look forward to returning to my career as a business developer. But for now, it's a joy for me to have this time to look after my son, while still volunteering for SWA.

As expats, we live relatively privileged lives in Singapore and many of us have so much more than we need. Through SWA, we can share some of what we have with others in the community who are less fortunate. 

swasingapore.com.sg

School Report: MacBooks & Mandarin

MIGNON WECKERT, Head of Elementary at the Australian International School (AIS), talks us through two new initiatives being unrolled at the school in 2014.

TECHNOLOGY: Apple at AIS

Tell us about the introduction of an Apple platform this year.

We've had a 1:1 laptop programme at AIS in Secondary School since 2011, using Acer and Dell laptops. For 2014, we've taken the opportunity to begin with a deeper vision for ICT (information and communications technology) across the whole school. The two key elements of the programme are to get technology "out of the way" of learning and teaching, and to get better educational return on investment from our devices.

Given this, we've decided to move to an Apple platform. Beginning on the first day of the 2014 school year, AIS will be a 1:1 technology school, with a 1:1 iPad programme for all Elementary students (Prep to Year 5) and a 1:1 MacBook programme for all Secondary students (Years 6 to 12). Preschool students will move to a 1:4 iPad programme.

To mirror these learning devices in their classrooms, Elementary and Preschool teachers will be using an iPad as their central teaching device, while Secondary teachers will be using MacBooks. We will also have a mapped professional development path for our teaching staff, which is supported by Apple.

How will the iPads be used by the Elementary School students?

Our initial focus has been on teacher development, ensuring all teachers have lesson plans that leverage iPad apps. Following this, we will expect to find students engaging strongly in content production like video production, stop-motion photography and student-created books and texts. These educational "products" will be very strongly linked to the IB Primary Years Programme Units of Inquiry.

Will students take their iPads home each day?

As we embed iPads into our daily learning, our primary focus will be on strong device management. During this time, the iPads will not be taken home; however, as the programme progresses we will be investigating ways which will allow our older Elementary students to continue the learning at home with the iPad.



How can parents ensure that the students aren't using the devices inappropriately?

Where schools focus on the device and the app first, and the learning second, lesson design tends to be shallow, and students can tend towards less effective and even inappropriate use of the iPad. Our teachers have already begun the process of curriculum and lesson design as a first point of planning, and will then look to see what apps fit the design outcomes. This ensures deeper levels of educational engagement with the iPad and avoids "baby-sitting". We will also be using back-end mobile device management to tightly control apps that are installed on student devices. Finally, students will be taken through essential agreements with teachers to build understanding and commitment to appropriate device handling and use.

LANGUAGE: Daily Mandarin

How much Mandarin instruction have students been receiving up to now?

In Preschool, 20 minutes each day; in Prep to Year 5, three 40-minute classes a week.

Why Mandarin?

It's important for us as an IB PYP school in Singapore to support the learning of one of the host country's main languages. We want the students from an early age to acquire an additional language that they build upon through their Elementary School years. The collaboration of the experienced Mandarin staff

ensures a strongly innovative, differentiated programme. We also want to build on the Australian commitment to the initiatives from the "Australia in the Asian Century" government white paper, and Australia's engagement with Asia as part of the Australian Curriculum.

Will the daily classes be based on the immersion method?

Mandarin will be used throughout the lessons with a focus on developing skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Our teaching team has worked hard in 2013 to develop a rigorous, coherent curriculum with a focus on differentiation in preparation for daily Mandarin. Language expert Dr Andrea Truckenbrodt has been guiding them, and she will continue to support the team with their teaching and assessment practices.

The Mandarin programme will also be supported by the Apple 1:1 programme. Using technology is already a feature of learning Mandarin at AIS, and greater access to devices will further enhance the learning.

What level will students reach by Year 5?

If they start the programme from Preschool they should be fluent enough both inside and outside the classroom to converse about daily life and events. The students should be able to recognise 150 characters and write up to 100 characters. 📖

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Set to open in August, Dulwich College is based on 400 years of tradition and innovation from Dulwich College in London and its sister schools in China and South Korea. Besides offering a dual-language Mandarin programme and being academically selective, emphasis is also placed on competitive sport and excellence in music and the arts.

Headmaster Nick Magnus (*below*) says the College's strength will be its subtle blend of the old and the new and of the East and the West. "Our academic rigour, our commitment to a first-rate Mandarin programme, the Dulwich network and a quality holistic approach to what goes on outside the classroom have all been very well-received so far by the parents of prospective students," he said.



Dulwich College teaches an enhanced form of the English National Curriculum, IGCSE and, pending application to and approval from the IBO, the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The student population will initially be approximately 550, with initial intakes from Pre-Nursery to Year 9 (ages 2 to 14), and will expand yearly through to Year 13.

Master of Cricket and Physical Education teacher, Kevin Shaw (*right*), is currently teaching at Dulwich College in London. "The opportunity to move to Singapore and develop a sports programme at the College that will rival any school in the world is one that my family and I are truly excited about," said Kevin.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the students at Dulwich Singapore competing successfully in major international sports events and inspiring the next generation of athletes, while at the same time ensuring that all students participate at their appropriate level."


Director of Music, Shane O'Shea, and physical education teacher, Kevin Shaw, will support the Headmaster in senior roles. Shane O'Shea (*below*) is Director of Music for all seven Dulwich International schools and is based in Beijing. He established the critically acclaimed Beijing Youth Orchestra, a group of musicians from international schools and Chinese conservatoires that performs together regularly.

"Music and indeed all of the visual and performing arts are an integral part of the development of the child. It offers opportunities for personal growth that no other subject can match, from performing on stage to composing your



own music, being trained how to listen to music correctly and being given the opportunity to lead," said Shane.

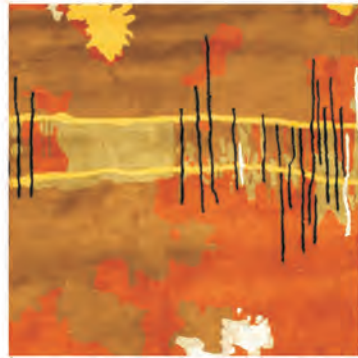
"From the beginning we will have a choir and an orchestra, followed soon by a jazz band, a big band and rock bands for those students interested in different genres," he said. He expects the development of other student-initiated and student-led groups, which he sees as being vital to the life, energy and soul of the College.

There are also opportunities for talented students across the region, with the impending launch of the Dulwich International Music Academy. "This is a one-stop shop where students will gain the ultimate in music education from some of the world's top professors," he added. 

Admissions Office
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Campus (Opening in August 2014)
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That urge to give back something to society often comes to a woman at a time when the demands of her family and career become less compelling, as LISA MULLER found. Now she is using her formidable creative talent to raise funds to help women whose lives are blighted by obstetric fistula. She talked to **Verne Maree** at her Meyer Road apartment.

Liberty ROCKS!

Photography by Ken Tan and Julia Ferrero

How did your interest in fistula begin?

It began when I read a beautifully written novel called *Cutting for Stone*, by Abraham Verghese, about an Indian nun who travels to Ethiopia and gives birth to twins. In it was a description of a fistula patient, and the condition sounded absolutely horrendous. So I started to research it further. Two other wonderful books to read are *Half the Sky*, by Nicholas Kristof; and *The Hospital by the River*, by Dr Catherine Hamlin, who in 1974, with her husband Reg, set up the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

What struck you most about it?

Most people – unless they have some sort of medical background – have either not heard of fistula or have no idea of how it ruins women’s lives. It’s an absolute disgrace how under-reported and neglected the condition is.

Part of the problem is that girls in these remote, undeveloped areas are married off too young, so they give birth in their early teens before they’re properly developed. It has a lot to do with poverty, with gender inequality and with their complete lack of access to obstetric services.

It’s a horrific scenario. Just imagine: After anything from two days to three weeks of agonising labour, your baby dies

Fistula Facts

- Obstetric fistula is a medical condition caused by prolonged or obstructed labour
- Prolonged pressure from the baby’s head causes tissue to die, thus opening up an abnormal passage between the vagina and the bladder or the rectum, allowing urine or faeces to pour out through the vagina.
- Fistula was common in Western countries more than a hundred years ago, but advances in medical care, including Caesarean sections, have changed all that.
- An estimated two million women are affected, mainly in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

inside you. After it has been stillborn or cut out, there is a good chance that you will either die from infection or be left with a fistula. Without the necessary surgical intervention, the continual seepage of urine or faeces means that you’re constantly ill; and because you smell so bad, your husband doesn’t want you near him. In most cases, you’d be thrown out of your village to live alone and in misery.

Liberty Rocks is about fundraising through the design and sale of jewellery. Why did you take that route?

When I got in touch with the Worldwide Fistula Fund (WFF), I realised that I could either make a straightforward money

donation, or choose a more sustainable and ongoing way of contributing.

Also, I thought it would be good if I could do something creative, as I was missing that aspect of the interiors retail business, Double Luck, which I ran for many years and closed down in 2010. What’s more, I love jewellery, and particularly this kind of “tribal chic” look that’s achieved by combining different stones, colours and textures.

The piece around your neck is exquisite. Where is it from?

In fact, this necklace is what got me started! The pendant is an ancient piece of glass, more than two millennia old, and was part of a Roman hoard that



was dug up in Afghanistan. As you can see, it's been oxidised during its many years under the ground, and gradually infused with mineral traces.

I came across this trove of glass shards and beads in Bangkok some time ago, and the style of this necklace is indicative of the kind of thing I'm working on. This one is not actually part of the collection, though; because the pendant is set in heavy gold, it would be too expensive to sell.

How did you go about getting your designs made up?

Through an antique dealer friend here, I met an Afghani jewellery dealer who travels back and forth between Singapore and Kabul. He told me about a group of women in his village who did work for him, so I handed over some materials and kept my fingers crossed. Sure enough, he turned up a few months later with a bag of finished jewellery. They had done an excellent job.

I am now using a team of young girls in Chiang Mai, mostly Burmese, who do fine beadwork; I go to Thailand a lot, as Paul and I are building a house there. We've also found someone to make the gold-plated clasps that finish our pieces off perfectly.

Each necklace is individually designed by me, and each one is different, like a painting. I don't want to do five of the same thing. I love these natural stones; I don't want to get into anything plastic or mass production. I could work with wood, too, or with shell – as long as it's a natural material.

How does Liberty Rocks work?

It's a business that is registered here in Singapore. Any costs incurred come back into the business to be reinvested, and all the profit from each piece of

jewellery is donated

Working in this way gives me the flexibility to support other charities, too. Another cause that's dear to me is Maiti Nepal, which combats human trafficking, especially the sexual slavery of women and young girls. We hold an annual Girly Whirl, where we get together to collect good, gently used designer clothing and accessories to sell at a three-day sale.

How have you been getting the word out?

I'm lucky to have an interesting and varied group of friends, each with their own extensive circles over many communities – Malaysian, French, Japanese, Iranian, Indian, Norwegian, American, English and Australian – and they've all generously come on board to help nurture this new baby of ours.

I'm starting to discover how kind people can be. My sister-in-law Julia Ferrero, a photographer and key support partner, took photos of the first collection and posted them on our Facebook site. Several friends and businesses have offered to sponsor coffee mornings or wine evenings, modelled on the Tupperware party formula.

And recently, a close friend who had a significant birthday asked friends and family not to buy gifts for her, but rather to make a donation to WFF. That raised an amazing \$2,000!

What inspires you?

Colour inspires me enormously; I love browsing through the silks in Arab Street, putting fabrics together to see how the combinations work. These days, my mind is often on necklace designs – inspiration comes from everywhere. Even at night, colours, shapes and textures swirl around in my head, and I have to keep a piece of paper and a pen at my bedside



66 Colour inspires me enormously; I love browsing through the silks in Arab Street, putting fabrics together to see how the combinations work

to sketch ideas as they come up.

Without meaning to, I seem to have followed in my mother's footsteps. She worked as an interior decorator in New Zealand, back in the sixties and early seventies; and then, years later, she opened a very successful little jewellery business in Wellington, selling mainly costume jewellery. Recently, she gave me a bag of stones, including bone, ivory and onyx that had been sitting in her cupboard for over 30 years. That's just waiting to inspire me, too!

What are your goals?

Through the wonderful success of our launch and three-day sale in November, together with some incredibly generous donations, we raised \$14,000 – enough to pay for 30 fistula operations.

My mission for 2014 is to continue donating money from jewellery sales, and also to go to Africa to find out more about the work being done there. We may make a small film about it: I have a daughter who is a filmmaker in Los Angeles, a friend who is a filmmaker in Thailand, and a sister-in-law who is a photographer. Wouldn't that be a wonderful joint effort! 🎬

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Giving flowers in Singapore? What's the point?

Wake up and Smell the Roses!

By Jade McLean

When I lived in England, I wouldn't have dreamt of turning up at a friend's house without a bunch of flowers. In Singapore, I come armed with a bottle of wine instead. No flowers (they don't last long enough) and no chocolates (everyone's on a diet). And so we drink and are merry and we appreciate the Zen of the tall glass vase, full of expensive twigs.

That was until I met Christine Scholtz of Christine's Corner, who has made it entirely possible and, more importantly, economical, to buy flowers (with foliage) as gifts, in the knowledge that they will still look good weeks, and even months, later.

When I walk into Christine's lovely old Chinese house in Changi, the smell of fresh flowers permeates

the room. I notice a vase of beautiful red roses on the table.

"They're 15 months old," Christine tells me. "Although I tell my customers that they'll last for six months, if you care for them properly they can easily last up to a year."

Imported from South Africa, Christine's own country of origin, her roses are painstakingly preserved by hand, using an eco-friendly, non-harmful chemical. When I say "preserved", I don't mean dried brown stalks with brittle petals; I mean naturally green leaves and still-soft petals – real flowers, but ones that will last hundreds of times longer than fresh ones.

I admit I'm surprised and impressed at how this effect has been attained, and in my mind I start chalking up friends who might like some as a birthday offering. Wouldn't your wife be impressed to receive a dozen of these on Valentine's Day and find them alive and blooming months later?

These natural alternatives to artificial flowers not only have a long lifespan,

but are also practically maintenance-free. Whatever you do, don't water them. They just need to be in a moderate environment – not too hot and not too cold – and treated with love: no squeezing or excessive touching. In short, if you leave them alone they will be happy.

Having been in Singapore for six-and-a-half years with her husband and two young boys (aged eight and 11), Christine brought some of the preserved roses home from South Africa after a visit with her family, to see how they fared in our humid climate.

"Eight months later, the flowers still looked beautiful. I have so much fun seeing people's reactions to them. They're not what you expect, are they?"

Christine's naturally preserved roses come with medium or large heads, long or short stems and in a variety of colours. 🌹

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BYE BYE BABY WEIGHT

By Amy Brook-Partridge

For mere mortals not genetically built to snap back into our size 10, 12 or whatever, the months after having a baby can be a heady mix of bonding, feeding, sleeping (or not), and often vain attempts to lose the excess weight. Here's our overview of suitable postnatal exercise options to lose it the healthy way.

For the best chances of losing weight healthily and safely after birth, good habits should begin during pregnancy. Dr Jasmine Mohd, an obstetrician and gynaecologist at WC Cheng & Associates at Thomson Medical Centre, suggests, as a rough gauge, a weight gain of between 11kg and 15kg during the pregnancy.

"Weight gain should be gradual over the course of the pregnancy; an average of 1kg to 2 kg per month. If you gain a



large amount, say 4kg to 5kg over a few weeks in the third trimester, I would suggest checking for pre-eclampsia – pregnancy-related high blood pressure that causes significant water retention."

Dr Jasmine recommends eating healthily, taking no more than an extra 300 to 400 calories a day, avoiding foods with empty calories such as fast food, anything deep-fried, oily, or containing excessive amounts of cheese, sugar or cream, and opting for

more fruit, vegetables and lean protein.

"Regular exercise three times a week or so should moderate the weight gain, for example gym work with resistance machines, swimming, brisk walking, yoga or Pilates."

Excessive weight gain during pregnancy can cause the mother to develop gestational diabetes, which in turn can result in very large babies and a higher likelihood of caesarean sections.

Before you start your weight loss plan...

Don't start too soon. Give your body time to recover from giving birth, and allow yourself time to get used to being mum to a newborn, whether it's for the first or fifth time.

Take it slowly, especially if you're breastfeeding. Restricting your diet can affect your milk supply.

Don't set yourself unattainable goals: be realistic. For many of us, our post-pregnancy body will never quite match our pre-pregnancy shape, so it's important to embrace what we end up with.

Group activities

Only embark on an exercise plan after you have received your obstetrician's blessing. The next step is deciding what kind of fitness programme will suit you. For first-time mums, group exercise can be an ideal way to lose the weight and make some new friends in the process. These types of classes often encourage you to bring your baby along, and some even incorporate the stroller into the exercise programme.

Owner of Ooberfit, Sam Blakey, currently runs two Baby Boot Camp classes in the Botanic Gardens, on Monday and Friday mornings. She focuses on a 30-second active period, followed by a 30-second rest period, carried on throughout a one-hour session. "Having a small group of six to eight people allows me to work the mums at their own level, slowly building their fitness levels and areas such as their abdominals."

Hayley Andersen, an Ooberfit client and mum to one-year-old Harry, started Baby Bootcamp six months ago. "I joined eight weeks after arriving here from the UK, and was looking to lose some weight, and to get fitter and stronger. At first I attended once a week, as that was all I could manage, but later I went twice a week. Harry sits and watches us jumping around, and it's been a great way to make friends. I'm now at my pre-baby weight, and I'm building up my strength, which had been quite low since I had Harry."

The personal approach

If the thought of a group session is enough to have you reaching for another slice of cake, personal training sessions could be the answer. "One-to-one sessions ensure proper monitoring of progress and execution of exercises," says personal trainer Kevin Chiak. "They also allow for a more



Group Exercise

Bloom'n Fit's Strolltastic classes in the Botanic Gardens are a chance to get fit, lose weight, tone up and have fun with your baby and like-minded mums. Workouts include cardio, body resistance and resistance band circuits.

Ozfit offers a wide range of classes, including SheFit, exclusively for women, in the Botanic Gardens and at a new location in Bishan Park. The classes combine plenty of cardio, interval, strength and resistance band training to build long and lean muscles.

UFIT runs its Mums and Bubs bootcamp-style class on Monday mornings in the Botanic Gardens. It also runs other bootcamps in locations such as Holland Village and Fort Canning, and has recently introduced more indoor classes.





Kettlebell training can help you burn fat and calories

Feel the Burn: In one minute, you could burn...

Push ups: 6 calories (done moderately)

Jogging: 8 calories

Jumping jacks: 10 calories (vigorously)

Kettlebell training: 20 calories in a minute of Kettlebell swinging, according to personal trainer Alvin Francis Fok of Alvin Fitness. It provides high-intensity, interval-style training, and is an effective way to lose fat.

(All calorie counts are estimated and depend on individual weight.)

tailored programme that is critical to progress and safety, particularly as new mothers' fitness levels can be affected during pregnancy." Although Kevin will happily carry out home sessions, he recommends gym visits to make the most of your programme. "Included in the training fees is the use of our well-equipped gym on Joo Chiat Road, where you will learn more skills with the equipment."

Kevin recommends three one-hour sessions a week as ideal, but also notes that success will come if four main criteria are satisfactorily met: intensity,

frequency, type of exercise and diet. Most of Kevin's exercises for new mums will not exceed an exertion level of 7 out of 10, and weight-bearing exercises will be restricted to 20 to 25 repetitions. "Most will be isolation exercises to concentrate on the hot spots, namely hips, legs, upper back and triceps, but all other body parts will be worked out too."

Importantly, Kevin advises all clients to manage their expectations, and not be too ambitious. "Baby steps should be advocated so that the client does not feel too much stress, which would get in the way of the fitness regime."

Turning to technology

Sometimes, no matter how stringent the diet and exercise plan it's still hard to shift weight from specific areas of the body. For many women, these are the stomach, thighs and buttocks, which can be altered noticeably by pregnancy. The HYPOXI method is a studio-based exercise programme using equipment that focuses on a combination of compression, vacuuming and fat burning. It encourages blood supply to the lower part of the body, where trouble spots can be targeted and fat burnt.

The equipment is safe for new mums, but the Dermology machine is not recommended for breastfeeding mothers: it applies high and low pressure to the skin, which could affect milk supply. The studio carries out a body analysis before you start the programme, and ensures you have clearance from your doctor.

"This is for anyone interested in reducing the size of their stomach, waist and buttocks," says studio manager Margaret Cermak. "They've usually done what they can at home, and now it's time for them to come to us and kick-start things again."

Studio trainer, Tanya Strinich, is a mother of three children who used the HYPOXI method after her second and third pregnancies before she began working for the company. "I was one of those people who would put on 25kg

during pregnancy, and although I'd lost the bulk of the weight after my second, I was getting frustrated and finding that gym work only helped up to a certain point. I also found I had a tummy that I didn't have with my first, and I had saddlebags from hell. Using HYPOXI helped reduce my waist, stomach and thighs, and I recently bought a pair of jeans without realising they were two sizes smaller than what I used to fit into." **31**



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ARE YOU COVERED?



The start of a new year is a good time to reassess the important issue of insurance and how well you and your family are covered. With this in mind, we chatted with British expat and financial planner ANDREW TALBOT, whose job at Globaleye includes dispensing insurance advice.

What course of action would you recommend for a complete overhaul of insurance cover for 2014?

We have a number of free e-guides on our website which show you where to start and the types of cover available. We also have financial calculators to help you understand the amount of cover you require. Just as importantly, make an appointment with us!

Many Expat Living readers run small businesses. Can Globaleye help with the commercial side of insurance?

We do put into place insurance for the key people in a business; this is to protect the business should something happen to them. There's also shareholder protection for businesses with partners or a small number of shareholders that can protect a family's interest in its business.

Your company's personal insurance options include income protection and critical illness cover. Can you run us through the basics of those?

Income protection will provide an income to cover expenses in the event

of a disability due to illness or accident, while a medical insurance plan will pay just for the hospital bills.

Critical illness cover provides a lump sum payment on diagnosis of a critical illness. In general, if something terrible happens, expats tend to leave Singapore and return to their home countries; the money provides the ability to do that and peace of mind about finances.

Any other advice about insurance or financial planning?

Our process is based on the internationally recognised certified financial planning certificate. A lot of this is common sense, though: save for future events and make sure your protection is adequate; and don't risk a lot for a little.

What does your job entail on a day-to-day basis?

A lot of paperwork! The financial services industry is dominated by it. In the modern era, and especially in Singapore, there is a huge number of regulations to follow for the advice you're giving to be compliant. But it's a very

positive development, and it ensures that only the best possible advice is given to clients here.

As a financial planner, I give advice to a predominantly expat audience, on areas including mortgages, insurance, retirement, education fees and tax. The services can be quite broad and it depends what each individual is looking for. Based on specific requirements and areas of concern, I provide tailored strategic advice and direction.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I've got a 20-month-old daughter, so after playing football as much as I'm allowed, most of my time is spent on family-related activities.

Where has your expat trail led you?

I was in Kuala Lumpur for three years before living here for the past four. I prefer Singapore; it's a more dynamic and advanced city with a better quality of life.

What do you miss about the UK?

The change in seasons! Nothing beats sitting by a roaring fireplace in an English country pub with a good pint of local ale.

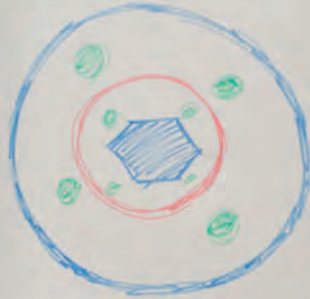
Any New Year's resolutions?

It's been a while since we've been skiing and snowboarding, so it would be good to build them into the travel plans.

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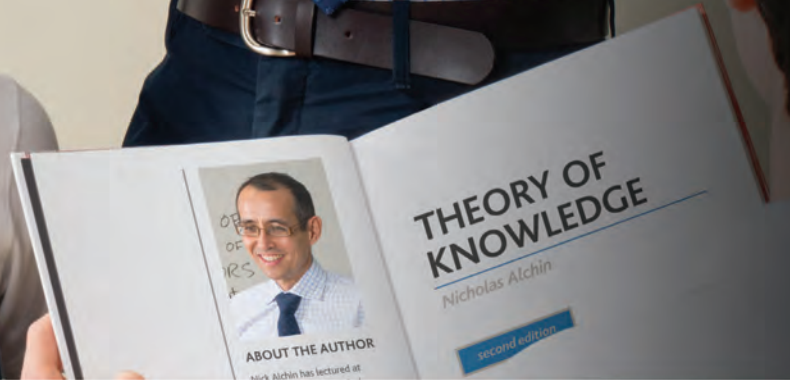
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Nice Wheels

Singapore might have a great public transport network, but nothing beats a car for getting around, particularly if you have children. We ask three *Expat Living* readers about their current leasing arrangements.

Rob Mason, British

Type of car: Maroon Nissan Latio

Reason for choice: Safety and cost

Best features: Spacious, fuel-efficient and reliable

Frequency of use: Week: My wife drives the car to and from work and for general errands. Weekend: Leisure activities such as church and kids' activities

Rental deal: Flexible; we typically take the car for a three- or six-month period as it's more cost-effective than a rolling monthly contract

Service: The service at Evergreen is very good. The manager Andrew is hands-on and helpful, and when we go on holiday, they service the car for us. If there are any problems, the response time is quick

Singapore driving: Everything is close by and congestion isn't too bad (compared with London!); we do find the driving style quite aggressive in Singapore, though



Favourite local road: The winding road to Mount Faber – beautiful views

Previous car: BMW 530i M-Sport

Dream car: Porsche Carrera

Evergreen Rent A Car
159 Sin Ming Road
#01-07 Amtech Building
6459 0990 | evergreenrentacar.com

Steve & Justine Blakeman, British

Type of car: 2011 Land Rover Discovery 4 HSE (colour: Bournville Brown)

Reason for choice: Blend of versatility, practicality and luxury

Best features: Flexibility of having seven seats; brilliant air suspension – it's such a smooth ride; and the powerful, quiet and frugal V6 diesel engine

Frequency of use: Week: Justine does the school run and takes the girls to ballet, gym, dance classes and so on. (Dad gets a taxi to work or the airport!) Weekend: Taking Baxter to the beach or bikes to East Coast Park

Rental deal: Two-year all-inclusive lease through Wearnes

Service: Hazel is incredibly helpful; she also found a buyer for our Volvo XC90. Mr Tan has organised regular servicing, including collection from our home and a quality replacement vehicle

Singapore driving: Clear signs, well-maintained roads, proximity to everything; tree pruning and the



occasional crazy cabbie can be a pain when you're in a hurry

Favourite local road: The quiet roads around Mandai, or anywhere other than the PIE or the AYE

Wearnes Automotive Leasing
45 Leng Kee Road
6876 5063 | wearnesleasing.com



Peter Strelb, Czech

Type of car: Black BMW 3-series, 2013

Reason for choice: Great value for money

Best features: Latest technology, eight-speed gearbox, quality in the detail, German-made

Frequency of use: Every day, up to 500km of driving in a week

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PREDICTIONS FOR THE YEAR of the Horse



What's in store for 2014, the Year of the Horse? Singaporean feng shui master and Chinese astrologer CLARICE CHAN gives her practical advice.

1. Overview

There are two major elements in The Year of the Yang Wood Horse: Wood and Fire (with some hidden Earth). According to the law of Chinese metaphysics, these elements are in a productive cycle and thus 2014 is termed an auspicious year. People who belong to the Horse sign are said to be friendly, easygoing, elegant and popular, with an attractive nature. They usually have a large following of friends mainly due to their good sense of humour and ability to instantly put people at ease.

2. Relationships

The Horse is the seventh zodiac sign in the Chinese Astrology system and is one of the four "Flowers of Romance". The year that carries a Flower of Romance is known to induce social activities and relationships; we can therefore expect an increase in the number of engagements and weddings. On the negative side, Flowers of Romance are known to trigger sex-related crimes and scandals.

3. Health

In this strong Fire year, the parts of the body that will be most affected are the kidneys, the heart and the blood; heart and blood belong to the Fire element, while the kidneys and reproductive organs belong to the Water element. Other vulnerable organs are those belonging to the Metal element: skin, lungs, nose and large intestines. If you have weakness related to these organs, take extra care of your health.

4. Babies

While 31 January 2014 is the official first day of Chinese New Year, according to the Lunar Calendar, the year of the Wood Horse only begins on 4 February, at 6.03am. If your baby is born on or after 6.03am on 4 February, he or she will belong to the Yang Wood Horse sign.

5. Money

The strong Fire of this Horse year will help to drive the economy forward and bring wealth and prosperity to many countries. The property market will continue to be busy. However, do note that the Water element is absent in 2014: as Water is the wealth element for Earth, money in the property sector will not be as lucrative as in previous years.

Fire industries generally refer to oil and gas, and the Metal element is the wealth element for them. Metal is also absent this year, so it's likely that there will be stiffer competition and profitability will be down.

Metal industries such as hi-tech companies and automobile companies can have a productive year, but this does not necessarily equate to making huge profits.

The stock market will be filled with movement and enthusiasm, but the banking industry, classified as a Metal industry, will continue to face stiff competition.


The medical industry, including dentistry and dermatology, will do well.

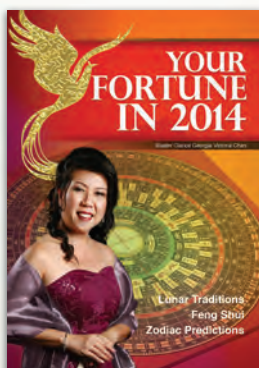
While communications companies, restaurants, bars and the entertainment sector will go through a time of growth, competition this year will be very stiff and expenditure will be high.

Water industries will see a profitable time as Fire is their Wealth element and this is the strongest element this year: therefore marine, shipping, air and sea travel and transportation will benefit.

Wood industries such as agriculture, textiles, fashion, wood-furnishing, education, and retail publishing will have a decent year.

Overall, 2014 will be an exciting year with an abundance of joy and possibilities, and we should use this time to build solid foundations. Wishing everyone a blessed and prosperous Year of the Yang Wood Horse!

For more tips and predictions, get a copy of Clarice's new book, *Your Fortune in 2014*, available on newsstands and in the magazine section of major bookstores. claricegvchan.com 





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Thanks for the Rain!

Rather wet weather didn't dampen spirits at the 2013 Great Eastern Women's Race – if anything, it was a blessing, whether you were doing 21km, 10km or 5km. Apart from the usual complimentary bananas and bottles of 100 Plus, runners were also treated to free ice cream, muffins, hot dogs and more. The longest queue was for Nando's flame-grilled chicken, though!



Community Activity

Grade 6 students at EtonHouse International School, Broadrick, have partnered with KK Women's and Children's Hospital in the lead-up to Christmas for a book collection drive for out-patients and a session of carolling at the hospital.



Swimming Masterclass

Stamford American International School invited Olympic Champion Roland Schoeman - arguably South Africa's greatest swimmer - to visit the school and host a special masterclass with students recently. Sixty students aged from 9 to 14 took part in the class with Mr Schoeman who was in Singapore to compete in the FINA Swimming World Cup.



Super 7s

The 66th SCC International Rugby 7s was another great success, with teams from around the world converging on the Padang to play some tough and exciting rugby. A star-studded Asia Pacific Dragons team won the cup with a big win over the Penguins in the final. Expat Living's inflatable oversized rugby balls were also a hit!



We Were There!

Run for Hope, an informal annual event held to raise awareness and funds for cancer research, gets bigger and better every year. On Sunday, 17 November, unprecedented crowds assembled in comfortably cloudy conditions at Marina Bay Promontory, to run either 3.5km or 10km over a lovely course that included the spectacular Marina Barrage.



Cambodia Focus

Jamie Amelio, founder and CEO of Caring for Cambodia (CFC), spoke to a crowded auditorium at the Singapore American School. Following an introduction by High School club co-presidents Binah Parekh and Sam Devine, the audience enjoyed a candid account of Jamie's personal story, her dedication to education and her journey to create CFC. She also signed copies of her new book, *Graced With Orange: How Caring for Cambodia Changed Lives, Including My Own*.



Around the World

Students and parents of White Lodge travelled around the world in November as they celebrated cultural diversity at the preschool's annual United Nations Day. Children from White Lodge's eight campuses across Singapore got to visit booths representing 23 different countries. Around 300 families attended and participated this year, enjoying cultural performances and more.



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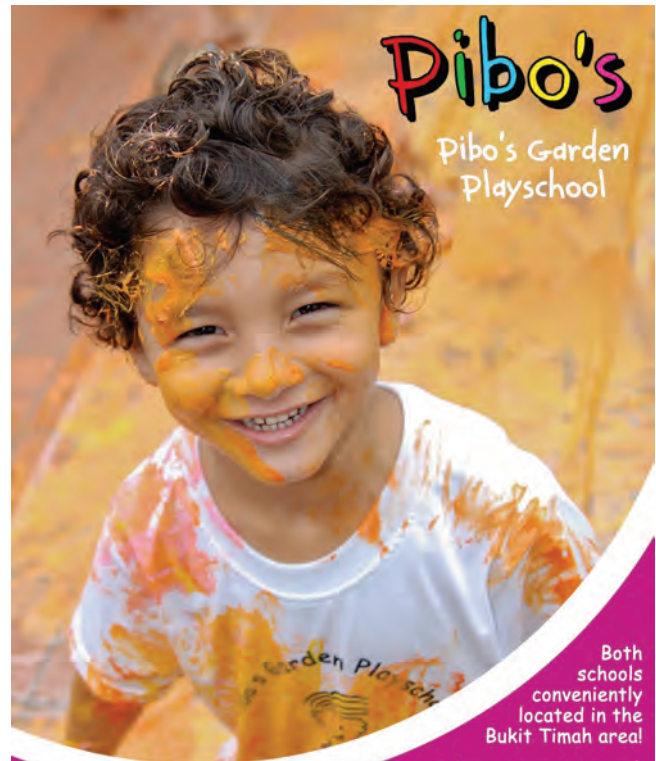
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Arts & Leisure



ON THE STAGE

Live music, theatre and dance to start the New Year with a bang

LIVE PREVIEW



Live music

Eighteen bands hit the stage at the fourth **Laneway Festival**, with Scottish alternative electronic band Chvrches, US group Haim, English singer-songwriter James Blake, and Singapore experimental rock band The Observatory among those in the outstanding line-up. Organisers say it's shaping up to be the biggest event yet. While 4,000 attended the inaugural festival in 2011, the same number of tickets were sold in the first ten days of sales for the 2014 event. **The Laneway Festival is on 25 January at The Meadow, Gardens By The Bay. Tickets from Sistic. singapore.lanewayfestival.com**



Theatre for Kids

Nine stellar plays are in the line-up of this year's **KidsFest**; a smorgasbord of fabulous kids' theatre that is bound to send imaginations into overdrive. We can't decide which one to see, so we might go to three or four. They include perennial favourite *The Gruffalo* (15 – 21 January), *What the Ladybird Heard* (21 January – 1 February), two *Horrible Histories*, including *Awful Egyptians* (31

January – 8 February), and *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (23 – 26 January). **At Drama Centre Theatre, 100 Victoria Street and DBS Arts Centre, Merbau Road. Tickets from Sistic. kidsfest.com.sg**

Fringe Festival Singapore

Celebrating a decade of performance art, this programme is jam-packed with 15 works from six countries. Highlights include Henrik Ibsen's iconic play *An Enemy of the People*, which depicts one man's struggle to hold his beliefs against the majority; *Three Fingers Below the Knee*, which examines how censorship tried to control art during 40 years of dictatorship in Portugal; and the specially commissioned *The Mountain*, exploring themes of climate change, society and identity. Catch these and lots more from **8 to 19 January at venues across town. Tickets are \$19 each from Sistic. Check out the full programme at www.singaporefringe.com.**



The Ant and The Grasshopper

A bright, breezy musical based on Aesop's famous fable, with colourful characters, puppets and catchy songs. Perfect for ages three to 12. See it from **26 February to 15 March at the historic Jubilee Hall at Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Road. Tickets from Sistic. itheatre.org**



My Fair Lady

Head back to Edwardian London and meet Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl, and the snobbish Professor Henry Higgins, a phoneticist who wagers that he can turn Eliza into a "proper lady" in three months. One for the whole family. **From 11 to 23 February at Marina Bay Sands Theatres – Sands Theatre. Tuesday to Sunday at 8pm; Saturday and Sunday at 2pm. Tickets from www.marinabaysands.com.**



LightSeeker, an original production of Resorts World Sentosa, tells the riveting story of the power of choice when one is stuck at the crossroads of fear versus freedom.

Seeking the Light



The plot is brought to life against a backdrop of vibrant and joyous celebrations, memorable melodies, epic battles and heart-stopping live-action stunts. With songs written by acclaimed Singaporean songwriter, Dick Lee, and an international cast, including West End performers, this is a musical not to be missed.

In the fantasy world of LightSeeker, a terrifying warrior called the General pursues a precious energy that will make his ominous Emperor more powerful. His quest leads him to Nova, an enigmatic girl who seems to have the ability to create The Light.

A battle for The Light ensues, and he captures Nova and tries to force her to conjure up The Light. He soon discovers that not only is he unable to control her, her presence calls into question the only world he has ever known. He must make the ultimate choice: be secure in the dark world he knows, or embrace a new world with The Light.

Andrea Teo, Executive Producer and Creative Director, says, "LightSeeker is a musical that audiences at different stages of life will relate to. On the one hand, this musical is about the choice between fear and freedom. On another, it is a metaphor for the corporate world and its power struggles. It is a fantasy fable with spectacular visuals, action sequences and theatrical effects that will appeal to the whole family.



LightSeeker runs until 23 March 2014 at Resorts World Theatre. Purchase tickets (from \$48) at Resorts World Theatre or from www.lightseeker.com.sg or SISTIC.

ON THE SCREEN

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



SMALL SCREEN



Art Attack

Unleash your inner Picasso with the return of Disney's *Art Attack*, the award-winning programme that introduced millions of children to the joy of art. Don't worry if your clay model dog looks like a mouse, all you need is lots of creative ideas and loads of enthusiasm. **Weekends from 11 January at 9.30am on Disney Channel (StarHub Channel 312).**

Get Fresh With Al Brown

Travel New Zealand with local chef Al Brown to discover the country's distinctive selection of fresh produce. Then watch him create a meal that captures the quintessential flavour of each region. **9 January at 9.30pm on Asian Food Channel (StarHub Channel 435).**



Behind the Five-Stars

Ever wanted to know what happens behind the scenes at a five-star hotel? For the first time in Claridge's long history, this famously discreet hotel in the heart of London's Mayfair opened its doors to documentary cameras. *Inside Claridge's* documents a year upstairs and downstairs, following guests and staff, some of whom have worked there for 30 years. **13 January at 9.50pm on BBC Knowledge (StarHub Channel 407).**



Closer to home, take a look at what goes on behind the glittering facade and fancy-pants shops of Marina Bay Sands. Singapore's biggest integrated resort and the world's most expensive casino needs a small army to keep it ship-shape. But who are the people that keep this landmark buzzing around the clock? **Marina Bay Sands 24/7 airs on 31 January at 8pm on Bio (StarHub Channel 404).**

True Detective

A new eight-part series that follows two Louisiana detectives whose lives entwine during their 17-year hunt for a killer. *True Detective* stars Matthew McConaughey, Woody Harrelson and Michelle Monaghan. It premieres just a week after its US debut. **19 January at 9pm on HBO (StarHub Channel 601).**



BIG SCREEN

We haven't seen the preview yet, but this one could require a box of tissues. It's based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning play, but the cast is reason enough to go and see the awkwardly named **August: Osage County**. Meryl Streep, Dermot Mulroney, Julia Roberts, Juliette Lewis, Benedict Cumberbatch and Ewan McGregor star in this story about the strong-willed women of the Weston family, who gather at the Oklahoma house they grew up in after a family crisis. **Opens 23 January at Golden Village cinemas.**





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ON THE WALL



January is a big month for art in Singapore with exhibitions galore

Art Ablaze

Singapore has gone bonkers for art this month. Here's a quick wrap of a visual feast for all tastes and budgets:

- **Art Stage Singapore** from 16 to 19 January at Marina Bay Sands. artstagesingapore.com
- **Art Apart** at ParkRoyal Hotel, Pickering Street from 17 to 19 January. artapartfair.com
- **Singapore Biennale** until 16 February at venues around Bras Basah Road. singaporebiennale.org

Plus, the new **Prudential Art Awards** is an exhibition of contemporary Asian artists' works, recognising excellence in photography, painting, sculpture, installation, and digital and video art. Five category winners will be announced at an awards ceremony, the overall winner to be exhibited at the Saatchi Gallery in London this summer. See the exhibition from 17 January to 5 February at Crescent Room, Level 2, Suntec City. Free. prudentialeyeawards.com



Human Frailty

(30 January to 17 February)

French photographer Alain Soldeville's portraits of the transgendered community in Bugis in the 1980s show a largely forgotten side of Singapore. Explaining the photos, Soldeville says, "Looking back, I believe I meant those photos to be portraits of these people I had come to consider friends, wishing to show their fragility, their humanity, rather than documenting a situation news-style." Visit the exhibition from 30 January to 17 February and attend a free talk by the photographer on 29 January from 6pm to 7pm. Objectifs, 56A Arab Street. 6293 9782. objectifs.com.sg



Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

(23 to 25 May)

Hot on the heels of the success of the Affordable Art Fair in November, the organisers have announced another event from 23 to 25 May this year. The 2013 show was the biggest yet, with 17,800 visitors, 101 galleries and \$4.9 million in sales across the mammoth 5,000-square-metre exhibition space. affordableartfair.com/singapore

Off Shore

(7 February to 1 March)

All art roads lead to Perth, Australia in February, when the city hosts the month-long Perth International Arts Festival. And with airfares so cheaply available, why not join in? An incredible 1,000 performers will take part: from great Russian theatre to world-class Israeli dance, from Man Booker Prize winners to Tony Award winners, from multi-player video theatre to a life-size bouncy-castle Stonehenge. Promising to both disrupt and transform Perth, the Festival spills across unique venues and outdoor spaces from 7 February to 1 March. perthfestival.com.au



Zaw Win Pe

Motley & Me 16 Jan – 15 Feb, 2014



Zaw Win Pe, Lost of The Coldness, 2013, 168 x 214 cm, oil on canvas

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ON THE PAGE



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

The Hunt (2nd edition)

Bernie Baskin and Jalean Wong

Gatehouse Publishing | 128 pages



Within days of bringing the second edition of *The Hunt* back to my apartment, it mysteriously began to get dog-eared. Not messy dog-eared from overuse, but neatly dog-eared, with precisely folded-down triangles on the corners of certain pages.

Either we had a poltergeist or someone else on the premises had taken a shine to the book. The fact that the articles on the dog-eared pages were almost

all about clothing, shoe and bag boutiques led me swiftly to the suspect.

At which point the book just, well, disappeared.

"You haven't seen my copy of *The Hunt* anywhere, have you?" I asked my wife.

"Sorry?" came the reply, and I could tell she was using "sorry" not because she didn't hear the question but because

she was buying time while working out her answer.

"*The Hunt*. You know – useful little handbook about Singapore's cool neighbourhood restaurants and shops. Divided into sections on Tanjong Pagar, Bukit Timah, East Coast, and so on. 128 pages and small enough to fit into any handbag. That one."

"Ah. Yes. I know it. I took it to work."

"Why?"

"I wanted to ask my colleagues if they knew a couple of places it recommends."

Then I asked her if I could get it back. After all, the book has info on dozens of very awesome cafés and eateries whose food I'm keen to try.

"Sure, I guess."

Sounded fairly non-committal to me.

Here's a tip: if you get yourself a copy of *The Hunt* – and I suggest you do – keep close tabs on it.

Shamus Sillar

My Singapore Lover

Judy Chapman

Monsoon | 254 pages



Sara arrives in Singapore on a magazine assignment to research and write about the attraction between Western men and Asian women. This she does so well that the head of the publishing house gives her a chance to immerse herself in the corporate world and make a lot of money. Now for the big question: will she lose her "intuition, femininity and grace" in this dog-eats-dog world?

Aussie Judy Chapman is a former editor-in-chief of Spa Asia, and this is her first novel. I didn't like the self-obsessed Sara, but then again, phrases such as "I radiated loveliness" are not calculated to endear a protagonist to the reader. What's more, Sara's relationship with a rich, tall, dark,

handsome (and married) Indonesian Chinese man didn't quite gel for me; neither did the coyly vague and rather repetitive sex scenes.

(And – spoiler alert! – can you imagine a man at the end of a relationship saying: "You have taught me to be vulnerable again. What more could a man ask for?" Puh-leeze.)

The plot switches confusingly back and forth in time, in a way that might work better in a movie. And the interesting back story that emerges to partially explain Sara's racketsy behaviour comes rather late; generally, I would have given up before then. So, why did I read through to the end?

Well, I'm a sucker for anything set in Singapore, and this book is peppered with descriptions of places such the Four Seasons Hotel, Café le Caire in Arab Street, the Hyatt's Martini Bar, the Marriott's Crossroads Café, Little India, Club Street and more. If you love the Singapore life and enjoy the *Eat, Pray, Love* genre, this book might just be worth a go.

Verne Maree

I Ate Tiong Bahru

Stephen Black

Book Merah | 125 pages

Get it from Books Actually in Tiong Bahru or in e-book form from Amazon, Kobo or Xinxii



When I say this is a delightful little book, I don't just mean it's a slim volume: it's literally the size of your hand, so small (and white) that it's apt to get lost in the bedclothes.

The author is an American artist and writer who has lived in the Art Deco Tiong Bahru estate for around three of his 11 years in Singapore, and he describes IATB as a "fact-based, lyrical documentary".

Part stream of consciousness, part poetry, part historical research, it's a deeply personal yet wholly accessible journey that apparently follows the route of the old Hock Lee Bus #6, which entered the estate at Tiong Poh Road,

eventually skirting the Great World Amusement Park (now a mall, of course) before returning to Chinatown. That cost just five cents.

Along the way, Stephen uncovers Tiong Bahru's 1930s origins as Singapore's first public housing estate; immerses himself in its famous food as he breakfasts on half-boiled eggs with *kaya* toast or dines on porridge, *mee pok* or *yong tau foo*; and reflects with some pain on astronomic price rises, a creeping loss of authenticity, and the fall of the area to yuppies, expats and the super-rich.

Cute as the presentation of this diminutive book may be, I'd like to see it in a larger format – and perhaps illustrated with the kind of gritty yet dreamy photography that we saw in the same author's *Bus Stopping* a couple of years ago.

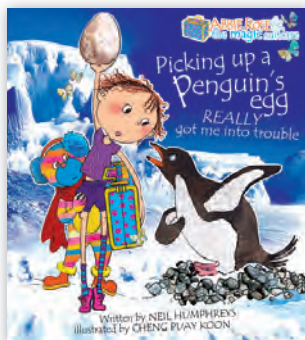
Verne Maree

MAINLY FOR CHILDREN

Picking Up a Penguin's Egg REALLY Got Me Into Trouble

Written by Neil Humphreys; illustrated by Cheng Puay Koon

Marshall Cavendish Children | 28 pages



This is the third in the popular *Abbie Rose & the Magic Suitcase* series by Singapore-based British expat Neil Humphreys. Four-year-old Abbie's suitcase has magical powers, which means she can travel to far-flung destinations with her sidekick bear Billie.

The first thing that caught my five-year-old and three-year-old's attention was the puzzle that came in the three-book boxed set. This gave them plenty to fight over, before I finally managed to grab their attention away from said puzzle and draw them into the book.

Abbie Rose journeys to the South Pole, where she mistakenly picks up a penguin egg and soon finds out this was not the right thing to do. The storyline and style of writing were just right to keep my elder child entertained, while the younger one was most drawn by the lively and colourful pictures of animals. There were giggles at mentions of Daddy's sweaty, cheesy feet, soon repeated ad nauseam when their own daddy came home.

I have also been instructed that a magic suitcase is now on my eldest's birthday gift list, meaning a big thumbs-up for the book itself, but a minor struggle for me in the gift shop. 🐧

Amy Brook-Partridge

SCENE AROUND TOWN

Recent events, openings & parties



Wild Bean-Sprout

Chockfull of great voices, local humour and satirical digs, Wild Rice's edgy Christmas panto, *Jack and the Bean-Sprout*, had us rolling in the aisles. A talented chorus of young stars from the company's First Stage Programme stole the show.



Clockwise from top left: Adrian Pang, Ivan Heng and Tracie Pang; Adrian and Tracie Pang and family; Neo Swee Lin, Jon Pye, Ng Mui Hwa and Glen Goei; Janice Koh and kids; Tony Trickett and Lim Chiwen; Judee Tan and Siti Khalijah; Dwayne Tan, Jo Tan, Rayann Condy; Ivan Heng and Tony Trickett; Aubrey Mellor and guest with Ian Bailie; Glen Goei and Brendon Fernandez; Judee Tan, Rayann Condy, Brendon Fernandez and Paul Searles



Art and Champagne

Art lovers and social bodies alike thronged the 2013 Affordable Art Fair at the F1 Pit Building. At the private viewing event, spirits were cheered and wallets loosened, no doubt, by a glass or two of Mumm.



From top left: Artist Marcel Heinan and Dawn Mok; Geri Archer and Karina Zabih; Jon Reading and artist Ketna Patel; artist Patricia Cabaleiro de Meuser with Patrick and Monica Donaldson; Tania Thomas and Stacey Halliwell; Vidhya Gnana Gouresan and artist P. Gnana



Swiss Hit

At the Swiss ambassadorial residence, HE Thomas Kupfer and his wife, Fiorella, hosted the launch of *The Swiss in Singapore*, a beautifully bound coffee-table volume, written by Andreas Zangger. Guest of honour was Singapore's roving cultural ambassador, Professor Tommy Koh.

Clockwise: Prof. Tommy Koh, Andreas Zangger and HE Thomas Kupfer; Oliviero Bottinelli, Danielle Zuellig, Lindsay Davis and Antoine Monod; Emi Georgieva, Deputy Head of Mission with Rebekka Aicher; Christa Wüthrich with Christoph Bühler and Désirée Wappler of the Swiss Embassy; HE Thomas Kupfer, Peggy Kek and Charles Orwin

Melbourne Cup

Now in its sixth year, the Melbourne Cup Charity Luncheon 2013 was held at the Intercontinental Hotel and again hosted by Tiffany Maughan, Melissa Connell and their crew of committee members. The day included Champagne, fashions, prizes for best dressed and best hat and more, plus \$20,500 dollars was raised for Ronald McDonald House.



Tremendous Trivia

The Great AIS Quiz Night at the Hollandse Club was hosted by the New Zealand Chamber of Commerce and the Australian International School. It was a night of fun rivalry, challenges and competition, with AIS proving victorious, edging out the boys from ANZ. Winners walked away with New Zealand treats, wine and vouchers from Fitness Buffet, Showbiz Asia and City Nomads Singapore.



From left: Dr Nick Miller (AIS School Principal) with Sumin Ahn and with Glenn Kane; The AIS Executive Team: Andre Casson, Dr Nick Miller, Katrina Bracken, Andrew Mowat, Tony Gravina and Claire Ettinger

Polish Painting

Sabiana Paoli Art Gallery hosted Polish-born figurative painter Robert Latos, who welcomed guests at the opening of his first exhibition in Singapore.



Silk Screened

Deborah McKellar has held her third solo exhibition at John Erdos Home. Singapore Silk Screened presented a collection of artworks focusing on the city's architecture, people and everyday life. Deborah's textile artworks are characterised by custom-designed silk-screened images and printed patterns with bold colours, layers of stitching and fabric remnants.

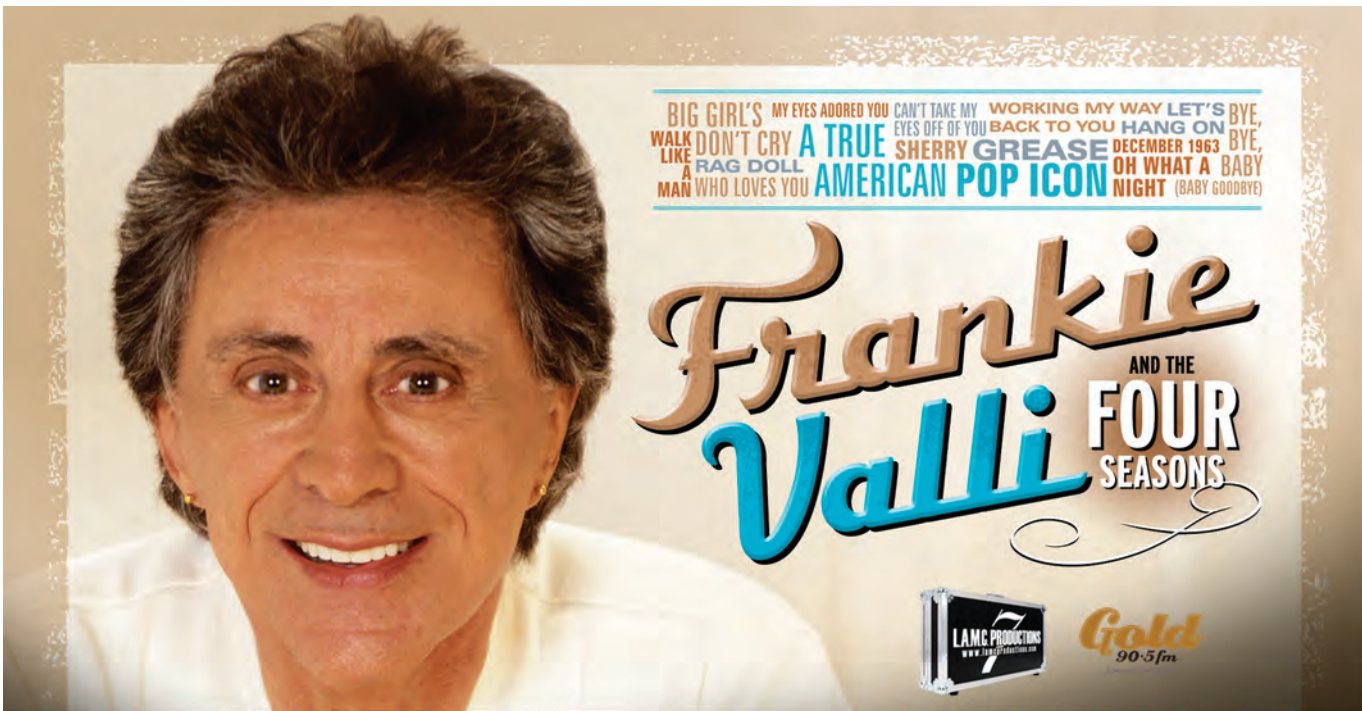
From left: Deborah McKellar with Zinola and Zoey Moodley; Mr Thng, Adeline Thng and Edwin Lim; Deborah McKellar and Olivia Sequeira



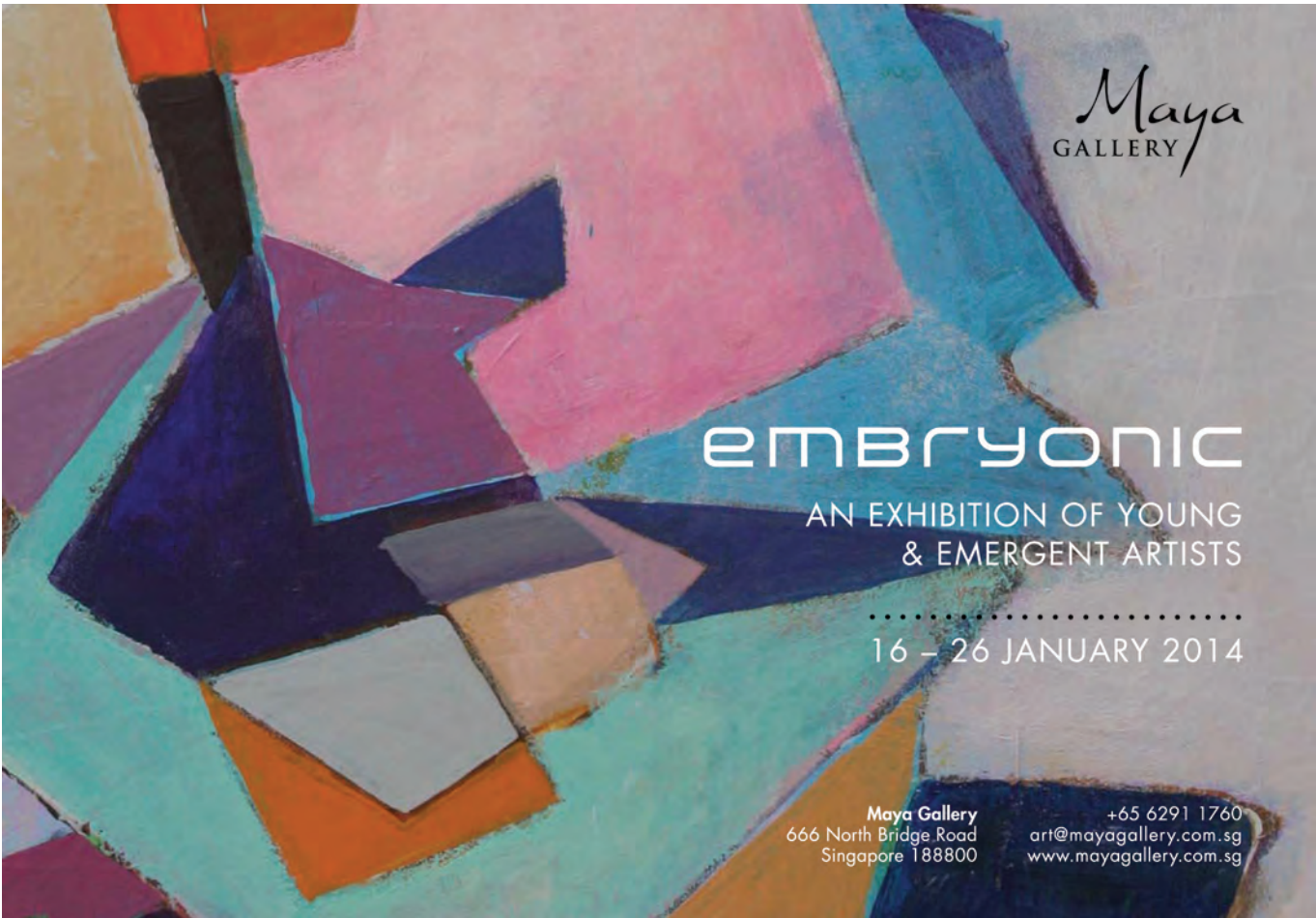
Art Anniversary

A year has passed since Alexander and Elvira Sharov opened 11.12 Gallery, Singapore's only Russian gallery with an international branch. To celebrate, the gallery hosted friends and guests for a special anniversary exhibition show featuring the works of celebrated Russian contemporary artists.

From left: Valentin Abashin, Irina Abashina, Sergey Maksimenko and Anna Maksimenko; Vladislav Kornikov, Elvira Sharova, Elvira Luy and Rustam Muratkhanov; Ru and Lou Lineker; Irene Scherrer and Michael A. Scherrer



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Wine & Dine



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The latest trends in food and wine

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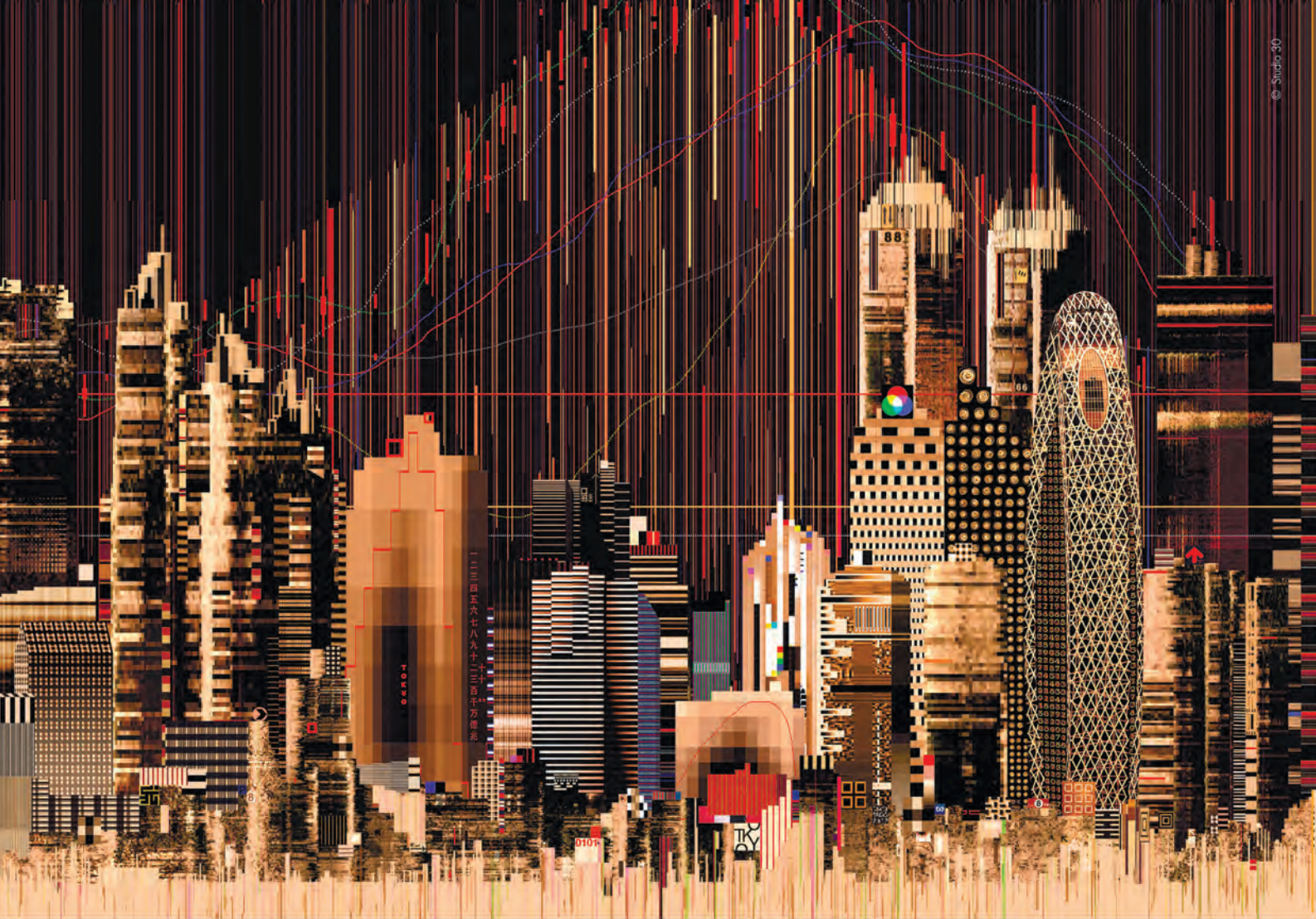
Artichoke's new bakery, **Overdoughs**, is hosting baklava classes to teach you how to make two types of this most famous of Middle Eastern desserts. Classes are on Mondays from 7pm to 9pm and Saturdays from 4pm to 6pm. \$65 per person. 161 Middle Road, Sculpture Square. **Call 6336 6946.**



TEST THE TUBE

Wine by the glass is nothing new in Singapore, but wine by the tube is. The first tubes were produced in 2007, but Singapore just got its first taste courtesy of **Wine by the Glass**, a new store in Tiong Bahru owned by a French husband-and-wife team. One tube equals one glass of wine, and all wines hail from reputable chateaux in Bordeaux, Burgundy, Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence and the Rhone Valley. Individual tubes are from \$11 to \$77, while the "Great Wines of Bordeaux" box set (*shown here*) is \$149. 55 Tiong Bahru Road, #01-53. drinkintube.com.sg





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STUDIO 30

Lilia Balasanova & Sergei Kolevatykh

TOKYO

110x160 cm | Mixed media on canvas | 2013





FROM LADURÉE TO LOUIS V

Did you know that there are nearly 400 different types of French cheese? This is but one of the many factoids in **So Chic**, a new guide that explores all things French in Singapore. Published by the French Chamber of Commerce, it reads like a local who's who in French gastronomy, with details and photos about some of the island's best French restaurants, plus French luxury brands, beauty products and fashion labels. **Pick up a copy at French retailers and restaurants in Singapore, the Singapore Visitors Centre and the French Chamber of Commerce.**

ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED?

The Entertainer is now available as an app, meaning you get the same great one-for-one deals but without having to lug the voucher book around. Here's how it works: you buy the app, select a voucher, have the merchant enter its four-digit PIN into your phone and *presto* – one of your main courses is free. And more restaurants than ever have come on board – places like Au Petit Salut, Il Cielo, Hummerstons, The White Rabbit, Original Sin and The Disgruntled Chef (*below*). Buy early so you have the entire year to save on meals, activities, spas, fitness and hotels – for example, a free second night at a Grand Hyatt or Banyan Tree property. All in all, there are 1,150 vouchers valued at over \$150,000. The app is \$95.

Download it on iTunes. ▼



HDB HOTSPOT

The folks that brought us Burnt Ends, Esquina and Pollen are at it again – this time with a little corner restaurant in historic Everton Park HDB estate. **The Provision Shop** is bringing a new crowd into the sleepy Tanjong Pagar neighbourhood, a crowd in search of rustic chicken, mozzarella and grilled veggie sandwiches (\$14), Nuts About Smoked Salmon salads (\$16, *shown here*), not-to-be-missed Polish *perogis* (\$5) and homemade sea-salt vanilla ice cream. **Block 3 Everton Park.**



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SAY OM



Here's a rooftop bar that may have slipped under your radar – **Graffiti** in the new Carlton City Hotel is a relaxing watering-hole 29 floors above Tanjong Pagar. True to its name, a SIA Singapore Girl and other national icons are spray-painted by the bar, yet the grassy green space is much more *om* than inner city. Asahi, Tiger and Heineken beers are \$9 and cocktails like Singapore Slings are \$12 during Happy Hour (6pm to 8pm daily), which makes this one of the most affordable rooftops around. 1 Gopeng Road. carltoncity.sg ▲

SIN WIN

For top-notch comfort food with a view, head to the newly opened **Spuds & Aprons**. Scoff succulent crispy pork belly with homemade pineapple pickle (\$26) and chilli crab stuffed in potato skins (\$12) while taking in the stunning vista of Mount Faber and beyond. It would be a sin not to finish off with *chempedak* bread-and-butter pudding (\$10, *below*). Set menu options start from \$48 for a three-course meal. The Jewel Box, 109 Mount Faber Road. Call 6377 9688 or visit mountfaber.com.sg. ▼



AUSPICIOUS OFFERINGS

If the **Chinese New Year** holiday caught you off-guard this year, it's not too late to make plans to celebrate Singapore-style. To book a traditional meal and toss the *yu sheng* high for good luck in 2014, see our picks for the best CNY restaurant and dishes – such as Majestic Restaurant's festive durian *nian gao* (*shown here*) – at www.expatliving.sg. ▼



SI, SEÑOR

If you've had trouble getting a table at **Señor Taco's** Clarke Quay outlet, you may want to try your luck again. This simple *taquería* that once sat 20 has expanded into a fully fledged restaurant that seats 140. To celebrate, they've introduced a slew of new tacos – like the 100-day grain-fed rib-eye taco (\$9) and the beer-battered Baja fish taco (\$8) – and the gravity-defying Corona-rita (\$24): a frozen margarita with an overturned bottle of Corona that's slowly dispensed as you drink. Block 3D Clarke Quay, #01-12. senortaco.sg ▲



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This month:
LOWER EAST SIDE
TAQUERIA
CICHETI
EARL OF HINDH
VIDA VINO

We sample the island's newest restaurants,
so you can decide whether to follow suit

Lower East Side Taqueria

19 East Coast Road
9824 4009 | lowereastsidesg.com

The compact menu of this informal, open eatery on an East Coast Road corner doesn't claim to be authentic anything. "Call it Singapore Mexican," says friendly manager Tron Young. "Or Smex, if you like."

Corn chips and guacamole (\$9) can be ordered with up to four extra dips (\$5 each). From a selection of **craft beers**, I choose a bottle of Wheat King Ale (\$15), Roy a Corona (\$12); to beat the heat, we recommend a glass of **horchata** (\$5), rice and almond milk flavoured with cinnamon.

We share a good **pork belly taco** (single \$11; trio \$28) and an excellent **tilapia taco** (single \$12; trio \$28). Our **octopus and squid burrito** (\$18) is fresh and light, with an unexpected crunch of green apple, but the bacon rather overwhelms the seafood. More satisfying is the **cumin and grilled chicken burrito** (\$15) – also with bacon, but it can take it.

Charcoal grilled beef (\$28) is a slim slab of tasty Aussie ribeye served on a salad with grapes and green apple (again), conveniently sliced for sharing.

Our verdict? If you're in the area and in the mood for a beer to wash down some light Mexican (-ish) nosh with a good, slow chilli-burn, it's worth a go.



MUST-TRY DISH: Tilapia taco

Verne Maree



Charcoal
grilled beef



DIY burrito
platter

Cicheti

52 Kandahar Street
6292 5012 | facebook.com/cicheti

Small plates are all the rage at the moment – the tapas movement is going strong, but other countries are also making their mark with this concept. Cicheti (“chi-keh-tee”) is Italy’s answer. Traditionally, Venetian *bacari* (wine bars) serve up *cicheti* (bar snacks) alongside your drinks order.

Cicheti is set in a tiny blink-and-you’ll-miss-it spot in Kampong Glam. A huge two-ton oven shipped in from Italy blazes at the back (it zaps raw pizzas to wood-fired deliciousness in 90 seconds flat) and a few tables are squeezed into the front section. Having just opened when we visited, the restaurant only had a choice of house red or white (\$12/ glass) or Peroni beer (\$9) to accompany the *cicheti*, but now the lounge bar is open upstairs and the drinks menu has expanded.

It’s a perfect grazing spot – finger-licking-good **prawns in a smoked garlicky butter** (\$11), **semi-dried tomato and ricotta cheese bruschetta** (\$11) and **beef meatballs in slow-cooked tomato sauce** (\$11) are just some of the small plates. Make more of a meal of it with the selection of pastas, meats and seafood or go for the highly recommended **Napolitano pizzas** (\$17 to \$19) like **margherita di bufala** (\$19) – the dough chewy and thin, the sauce perfect and topped with soft *bufala* mozzarella. Leave room for the **salted chocolate cake** (\$12.50) – that’s all we’ll say!

Beate Baldry




MUST-TRY DISH:

Margherita di bufala pizza
and salted chocolate cake

Pomodori secchi –
semi-dried tomato
and ricotta cheese
bruschetta





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Murgh tandoori



Murgh mahkani

Earl of Hindh

31 Ocean Way
#01-16 Quayside Isle
Sentosa Cove
6681 6694 | earlofhindh.com

Family owned and run Indian restaurant The Earl of Hindh is a new addition to the cluster of eateries at Quayside Isle.

Interestingly, it also specialises in a wide variety of malt and blended whiskies.

The spacious interior has a warm ambience and is beautifully decorated with portraits of maharajas, rustic tiled flooring and wooden furniture. You can opt to dine inside or alfresco with stunning views over the cove.

The large selection of traditional dishes come in portions big enough to share, including a variety of lamb, chicken and mutton kebabs and fish dishes. The spiced salmon **dariyai tikka** (\$32) and the popular minced lamb **kakori kebab** (\$44) got our seal of approval.

From the selection of curries, the **dal panchratan wani** (\$16), a combination of five types of lentils with secret spices, and the colourful **murgh mahkani** (\$34), chicken tikka tossed in tomato, butter and cream, went perfectly with **garlic tandoori naan** (\$9) and perfumed **saffron rice** (\$18). A surprise to the taste buds was the sweet **Earl-E-Hindh naan** (\$12), which is topped with milk, honey, almond flakes and glacé cherries – an in-house creation.

If you've room for dessert, the **jamun-e-galub** (\$16) – milk dumplings filled with pistachio and cardamom and dipped in rose and saffron sugar syrup – pairs well with a slice of *kulfi* ice cream.

Impeccable food and quality ingredients aside, what sets Earl of Hindh apart is the attentive and genuine attitude of the staff and owners.

Susannah Jaffer



MUST-TRY DISH: Kakori Kebab



Vida Vino

29 Keong Saik Road
8228 4765 | vidavinogroup.com

This tapas and wine bar is the latest spot to open along Keong Saik Road, and recognises that it has a lot of competition in the area.

The menu and atmosphere have a relaxed Mediterranean vibe; the super-cool décor is a jazzy blend of modern and vintage that trendy types will enjoy. There's a surprise waiting in the toilets (bear with me) – a jukebox for those queuing or dolling themselves up.

With a focus on great wine, the menu is not huge, but the dishes are good and worth a try. The small plates are simple, but hearty – like the **cheese platter** (\$19), **ibérico ham platter** (\$17), **Spanish omelette** (\$10) and the **Bikini** (\$10): black truffles, Manchego cheese and *ibérico* ham served with toasted bread.

The wine list is the biggest draw, with a great selection by the glass that is surprisingly affordable. For wine novices, the menu is helpfully laid out by country with easy-to-digest information, plus the staff offer great tips to help you decide. If you're a sucker for fizz, their **Noche y Dia** cava (brut and rosé) is a reasonable \$13 a glass and a bottle of **Mionetto Sergio Prosecco** goes for \$60. The Spanish **Canestruc Tinto Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$13/glass) is a delight, plus there are a few craft beers on offer from \$15 or El Bulli chef Ferran Adrià's creation, Estrella Damm Inedit, for very refined chaps.

Rachael Wheeler



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Martial Art

In Japan, food is a form of art unto itself. Here are nine dishes that prove it.



Shabu Shabu

What it is: Also referred to as steamboat, *shabu shabu* is a dish of thinly sliced meat boiled in water. Beef is traditional, but many restaurants now also offer a selection of pork and chicken slices. Interestingly, the name is derived from the sound the meat makes when stirred in the cooking pot.

Where to get it: Shabu Sai at Orchard Central
6884 6760

What to order: To begin, you'll be asked to choose two soup bases such as the popular *sukiyaki*, a sweet soy-based soup that really brings out the flavours of the meat, or the peppery *tonkatsu shoyu*.

Once your hotpot has been filled and switched on for you, proceed to the buffet to choose your fresh vegetables, noodles and tofu to accompany your meat. Then mix your own dipping sauce – a winning combination is peanut sauce with ginger, garlic and a spring onion garnish.

All that's left to do is to cook your meat and vegetables in your chosen soups, which by this time will be boiling. Though the lean meat takes only a moment to cook, you can order ready-made sushi as an appetiser if you're too hungry to wait.



Also try:

Shabu Shabu Gen Restaurant at Shaw Centre | 6836 5155
Shabuya at VivoCity | 6377 0070

Yakitori

What it is: Although traditionally used to describe Japanese skewered chicken, the word *yakitori* can also refer to skewered food in general. *Kushiyaki* means the same thing, and the terms are interchangeable, so whichever is used, skewers will be on the menu.

Where to get it: Rakuichi in Dempsey Hill | 6474 2143

What to order: Rakuichi opened its Dempsey restaurant following the successful launch of its flagship outlet in Far East Shopping Centre in 2005, and the chain now has four restaurants. The Dempsey offering has varied indoor seating, from bar counter and casual dining to private rooms, as well as a few tables outside. Its *yakitori* is reasonably priced and popular. Recommended skewers include the *buta kakuni* (pork belly with *teriyaki* sauce) (\$4), foie gras (\$8), *negima*, fish and leek (\$6), the slightly spicy *shishito*, green chilli peppers (\$3) and the *enoki* bacon (bacon wrapped with *enoki* mushroom) (\$4).

The *sumiyaki moiwase* (\$28) consists of six skewers chosen by the chef. These generally include a mix of squid, pork belly, fish, chicken and vegetables, but the exact ingredients are determined by what is freshest and in season. Wash it all down with a cold draft Asahi beer (\$9) or house-pour sake (\$10).



Also try:

Aburiyatei in Robertson Quay | 6836 5370
Yakitori Emmau in ION | 6636 7282

Sashimi

What it is: Thinly sliced raw seafood. Many places pre-freeze sashimi for food safety.

Where to get it: Hashida Sushi at Mandarin Gallery | 6733 2114

What to order: Leave the ordering to the expert; celebrity chef-owner Kenjiro "Hatch" Hashida will prepare courses of sashimi and other Japanese delicacies *omakase*-style (no menu). Lunch costs from \$80 and dinner from \$250 to \$500. Seafood is flown in from Tokyo's Tsukiji Market and Hokkaido six times a week. Sashimi of this grade and quality is almost unparalleled; urchin, flounder, sweet prawns, an unusual crunchy conch, orange clam and meltingly soft octopus, its sweetness emphasised by Chef Hashida's special 400-year-old recipe for sour plum sake dipping sauce. If you're in luck, there will be a huge slab of bluefin tuna – both the fatty belly and cheek are carved from the same piece and are served mixed together atop warm sushi rice. The presentation is stunning. Surprising desserts include red bean and Valrhona chocolate, or persimmon and ice cream – again highlighting Hashida's varied talents. Pair with the incredibly smooth cold sake Shirakamisanchi No Shiki Tokubetsu Junmai (180ml/\$45). A meal here is guaranteed to be an exquisitely personal and memorable experience.

Also try:

Shinji by Kanesaka at
Raffles Hotel
6338 6131

Aoki Restaurant at Shaw Centre
6333 8015



Kushikatsu (or kushiage)

What it is: Skewered seafood, seasonal vegetables and meat: lightly breaded, deep-fried and served piping hot. In Japanese, *kushi* refers to the skewers and *katsu* to pieces of meat. First served, they say, in the city of Osaka (previously known as Naniwa).

Where to get it: Han, Cuisine of Naniwa at Odeon Towers
6336 2466

What to order: We're not keen on deep-frying, for the usual reasons, but this fine-dining version is worth making an exception for – it's not in the least bit oily or heavy. Chef Seiichiro Arakawa presides over the wok, presenting an array of delicacies straight from the heat: succulent prawn, fat scallop, minced chestnut, cheese-stuffed tomato, coral roe-topped salmon, tender beef, truffle-salt-dusted foie gras and more. The *kushikatsu* is preceded by an exquisite array of appetisers and *sashimi*, and followed by sushi, miso soup and dessert (\$160; *kushikatsu* dinners start from \$120). Try the *matcha* tea ice cream sandwich or a zingy grapefruit sorbet and, of course, the delicious Janpan (\$155 a bottle) – Japanese champagne, get it? – a bubbly sake that's around 16 percent alcohol by volume.





Sushi

What it is: Fish on rice, right? Kind of. Although fish is the star of the show, the term sushi actually refers to the vinegar rice. With so much importance placed on the grain (a sushi chef spends at least two years learning how to prepare and season rice), a sushi restaurant can rise and fall on its rice alone.

Where to get it: Sushi Kuu at Palais Renaissance | 6736 0100

What to order: This restaurant sits comfortably at the upper end of the mid-level price range, from the five kinds of broiled sushi (\$42) and rainbow roll (\$45), to the pricier Kuu house roll (\$90), including *toro* (that deliciously fatty tuna cut), *uni*, caviar and shrimp.

Visit for lunch when the restaurant offers sets from \$30 to \$64 that include a main course, miso soup, udon noodles and ice cream. Suggested à la carte dishes include Wagyu beef on rice (\$45), assorted seafood on sushi rice (\$49) and Japanese *shabu-shabu* salad (\$25). The ingredients are clearly extremely fresh, and the generous portions look attractive and taste delicious. Green tea ice cream is included in the set lunch, or a recommended dish, if you're willing to go off piste, is the creamy and rich green tea mousse with *yuzu* sauce (\$10).

Also try:

Budget: Nirai Kanai Okinawan Restaurant at Liang Court | 6339 4811

Bust: Shinjii at Raffles Hotel | 6338 6131

Curtain Call

Fugu may be one of the most nerve-wracking foods you'll ever eat – if you have the courage to try it. A delicacy in Japan, prepare this pufferfish the wrong way and it's curtains – yes, *those* curtains – for you. A place that knows exactly how to handle this notorious fish is Fairmont's fine-dining Japanese restaurant **Mikuni**. A nine-course *fugu* tasting menu is available until 15 January. \$220 per person.

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Okonomiyaki

What it is: Although often called “Japanese pizza”, *okonomiyaki* involves neither bread nor tomato sauce (and rarely cheese), nor is it baked in an oven. This pancake-omelette is a mix of seafood, meat or vegetables held together by a cabbage and green onion batter and topped with special *otafuku* sauce, Japanese mayo, and seaweed and *bonito* flakes.

Where to get it: Nanjya Monjya at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel (edge of Robertson Quay)

What to order: *Okonomiyaki* falls into two basic categories – Osaka/Kansai-style and Hiroshima-style – you’ll find mainly the former here (though the *hiro buta soba*, \$16, is made in the layered-noodle Hiroshima fashion). Since *okonomi* and *yaki* roughly translate to “what you like” and “grilled”, your toppings can be whatever suits your fancy – octopus, pork belly, scallops, Japanese pickles, spicy cod roe, sweet corn and more. We’re partial to prawn and *kimchi* (\$18) ourselves.

The *teppanyaki* tables are inside, which means you’re ensured a toasty warm dinner experience (dress accordingly) while your waiter cooks – or instructs you how to cook – the dish. It’s a relatively easy stir, grill and flip routine, followed by cutting the *okonomiyaki* into triangles with a metal *kote* spatula.

There’s a *tatami* room in front and private *koshitsu* rooms at the back. Families, your best bet is sitting outside, where little hands are as far from the blistering *teppanyaki* tables as possible.



Also try:

Okonomiyaki House Iroha 168 on East Coast Road
6738 1683

Ishi Mura at Northpoint Shopping Centre | 6484 1090

Tonkatsu

What it is: Thought to date back to 19th-century Japan, *tonkatsu* is a crumbed, deep-fried pork fillet or loin, but it can be substituted with prawn or fish. Normally ordered as a single dish, it can also be eaten in a sandwich or with curry sauce. It always comes with shredded cabbage, and is typically dipped in a thick Worcestershire-style sauce called *tonkatsu* sauce, served with rice and eaten with chopsticks.

Where to get it: Tonkichi at Ngee Ann City | 6735 7522

What to order: Tonkichi is a *tonkatsu* specialty restaurant. In typical Japanese style, food is ordered in sets. The signature *katsu soba* set (\$25) includes *chawanmushi*, a firm egg custard in a cup which comes first. The main arrives on a tray laden with plates bearing three pork fillets, cold *soba* noodles, dipping sauce, plus the essential shredded cabbage. You’re given a pestle and mortar to grind sesame seeds, to which is added the *tonkatsu* sauce. This dipping sauce is used for the pork, which is tasty, tender, not greasy and easily broken into pieces with the chopsticks. The cold *soba* noodles are dipped in a *soba* sauce. *Hire katsu don* (\$23) is another set: pork fillet cooked in egg and special soy sauce served in a large bowl of rice. A plate of fruit follows, and the Japanese tea is regularly topped up. This is a large and value-for-money meal with quick service.



Also try:

Saboten at Millenia Walk | 6333 3432

Japanese Fusion

What it is: A melding of European elements, untraditional ingredients and unusual cooking techniques.

Where to get it: Kinki at Customs House | 6533 3471

What to order: The main restaurant has a superb view of the Marina Bay skyline and waterfront, and the interiors are all funky murals and pumping beats – nothing traditional or Zen here. Kick off with Japanese fusion cocktails like the wasabi-infused Spicy Hachimitsu (\$18) or the *ume* mojito (\$18). Food-wise, there's foie gras and scallop sushi (\$22) and small lettuce wraps of Wagyu veggie sushi (\$38). The delicious Hot Dynamite *maki* with yellowtail and salmon (\$20) and the *unagi* Hokkaido scallop *maki* (\$28) come deep-fried; truffle oil is drizzled over slivers of sea bream in the *tai carpaccio* (\$32). Vegetarian *okonomiyaki* (\$25) is crispy toasted baguette topped with tomatoes, shiitake, eggplant, spinach and mozzarella and laden with mayo and sweet-and-sour sauce. Popular with the after-work city slickers, Kinki's rooftop bar buzzes at the weekday Happy Hour, where wines, beers and house spirits are one-for-one.

Also try:

LP+Tetsu at Tanglin Mall | 6836 3112

Dozo at Valley Point Shopping Centre | 6838 6966





Miso Glazed Salmon

Serves 4

Ingredients


- 4 salmon fillets, skin and bones removed
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- ¼ cup white miso paste
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons mirin
- Spring onion curls to garnish
- Olive oil spray

Method

1. Dry-fry sesame seeds and set aside to cool.
2. Preheat grill to high.
3. In a bowl, whisk together miso, sugar, vinegar, soy and mirin.
4. Spray both sides of fish with olive oil spray.
5. Line baking tray with parchment paper, place salmon fillets face down and grill for 3 minutes or to your liking.
6. Turn right-side-up and grill for 3 more minutes.
7. Remove from grill and place a large dollop of miso sauce mixture on each piece of each salmon. Spread with back of spoon.
8. Return to grill for 2 minutes until miso sauce is slightly charred.
9. Sprinkle with spring onion curls and sesame seeds.

Notes

Serve with steamed rice (or mashed potato), broccoli and carrots, and drizzle over any leftover miso sauce.

This recipe is courtesy of Expat Kitchen. For a schedule of upcoming cookery classes, visit www.expat-kitchen.com. 

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NOODLE KNOW-HOW

A crash course on Japan's big four.



SOBA

Translating as "buckwheat" in English, soba noodles are made from a mix of buckwheat and wheat flour, though gluten-free, 100-percent buckwheat versions do exist. These light brown, spaghetti-like noodles have a distinctive, nutty taste.

TRY THEM AT: Shimbashi Soba (Paragon and Nex), which makes fresh buckwheat flour daily from Tasmanian buckwheat seeds.

UDON

The thickness of these soft white noodles makes both the round and flat varieties easily recognisable. Made of wheat, udon are best when made fresh (rather than dried and reconstituted later). In eastern Japan, they are commonly served hot in a dark soy sauce broth, while the west is partial to a lighter soy broth.

TRY THEM AT: Tamoya Udon, serving golden broth Sanuki udon straight from the Kagawa prefecture; or Pan Pacific's renowned Keyaki restaurant (*shown here*)



SÖMEN

Especially popular in the summer, somen are thin, white wheat noodles, similar to vermicelli, that are often served cold (and sometimes on ice). This noodle has its own ritual: *nagashi somen*, or "flowing somen", is a summer specialty where diners use chopsticks to pluck fresh noodles from ice-cold water flowing through a bamboo flume.

TRY THEM AT: Skyve Wine Bistro where it's served with pan-seared tuna, *ebiko* and sesame *yuzu* dressing.



RAMEN

Perhaps the most popular of all, ramen noodles can be thick or thin, straight or curly. Not to be confused with instant noodles or Chinese noodles (though ramen are thought to have originated in China), ramen noodles owe their yellowish colour and firm texture to kansui, an alkaline mineral water ingredient.

TRY THEM AT: Ippudo SG @ Mandarin Gallery for both original and modern takes on *tonkotsu* ramen; or a spicy miso version by Iggy's Ignatius Chan at The Forum's Uma Uma Ramen. 🍜





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CRACKING CRAB BEE HOON AT HOME

By Beate Baldry

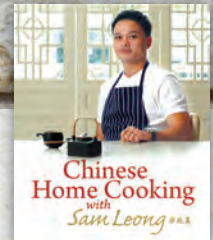
Crab *bee hoon* shot to fame when chef Anthony Bourdain raved about the dish after trying it at a street-side joint in infamous Geylang. When done well, this pretty dish is a great mix of saucy noodles and chunks of crab.

To find out how to recreate it at home, we checked out *Chinese Home Cooking with Sam Leong* – a cookbook by Singapore’s very own celebrity chef which features many recipes handed down from his grandmother to his mother.

This dish will add the wow factor to your dinner – serve it up when in-laws or other out-of-town guests come to visit.

WOK-FRIED VERMICELLI WITH CRAB

Serves 4



Ingredients

- 2 crabs, each about 500g
- Cooking oil for deep frying
- 10 slices ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 spring onion, cut into 1cm pieces
- 80g white *hon shimeji* mushrooms
- 300g dried thin vermicelli (*bee hoon*), soaked in water for 30 minutes and drained

Stock

- 800ml chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons oyster sauce
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- Pinch of ground white pepper
- Dash of Chinese cooking wine

Directions

1. Prepare the crabs by pulling off the top shells and cleaning them. Cut off the pincers and cut the bodies into quarters.
2. Heat the oil and deep-fry the crabs for about one minute. Drain and set aside.
3. Heat three tablespoons of oil in a wok and add the ginger, garlic, spring onion, mushrooms and crabs, stir-frying until fragrant.
4. Add ingredients for stock and bring to the boil.
5. Add the vermicelli and stir-fry until the sauce is thick.
6. Serve immediately.

Try it in town

- **Red House Seafood:** A bustling place with some riverside seating – smarter than many of the places listed below. Try their special seafood combination curry too. \$55/kg*. 60 Robertson Quay, #01-14 The Quayside 6735 7666 | redhouseseafood.com
- **Melben:** A hawker-style joint in an HDB block which often has long queues. \$55/kg*. 232 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, #01-1222. 6285 6762
- **Sin Huat:** Literally a one-man show, from the cooking to the service. Gets very mixed reviews; there’s no menu and prices can be exorbitant, especially for a place with street-shack ambience. \$70 for two people. 659 to 661 Geylang Road at junction of Geylang Lorong 35. 6744 9755



Also try:

- **De Classic Golden Spoon:** Block 115 Bukit Merah View, #01-68. facebook.com/DeClassicGoldenSpoon
- **Ming Kee Live Seafood:** \$54/kg*. 556 Macpherson Road. 6747 4075
- **Chin Huat live Seafood:** \$48.80/kg*. 105 Clementi Street 12, #01-30 Sunset Way. 6775 7348

*Crab *bee hoon* is sold most often by the price per kilo of the crab. One kilo should feed around three people as part of a larger meal. 🍴





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A



B

C



Purple Power

Here are some fast facts for you to consider as you wait a few minutes for your instant noodles to be ready:

- Almost 100 billion packets of instant noodles are consumed each year around the world.
- China eats almost half of them.
- The country with the biggest consumption per capita is South Korea.
- Instant noodles were first marketed in Japan in 1958.

Singapore has its own big player on the global noodle stage: **Koka**, produced by Tat Hui Foods. Koka instant noodles are available in a dozen or so varieties, from non-fried to rice noodles to vegetarian options.

Arguably, the company's most distinctive offering is its **Purple Wheat Noodle** range. These will appeal to health-conscious noodle enthusiasts because they're steam-cooked and dry-baked, rather than fried. They're also MSG-, fat- and preservative-free.

More obviously, they look very different to your run-of-the-mill instant noodles on account of their striking purple colour. There's nothing artificial about this; rather, the shade derives from two key ingredients in the noodles, purple wheat flour and purple corn flour.

Purple Wheat: Originating in East Africa and subsequently cultivated in Austria, purple wheat gets its name from the dark hue of the wheat grain. This pigmentation is due to the presence of anthocyanins. The antioxidant activity of purple wheat has been shown to be greater than that of non-pigmented wheat varieties.

Purple Corn: Cultivated in coastal areas in Peru, this is considered by many to be a "superfood". As with purple wheat, the reason for purple corn's dark hue is the presence of anthocyanins – and it's found at levels significantly higher than in blueberries.

The Verdict

Purple Wheat Noodles proved a hit in our in-office test of the three new varieties. Here's what one editor had to say about the **Soy & Vinegar** variety:

"The noodles stayed firm, even in the face of the over-boiling I gave them. They taste great cold, so make sure you run the cold tap for a while before rinsing the cooked noodles and covering them in the tangy soy and vinegar sauce. The packet menu suggests serving them with spring onion (I had none, so substituted with slightly cooked white onion) and cucumber, which complemented the flavours of the sauce and noodles well. The great thing is they're only 240 calories a packet, making them significantly less fattening than many of the standard dried packet noodles."

The two other new varieties are **Chilli & Lime** and **Aglio Olio**. You can also purchase plain Purple Wheat Noodles, without seasoning or garnishes, so you can prepare them however you want. We suggest stirring through some chopped veggies and dressing for an easy noodle salad, or getting inventive and adding tasty ingredients to make a hot dish. Very useful for when you need a meal on the run. 

Koka products are available at leading supermarkets. tathui.com



Flavour Forager

BEATE BALDRY forages for exciting Asian ingredients readily available in Singapore, to discover their traditional uses, health benefits and ways to incorporate them into Western home cooking.

This month's ingredient: *Water caltrop*
(aliases:) buffalo nut, bat nut, devil pod, Chinese horn nut, ling nut

What are they?

Water caltrops are the small, black, hard-shelled fruit of a floating aquatic plant that grows in fresh, warm, slow-moving, water. Taiwan is currently a big producer of water caltrops, but they have traditionally been cultivated in India and China for thousands of years. In the United States and Australia, however, the plant has become a pest.

Their nickname, buffalo nut, describes the fruit's striking resemblance to buffalo horns, while the shell's surface has an eerie depiction of a face. Inside the shell lies a cream-coloured, starchy fruit. Although they are sometimes called water chestnuts, they are not to be confused with the crunchy Chinese water chestnuts, which look and taste completely different.

The flavour

Water caltrops cannot be eaten raw. When boiled and cracked open, the mild and starchy fruit tastes similar to roast chestnuts or sweet potato, but less sweet.

Where do you find them?

In the fresh produce section of local supermarkets such as FairPrice Coronation Plaza or at wet markets like Ghim Moh. Water caltrops are commonly available in September and October when the Chinese community celebrates the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Uses

- In China, street vendors sell water caltrops steamed or boiled as a healthy snack. They are also used as a filling in pastries and, less commonly, as prayer offerings.
- In India, water caltrops are called *singhara* and are eaten boiled. They are often dried and then ground into a flour that is used in cooking, particularly on Hindu fasting days, and for religious rituals.

Health benefits

- Ayurvedic texts indicate that water caltrops can be used to increase men's fertility.
- There is some reference in ancient Chinese texts to water caltrops being used to reduce fever.

Top tip

Don't eat them raw! There's a small risk of fasciolopsiasis, an intestinal disease caused by parasites often found in aquatic plants.

Cook it at home

Water caltrops are easy enough to cook – just put them into a large pot of boiling water for 20 minutes, drain them, crack them open and eat them. However, as most of the fun is in their hard-shelled inedible exterior, it would be a shame to serve them up shelled without their buffalo horns and demonic faces. Along with their seasonality, that's probably why we couldn't find any references to recipes requiring them in the ingredient list.

The gluten-free flour made from grinding dried water caltrops is called *singhara* flour and can be used as a substitute for wheat flour in a multitude of recipes, from Indian *puri* to pancakes.

Idea?

Serve up a plate of these bad boys as a dinner party opener. Get people to guess what they are and how you eat them. While we can't guarantee your guests will be licking their fingers, their appearance alone should get chins wagging! 🍴

New Year, New Wines, New Friends

WHEN 23 January 2014

WHERE Wine Glass at the Marina at Keppel Bay, Singapore 098382

TIME 6.30pm to 9.30pm (registration at 6pm for a prompt 6.30pm start)

COST \$40

Online bookings essential

Admission includes a fabulous goody bag and canapés

Make it your New Year's resolution for 2014 to join the *EL* Wine Club at the luxurious Marina at Keppel Bay. The award-winning Marina on historic Keppel Island features world-class berthing facilities, fine gourmet restaurants and beautiful architecture. At this very special event, walk through luxurious yachts and mingle with world-class yachtsmen before settling down in The Wine Glass bar to sample select wines and nibbles provided by Italian specialty wine and food company, Clessidra.

Located within the clubhouse and directly facing the lagoon berths, The Wine Glass offers breathtaking views of multi-million-dollar yachts and the stunning architecture of Keppel Bay. This is the perfect location to kick off the *EL* Wine Club for 2014 and we are sure you will enjoy sampling the delectable wines that Clessidra have in store for you.

The winner of our lucky door prize and seven friends will get a taste of the high-life out at sea on a trip aboard one of the luxurious yachts. Maybe they will discover a new passion for 2014! And, of course, our popular quiz will dust away any cobwebs from your New Year celebrations!

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WINE CLUB

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 to your repertoire. *Bon appétit!*

PESTO ALLA GENOVESE

DINNER



Zander Ng,
Australian and Singaporean

"A lot of my inspiration for food and my style of cooking comes from my *nonna* (grandmother) in Varese, Italy."



This is a family favourite that we often serve when we have friends visiting or extended family gatherings. Being vegetarian, it is a great please-all dish and is also very satisfying.

Ingredients

- 4 cups fresh basil leaves
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 30g (about 2 tablespoons) toasted pine nuts
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 or 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cut roughly into 2cm chunks
- 100g green beans, cut into 4cm lengths
- 500g dried or fresh linguine pasta

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil. In a food processor, blend the garlic clove and pine nuts until smooth. Add the sea salt, basil, Parmigiano-Reggiano and a tablespoon of the olive oil, then process for a few seconds until the basil is chopped.
2. Add the remaining oil in a steady stream with the processor still running. Transfer the pesto to a bowl and set aside. (The pesto can be made one day in advance; keep it refrigerated in an airtight container.)
3. Add the pasta to the boiling water. After two minutes, add the potatoes. Add the green beans three minutes before draining the pasta. The idea is to get the consistency of the potatoes a little soft and the green beans still with a bit of bite. The pasta should be al dente.
4. Drain pasta, potatoes and green beans, reserving ¼ of a cup of the cooking liquid.
5. In a large bowl, toss pasta with pesto. Add a little of the reserved cooking liquid if pasta seems too dry. Serve immediately with freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano.



CHEEKY MARS BAR BREAD AND BUTTER PUDDING



**Jon Bett,
British**

"I like trying new recipes, but this is a tried-and-tested family favourite. It's easy to make, you can change the type of chocolate (it's great with Terry's Chocolate Orange too) and you can add as much or as little chocolate as you like, depending how indulgent you're feeling."

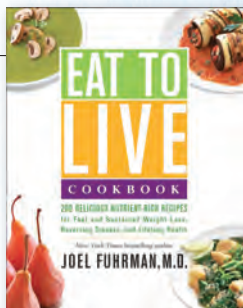


Ingredients

- 1 loaf white bread
- 150g unsalted butter
- 4 heaped tablespoons castor sugar
- 3 heaped tablespoons raisins
- 6 egg yolks
- 600ml full-cream milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 Mars Bars cut into chunks

Directions

1. Remove crusts from the bread, cut into triangles and butter both sides.
2. Lay one layer of bread on the bottom of a shallow baking dish and sprinkle with raisins and chocolate.
3. Repeat with another layer of bread in overlapping triangles followed by raisins and chocolate. Repeat until the bread is used up.
4. Beat the egg yolks and fold in the sugar. Mix well and set aside.
5. Add the vanilla and cinnamon to the milk and bring to a near-boil.
6. Slowly add the milk mixture to the egg yolk mix, taking care not to scramble the eggs.
7. Pour the milk and egg mixture over the bread in the baking dish, ensuring all layers are thoroughly soaked. If possible, leave it to soak for 30 minutes.
8. Bake at 150°C for 30 to 40 minutes until the top of the pudding starts to brown. Serve with ice cream or very cold single cream.



If we publish your recipe in our magazine, you'll be adding a great cookbook to your bookshelf. This month it's No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller *Eat to Live*, a cookbook by Joel Fuhrman, comprising 200 recipes to get you healthy, recover from chronic illnesses or lose weight. It includes a great guide to choosing the best ingredients. Publisher: HarperCollins UK.

Be Part of THE GREAT RECIPE SWAP!

If you have a fail-safe recipe you'd like to submit for our next issue, please send the recipe, a photo of yourself, and a few words about your dish to beate.baldry@expatlivingsingapore.com. Thanks, Chef!

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Travel

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WHAT'S NEW

Hot destinations & great places to stay



MALDIVES FOR FAMILIES

The Maldives might be the ultimate romantic destination, but it can also be a great option for a getaway for parents and kids. Family-friendly **One&Only Reethi Rah**, located on one of the largest Maldivian islands in North Malé Atoll, has just added a brand new Grand Sunset Residence to its all-villa offering. The 2,000-square-metre, three-bedroom beachfront villa sleeps up to seven and has a private 50-metre swimming pool, canopied daybeds, a sunken fire-pit, a built-in steam room and a couple-size rain shower with outdoor access to the lagoon. The Grand Sunset Residence comes with complimentary golf buggies for easy travel within the resort. **6438 4091 | lightfoottravel.com**

MAKE FOR MEXICO

Newly opened **Hotel Escondido** is a small designer hotel located in the renowned surf mecca of Puerto Escondido, on a pristine stretch of Mexican coastline between the Pacific Ocean and the Sierra del Madre Sur mountain range. Each of the hotel's 16 bungalows has a private plunge pool and a design that features locally sourced tropical wood floorboards and palapa rooftops. The property also offers a restaurant, a bar, a pool lounge, a beach club, a meeting room and a spa, with boat and horse rides among the leisure activities available. There are daily flights from Mexico City to Puerto Escondido International Airport, a 15-minute drive from the hotel. Rates from US\$185.

designhotels.com/hotel_escondido



TAKING FLIGHT

Here's good news for people who like to get expert advice when planning their travel. Giant leisure travel brand **Flight Centre**, which launched in Singapore in 2011, has recently been expanding its operations. The Aussie company has opened a Business Travel office in the Vertex Building in Ubi targeting SME business travellers, relocated one of its most established retail outlets from Suntec City to CityLink Mall, and opened a fourth retail outlet – on the fourth floor of the new wing of Plaza Singapura. **6692 9656 | flightcentre.com.sg**



COOL CANBERRA

Australia's capital has a new design and lifestyle hotel that is winning plenty of fans for its cool, contemporary approach to housing overnighters, business guests, long-stay guests and families. The six-storey East Hotel, located between the retail and restaurant hubs of Manuka and Kingston, has 140 oversized rooms in various studio and apartment-style combos. Quirky additions include retro and electric bikes for hire, laundry facilities in most rooms, and a French rotisserie restaurant, the first of its kind in Canberra. easthotel.com.au ▲

BIGGER BAGS

If, like us, you're the kind of traveller who has a mild panic about baggage allowance while waiting in line for the check-in counter, you'll be pleased to hear this piece of news. Checked-in baggage allowances have increased by 10kg for all classes of travel on all Singapore Airlines and SilkAir flights. First-class fliers are allowed to check 50kg, while those in business and economy classes are entitled to 40kg and 30kg respectively. KrisFlyer Elite Gold and Star Alliance Gold members continue to enjoy an additional 20kg of baggage allowance across all classes. singaporeair.com | silkair.com

Glorious Golf in NZ

More than 500 golf tour operator members from over 60 countries have voted in the golf industry Oscars, the IAGTO Awards, and the gong for the best golf resort outside North America and Europe has gone to New Zealand: specifically, to **The Farm at Cape Kidnappers**. Located on a triangular headland on the North Island coast, The Farm at Cape Kidnappers isn't just about golf: its cluster of luxury lodge buildings – all river stone and weathered wood – is also the perfect setting for honeymoons and romantic breakaways. Kauri Cliffs, the sister property of The Farm, looks equally stunning. capekidnappers.com | kauricliffs.com



TOP TOWN

The annual Telegraph Travel Awards asks readers to vote for their travel favourites across various categories, from Best Country to Best Travel App. This year's survey garnered 75,000 consumer votes by readers of *The Telegraph* in the UK. Among the "winners" was Cape Town, which topped the list in the Favourite City category. If you've not been there yet, maybe 2014 is the time to plan a South African sojourn. Flights from Singapore to Cape Town take 12 to 14 hours with a brief stop in Johannesburg. ◀

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Everything you need to know about a seven-night holiday on the **Palace on Wheels**, India's special heritage tourist train that explores the incredible history, temples, cities and cuisine of Rajasthan.

FACT FILE:

The Palace on Wheels was constructed for Indian royalty before the country's independence; it comprised personal coaches of the former rulers of the princely states of Gujarat and Rajputana. The train ceased regular operations in the early 1980s but made its first trip as a unique holiday train in 1982.

THE ITINERARY:

Day 1: Depart Delhi for Jaipur
 Day 2: Jaipur
 Day 3: Sawai Madhopur
 Day 4: Chittaurgarh
 Day 5: Jaisalmer
 Day 6: Jodhpur
 Day 7: Bharatpur, Agra (Taj Mahal)
 Day 8: Depart Agra for Delhi

SOME OF THE SIGHTS:

- "Pink City" Jaipur, including Amber Fort and the Palace of the Winds.
- Tigers in Ranthambhor National Park.
- Udaipur and its palaces on the lake.
- Camel riding on the sand dunes of Sam near Jaisalmer.
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WHAT IT COSTS:

Until March 2014, the cost per person is \$5,415 for twin share, \$4,900 for triple share, and \$7,250 for single occupancy. Discounts of around 25 percent are available for travel in April.

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Expat Living readers can enjoy a 10-percent discount for bookings made by 31 January 2014.



66 We had a great time on the Palace on Wheels; the decor and attentive service on the train made us feel almost like royalty. We visited historical forts and palaces, wildlife reserves and old towns. The highlight was the Taj Mahal – breath-taking!

– Titus Alexander, Singapore

HOW TO BOOK:

Contact Mustafa Air Travel at tours@mustafa.com.sg or 6419 0752/0757. Visit mustafa.com.sg for more info. 

CYCLING ALSACE

The French region of Alsace sits neatly on the French, German and Swiss borders and has a history as one of the most hotly contested corners of Europe. It's on the international radar again, but this time for its stunning wine, culture, food and scenery. KATIE ROBERTS toured the region from the vantage point of a well-padded bicycle seat and was beguiled by the Gallic charm and hospitality.

DAY
1

Alsace's capital **Strasbourg** is the starting point for our Wine Road Cycle trip. We arrived ignorant of the city's charms, history and importance, having not so much as leafed through our guidebook. After setting down our bags in a pocket-sized room at the well-located **Dragon Hotel**, we met tour company **Utracks** representative Anne-Sophie, who gave us a briefing in heavily accented French, passed us a wad of maps and trip instructions, and handed over our bikes.

Built for ease rather than speed, the bikes had enormous padded seats which, combined with our padded cycling shorts, made for a comfortable and chafe-free three days of riding. They were equipped with panniers and a front

pocket; our suitcases were transported from hotel to hotel by a faceless taxi angel, and were ready and waiting for us every evening.

We had a few hours that afternoon to stroll the cobblestone streets of Strasbourg's Unesco-listed historic city centre, but took a sudden dive into the stunning gothic **Notre Dame Cathedral** as relief from driving rain. I'll confess to lighting a candle inside the breathtaking 800-year-old cathedral in the hope that blue skies would reign over us for the coming three days. Because of the gloomy weather, we missed the full magnificence of the stained glass windows, but a fortuitous choir practice showed off the cathedral's incredible acoustics.



A dinner reservation was made on our behalf each night of the trip and the meal was included in the tour price, which happily avoided the risk of making a bad choice in an unknown town. If you are happy to eat your own bodyweight in *sauerkraut* or *choucroute*, try the Strasbourg regional specialty I ordered on our first evening, at the charming **Brasserie Flo**. To my husband's amusement (he chose the modestly portioned duck *confit*), my plate arrived with lashings of boiled cabbage and potato, and seven varieties of sausage and pork. Topped off with a warm molten chocolate pudding, this carbohydrate and protein overload proved useful for the next day's exertion on the bike.

DAY 2 Overnight, we kept a very close eye on the unseasonably dismal weather forecast, but the morning brought a few hours of clear blue sky. So, after a quick buffet breakfast we loaded the panniers and hit the road, bound for **Barr**, 45km away. We quickly learnt to look for the orange arrow which marked our route. The sticker was fixed intermittently on road signs, buildings and posts along the roads, lanes, tracks and cycle paths.

Conscious of the distance and not too sure of what lay ahead, we set a cracking pace, knocking off the first 20km to **Molsheim** along the tree-lined **Canal de la Bruche**, a sixteenth-century canal

Tasting opportunities

Unlike other regions of France, the wines in Alsace are labelled by grape variety, so tasting and buying here is easy. The most well-recognised varieties are gewürztraminer, pinot noir, riesling, pinot blanc and pinot gris. Locals say the vineyards are tightly held and passed down through the generations, so there's a lot of knowledge and tradition. Do enter one of the many wine cellars (caves) for a tasting; it's also a cultural and historical experience as most of the buildings are very old and atmospheric.



used to transport wine barrels in flat-bottomed barges. Other than its beautiful town centre, Molsheim's claim to fame is being the birthplace and manufacturing centre of luxury car brand **Bugatti**.

We stopped for lunch at **Rosheim**, a quiet village with three town gates and the half-timbered houses and quaint architecture the region is renowned for. Relying on my minimal French, we stepped into the quaint **Altenburg Brasserie** and successfully ordered what the locals were having: the *plat du jour* and half a carafe of local pinot noir, just to warm up. Even the locals commented that it was unusually cold for September. While temperatures had been in the mid-20s only the previous week, today it was 14 degrees Celsius, but with no rain so far.

We'd covered what we thought was over half our daily kilometres at this point, so leisurely pedalled through the vineyards taking in the scenery. The grape harvest was starting; people

were busy preparing equipment in the numerous workshops and there were pickers in the vineyards.

While enjoying a long downhill cycle into **Obernai** I realised that we'd barely seen anyone other than locals all day. We found them, swarming all over this lovely city. With its stunning medieval and Renaissance streetscape, decorative buildings and window boxes overflowing with flowers, it's impossible not to take photo after photo.

By now it was 3.30pm and, according to the maps, we were only a few kilometres from **Barr** and our bed for the night. After pushing our bikes up a long, slow hill passing paddocks of contentedly grazing cows, we soared down the other side, finding **Les Hortensias Hotel** easily. Our odometer read 53km. After locking the bikes away in the garage, we claimed our waiting bags and treated ourselves to a hot bath followed by tasty local fare in the hotel restaurant.



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DAY
3

We hadn't checked the weather report; so, pulling open the curtains at 6am, the grey sky and drizzle were a disappointment. In the event of dreadful rain the company has options, but we chose to rug up and brave it, setting off in the hope that the rain would hold off until we reached **Kaysersberg**, about 40km away.

The day's route wound through vineyards, quiet back roads and at least 15 quaint and pretty villages and towns. Each has a church, a *hôtel de ville* (town hall), a *pâtisserie*, a *charcuterie*, water fountains, and lots of wine tasting opportunities at doors labelled Vin d'Alsace.

After covering 25km, we stopped for

lunch at a small café at quiet **Kintzheim** for the regional specialty of *tartes flambées* (don't call them pizzas). And a half carafe of pinot blanc, which is the most widely planted varietal in the region after riesling.

It seems that only three or four towns in the entire region are overrun with tourists. After lunch we called into the very pretty **Riquewihr** and, finding that it was on the tour bus route, quickly headed off again. But we had the remaining dozen or so villages to ourselves.

In almost every village in Alsace, there's a **stork's nest** atop the town gate. These migrating bird were once endangered, but thanks to a concerted local campaign they are back. The stork is now an icon for regional souvenirs, and there's a **Reintroduction Centre** (cigogne-loutre.com) on the wine route at **Hunawihir**.

We arrived in **Kaysersberg** about 5pm, with 52km on the odometer and a bottle of pinot noir, purchased en route, to enjoy in a hot bath at the comfortable **Hotel Rempart**.



DAY
4


Kaysersberg is picture perfect. A winding cobblestone street is lined with gorgeous historic buildings (not great for bike riding, so we walked), a stream rushing through it and an old chateau overlooking the valley. The morning heralded a clear blue sky so we got up early and climbed the chateau tower for a great view over the vineyards.

Eager to make the most of the clear weather, we rode among the vineyards, through yet more pretty villages, and pulled into **Eguisheim** (ot-eguisheim.fr/en/) which was an unexpected finale. Within the circa-1257 walls, the streets are built in concentric circles to create a labyrinthine effect: designed to confuse invaders, it's now confusing visitors.

We lost our way among the colourful half-timbered houses and ended up grabbing a baguette and an asparagus quiche for a simple lunch in the sun sitting against the back wall of the church dedicated to 10th-century Pope Leo IX. There's an interesting walking tour of Eguisheim, voted favourite French village in 2013, with good signage in English that describes the town and its buildings in detail.

From here, we left the vineyards and villages for the flat ride into big city **Colmar**. We reached the final hotel, **Beau Séjour**, at about 3pm, having clocked an easy 35km for the day. Our bikes were locked up at the hotel to be collected the following morning. While there's much to see in historic Colmar, we left that for the following day and instead gave our legs a well-earned rest.

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This Way

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PARIS

With Kids

You love Paris. And you love your children. Is it possible to enjoy your two great passions at the same time? JENNIFER BURGESS explores how.



I have been conducting a long love affair. With a city; the city of Paris. I can track our relationship through my choice of accessories. When it started, I was carrying all my belongings in a backpack. Later, we would snatch some brief moments while I was toting a briefcase between appointments. In more recent rendezvous, I've had a designer weekend bag.

In the latest reunion with my beloved city, I was to be accompanied by my favourite accessories: my husband and our ten- and six-year-old sons. Our boys have been lucky enough to visit Paris before; when they were younger and easier to keep amused with short, frequent stops at parks and bribes of beautiful French toys.

Keeping kids engaged and enthused is a challenge on any city break. Could

Paris woo and bond with my older children? Would my city and I still be able to spend some valuable "alone" time together? As the French like to say: it is possible. Here's how.

What to do

It is almost mandated by international travel conventions that any Paris itinerary will include a visit to at least one of its 173 museums. Tragically, this pastime is not high on the radar of young boys who have been hanging virtual masterpieces in their own Minecraft galleries for years. What does interest them, however, is another quaint activity – a treasure hunt.

So, on Day One of our Paris tour, we adopt our best Indiana Jones expressions and strut past the long entrance queue at Musée d'Orsay flashing tickets purchased online. We

report to the gift shop to collect our clues (also known as art postcards) and begin the hunt for the precious artworks depicted, transforming the old train station from museum to adventure park. The only intrusion on this happy scene is my six-year-old's disgruntlement that he isn't able to photograph the "real" artworks on his iPod.

The iPods do come in handy the next day, when French socialism collides with tourism. After being reprimanded by ten-year-old Olivier for neglecting the Eiffel Tower during a previous visit, we dedicate a morning to the iconic monument, only to find it closed by a strike.

Fortunately, technology eases some of the disappointment. Taking some striking Instagram shots ensures that the visit receives an "awesome" rating by Olivier. The discovery of a large



playground at the residential end of the Parc du Champ de Mars consumes some of the energy six-year-old Nicholas had conserved to climb the 704 steps to the second floor of the Eiffel Tower, to buy tickets for the lifts and avoid the queues. A helpful tip for those who, like us, couldn't buy tickets online. Be warned – with almost seven million visitors to the Eiffel Tower every year, they sell out well in advance. Another Parisian park that has a five-star rating with our family is Jardin des Tuileries. It's a perfect pit stop between the Musée d'Orsay on the Left Bank and the world's most prestigious shopping boulevard, the Champs Elysées. The promise of fresh *crêpes*, hot dogs, coffee and playgrounds had all the family buzzing as we strolled the pale gravel boulevards.

Sadly, as we approached the carousel and the trampolines, Olivier informed me, "I won't be having a go. It's not cool." Bouncing was still cool for Nicholas. Olivier though, was unable to resist the attractions of the adventure playground and the opportunity to renew his membership in the International Playground Community as he and his brother played with locals and tourists.

My husband's favourite part of the gardens is the pond and the miniature wooden sailing boats. It is still one of our boys' top-rated activities in Paris. The boats are nearly as weather-beaten as their proprietor, but manage to look majestic as they sail across the pond with the assistance of a wooden cane and an enthusiastic young sailor. My thrill at hearing the magic words, "Hold my iPod, Mummy," probably generated

enough energy to propel the ancient boats along by themselves.

The pull of the boats also provided an opportunity for me to snatch a few moments with my beloved city in one of my favourite shopping streets, chic Rue Saint Honoré. The brief encounter left me breathless as I dashed between stores such as Collette and Hermès and came face to face with handbags and shoes normally only seen on the pages of magazines.

What to eat

My stolen shopping time comes with a catch. I must return with one of our favourite French delicacies: the *macaron*. Parisians invest nearly as much time debating who produces the most superlative *macarons* as they do queuing up on a Saturday afternoon to



buy a box of these colourful pastries. After years of arduous research, our family vote is with Pierre Hermé and the Mogador flavour (passionfruit and milk chocolate).

Apart from devouring macarons in the playground, there is another child-friendly way to savour French cuisine – a picnic. While you could easily fill your basket at the food hall of department store Bon Marché, practising your French at *fromageries* and flirting with the fruit seller should be part of the Parisian picnic. But to do this accompanied with two impatient boys diminishes the fun factor – even in Paris.

The solution? Do a parents-only food tour. The Eiffel Tower Food Tour with the Localers is like shopping with your local friend; if your Parisian friend happens to be a very knowledgeable, well-connected chef who lives in the glamorous 7th *arrondissement* near the Eiffel Tower. Armed with our new introductions, and our taste buds still tingling from the samples of the day before, we were able to return with the boys, impress them with our quick

purchases and put together a delicious picnic spread. Everyone happy.

Another way to keep everyone happy is with an English-speaking babysitter (see www.baby-sitter-paris.fr). She enabled the boys to have a “rest” morning with their gadgets at the hotel while we went on the food tour.

If we had wanted to dine at one of our favourite restaurants *sans enfants*, we could have also used her services. Instead, we opted for another strategy – lunch. Fashionable French restaurants exercise a greater tolerance of kids (and their iDevices) if you book for lunch. With its courtyard setting lifted straight from a villa in Provence, Ralph’s on the Left Bank is still one of the hottest places in Paris. But the lunchtime reservation and menu featuring one of the world’s best hamburgers gave all the family a highlight Parisian experience.


Paris is a perfect city for walking and our long relationship means that I navigated the family around its avenues or used the Métro with only the occasional misfire. More importantly, I was attuned to the signals from my

younger companions that sometimes it was necessary to surrender and find a taxi stand. Like all good relationships, a city break with kids requires compromise and consideration of all parties’ needs. It is a complex chemical equation. If my grown-up boys want to accompany me and my walking stick to my beloved Paris in the future, I’ll know I got that magical equation right.

Recommendations

- Musée d’Orsay | musee-orsay.fr
- Eiffel Tower | tour-eiffel.fr
- Parc du Champ de Mars | parisinfo.com
- Colette | colette.fr
- Pierre Hermé | pierreherme.com
- Bon Marche | lebonmarche.com
- The Localers | localers.com
- Babysitter | baby-sitter-paris.fr
- Ralphs | Ralphlaurenstgermain.com

Getting There

Singapore Airlines and Air France fly direct to Paris every day, with flights departing Changi just before midnight and arriving between 6am and 7am the following day. 

Common Eye Problems in Children – What every parent should know.

Children are not just small adults. They have a whole range of eye diseases that are different from adults. Young children are unable to verbalize that they have a problem but there are certain behavioral cues that may indicate that they have difficulty seeing.

Common warning signs include:

Rubbing

Their eyes even when not tired.

Poor vision

Avoiding games that need good vision or refusal to read books.
Holding objects or books very close when looking at them.
Sitting very close to the television and refusal to be moved further away.
Tilting the head to one side.

Tearing

Excessive tearing when not crying or large amounts of eye discharge.

Funny Eye Movements

Crossed eyes or eyes that do not look in the same direction.
Bobbing eyes.

Others

Frequently covering one eye.
Squeezing the eyes shut when the light is turned on or in the outdoors when others are not doing so.



Rubbing of the eyes is common and it usually indicates that the child is tired. Allergy or abnormal misdirected lashes (epiblepharon) are a possible cause. This may be accompanied by frequent covering of one eye or blinking or shutting one eye with or without bright lighting because he or she is experiencing discomfort.

Allergies that cause eyes to itch are the body's immune system over-reacting to foreign substances. Common allergens include pollen, animal dander, dust, mold, bacteria, food sensitivities, cosmetics, fabrics, soaps, and other substances may cause year-round allergies. If left untreated, there is a risk of increased astigmatism, scarring and infections on the surface of the eye.

Misdirected lashes (epiblephron) are more common in children of East Asian descent. An excessive fold of eyelid skin physically pushes the eyelashes inwards towards the eye, giving rise to symptoms of tearing, redness and even itching in some patients. Possible signals that may give clues that there may be **poor vision in children** may be indicative of a refractive error such as short-sightedness, long-sightedness or astigmatism in which spectacle correction is necessary.

A blocked tear duct may manifest in children as excessive tearing when not crying. If only one eye has a blocked tear duct, the child may have more discharge on one side compared to the other. In some children **excessive tearing** may be due to other causes like infection or glaucoma.



These problems may be obvious from birth or may develop as the child grow older. Care, examination and treatment of a child entails different and strategic approaches to diagnose the problem as well as to increase compliance of treatment. It is important to ensure good eye health especially before the age of 8. This is to ensure that there is reduced possibility of lazy eye or amblyopia developing.

Amblyopia or "Lazy eye"

In a normal child, the development of the part of the brain that enables vision is complete by the age of 8 years. The brain needs stimulation of sharp images from the eye to develop normally. Anything that causes blurred images in the eye will result in maldevelopment of the part of the brain that is responsible for vision. If the eye's condition is fully corrected later in life, vision will still not recover because the brain only develops in early childhood. This is then termed amblyopia or "lazy eye" which is irreversible after the age of 8 years.

Lazy eye may be unnoticed by parents especially if only one eye is affected as the child will appear to have good eyesight. The only way to detect lazy eye early is to have a sight test as early as possible.

Many people mistakenly assume that lazy eye is similar to "squint" which is a misalignment of the eyes.

Common causes of amblyopia (lazy eye)

- Refractive error: Short-sightedness, long-sightedness or astigmatism
- Large differences in refractive power between the two eyes
- Squint (misalignment of the eyes)
- Obstruction of vision (by droopy eyelid, cataract or other lesions within the eye)

Successful treatment of any eye problem in children depends on the severity of the condition. If the problem is detected early, successful treatment is possible and treatment time may be shorter. Early detection of any eye problems may also prevent the onset of amblyopia (lazy eye) and thus, giving your child the gift of good eyesight for his adulthood. Their eyes should ideally be checked at birth, at six months and annually till seven or eight years of age.

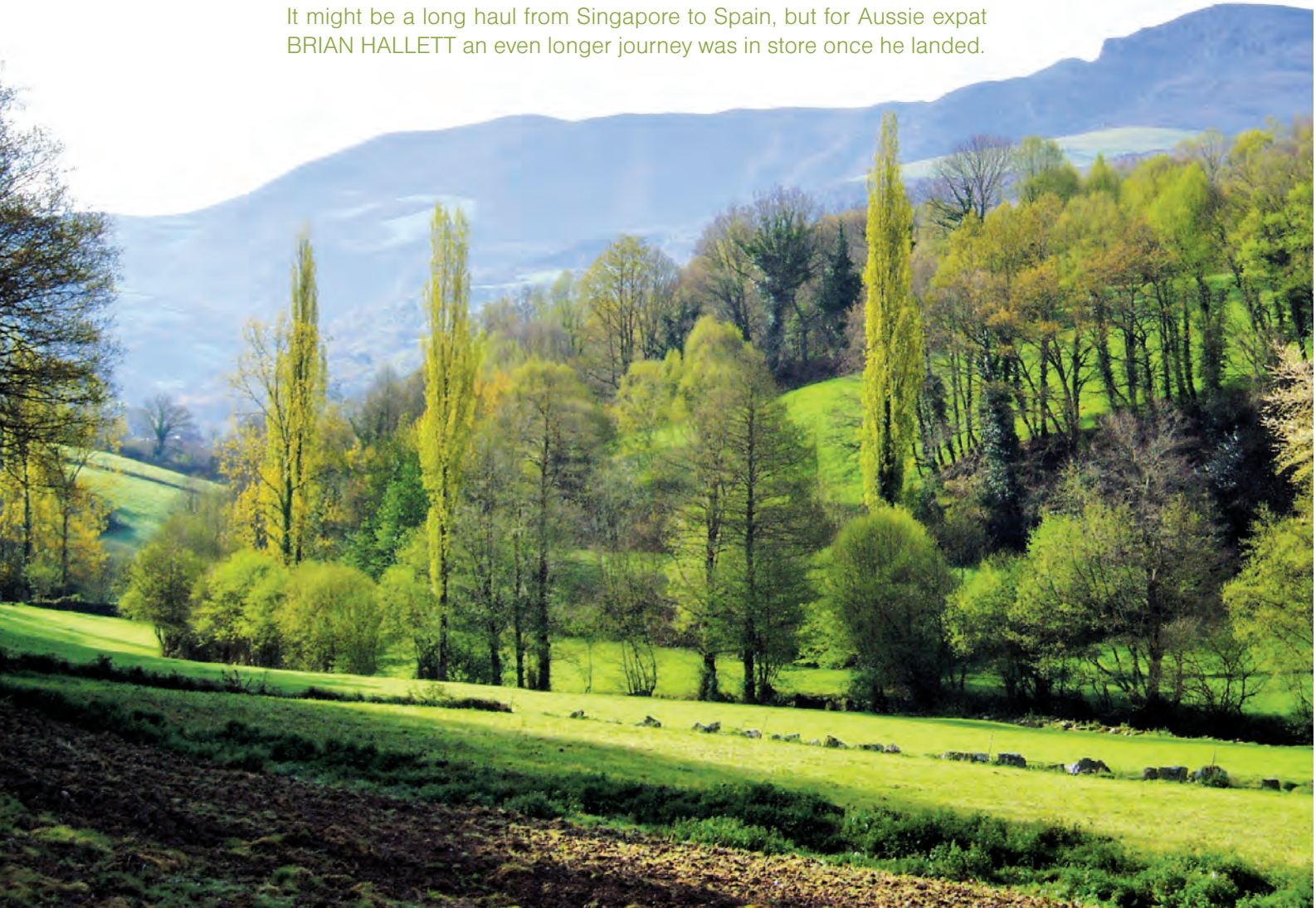


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SPAIN:

In the footsteps of the pilgrims

It might be a long haul from Singapore to Spain, but for Aussie expat BRIAN HALLETT an even longer journey was in store once he landed.



One of the world's great walks starts wherever you want it to, and whenever you want to do it. You can make it as long as you like, though 100 kilometres is regarded as a minimum. And if you complete it in particular years, all your sins are forgiven – or so the believers say.

This is the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, a web of trails blazed across Europe in the Middle Ages by pilgrims slogging their way towards the remains of the apostle St James, interred in the cathedral of Santiago in northwest Spain.

If you're looking for a travel experience beyond a Bali beach break or a guided package tour, this iconic walk could be for you. Those who take on the challenge will join a fascinating mix of people from all over the world: dedicated pilgrims on spiritual journeys, retirees defying the years, Spanish youths who'll place the achievement high on their CVs, fugitives from love gone wrong, others walking off grief (as portrayed by Martin Sheen in the 2010 movie *The Way*), or those who just like the idea of a long hike through a fascinating culture and landscape.

Traditionalists start their Camino from home, simply walking out the front door. For a few, that start can be as far away as Germany, Italy or beyond and involve trudging through snow while crossing the Pyrenees and other ranges.

Rebecca and I tackled the Camino's *route français* across northern Spain, the path of choice for medieval pilgrims from France keen to stay clear of unsympathetic Moors who dominated southern Spain for much of that country's history. We chose April, to avoid the crowds and heat of summer and to dodge the cold tail of winter.

We allocated 16 days of 25km for a total of 400km. The closest starting point for this distance is the city of León. There, arriving by train, we posted our luggage on to Santiago, leaving only essential needs in the backpacks we'd tote for the walk. At León Cathedral



we collected our Camino passports, which were to be stamped at overnight stops to verify our pilgrim status and thus earn the coveted "Compostela" certificate awarded to those who walk at least 100km (riding a bicycle or horse requires 200km). Next morning we took the first steps that begin every journey.

Pre-trip practice tramping around Singapore streets had taught us just how critical weight would be. We'd bought lightweight hiking boots and, with ruthless inventories, managed to keep our packs down to about eight kilos each, not including water.

Like all pilgrims, we displayed a scallop shell. Traditionally a scoop for water along the way, the shell's fluted grooves converge on a single point – a metaphor for the journey. Like all

pilgrims, we greeted fellow travellers with "*Buen Camino*".

Along the route are *refugios*, basic dormitories maintained for pilgrims bearing the Camino passport and charging a token tariff for overnight unisex accommodation, with tiered bunks, blankets (no sheets, so we carried silk liners) and showers.

Every pilgrim should try a *refugio* as part of the experience. In the warmer months they can be full by mid-afternoon, though, so it's sensible to have the option of one of the *pensiones* along the way – a blessed break from snoring neighbours, stinky socks and bathroom queues.

Then there's the walking: a serious distance with a relentless rhythm, along paths, roads and bridges, across plains,

silent forests, rolling hills and steep mountains.

After two days and 50km, our legs stiffened whenever we took a break. Climbing steps became a painful challenge. And our boots were threatening to cause blisters, so we shrugged off the indignity of limping around overnight villages in socks and sandals. If you tackle the Camino, you too may well don this fashion clanger.

After three or four days, things changed. Yes, we were tired and our backpacks pulled at our shoulders. But gradually our legs found their mojo. Gradually the walking became effortless, with a feeling that this is the way life should be: self-contained, reduced to essentials, renewing.

Once over the mountain range crowned with the village of O Cebreiro,

a misty cluster of stone and shingle dwellings, the countryside of Galicia opens to a patchwork of green valleys, farms defined by dry stone walls and lines of poplars, haystacks, jewelled streams and time-warp hamlets, each with its chapel, cemetery, slatted bins of drying corncobs and, with luck, a tiny *taverna* serving jugs of wine and *bocadillos* (bread rolls) stuffed with *jamón*, the smoky, dry-cured ham of Spain.

Locals along the way rarely speak English, but smiles and gestures resolve most situations. And though there's real camaraderie when you meet travellers at *refugios* and *taverna* stops, for most of the walk you're quite alone; after all, everyone is travelling in the same direction and at similar speed, so someone a kilometre or two ahead is likely to keep that distance all day.





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Towns on the way offer their own proud differences. Melide, as an example, claims to serve Spain's best octopus, so we indulged at a cosy *pulperia* where men hauled our lunch from simmering vats, sliced the tentacles with shears, piled them on wooden platters and served them with olive oil, salt, bread and deep saucers of red wine. *Delicioso!*

On and on. Always looking for the scallop shell symbol or yellow arrows daubed on barn walls, rocks or trees. Sometimes missing those signs, getting lost, backtracking, picking up the trail again, counting down the kilometres etched into stone waymarks.

All too soon the end drew near, and a moving experience awaited us on arrival at our destination, Santiago.

Every afternoon, a pilgrims' mass is held in the cathedral, a colossal baroque pile that rivals the great churches of Italy and France. Rebecca and I walked in while that mass was underway. Backpacks on, staffs in hand, tanned and dusty, mission accomplished, we felt we'd earned the majesty of the occasion.

Seven priests with scallop shell symbols prominent on their vestments conducted the mass. A nun pierced the soaring Romanesque interior with her soprano lead, joined by an exuberant response from the choir. Unique to this cathedral, eight red-robed monks hauled a massive thurible – the *botafumeiro* – swinging from a vaulted ceiling pulley so it just cleared the heads of the congregation in a mighty arc, spilling

incense smoke in its wake. Legend has it this was originally installed to mask the odour of hundreds of unwashed pilgrims.

After the mass, we stepped out into dazzling Spanish sunlight and a festival filling the plaza. Dancers wearing caricature heads twirled for the crowd as a brass band of old blokes in well-worn tunics plunged through a medley of local favourites.

Our next stop was the Camino office where, after careful scrutiny of our pilgrim passports, we were given our Compostela certificates. Thus registered, in Latin, our names, origin and start-point were read out by the priest at the next pilgrims' mass, together with the names of the 60 or so who'd completed their Camino the day before.

Santiago is a great place to relax after the journey. The old quarter surrounding the cathedral is a labyrinth of narrow streets lined with inviting restaurants, bars and the sort of all-night festive atmosphere you find only in Spain. Rebecca and I toasted our achievement – as the bar mirror revealed two figures somewhat leaner than those that had taken the train to León from Bordeaux after a fortnight of duck confit, foie gras and soft cheese.

The Camino is unique: unstructured, challenging, an encounter with a vibrant culture and a landscape that varies from melancholy to uplifting. It brings you to earth in a way that's hard to find in a sanitised world, and it's spiritually rewarding if you're that way inclined.


Buen Camino!

Camino Fast Facts

Getting there: It's a four-hour train trip from Madrid north to León. Multiple airlines fly from Singapore to Madrid, but there are no direct flights.

When to go: April to June is best: it's generally cool to warm and dry. December to February is wet and cold. July and August are hot and crowded.

Getting started: There's a wealth of information online. Start with Lonely Planet's *Walking the Camino: our tips. A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago* by John Brierley is a lightweight guide covering routes, maps, refugios and alternative accommodation.

Where to stay: In Santiago, Hotel Airas Nunes and Casa Hotel As Artes are both small, charming hotels in renovated old mansions, close to the cathedral and with mid-range rates. 



**AS
THEY
SAY
IN
SPAIN**

EXPLORING
BARCELONA,
SEVILLE AND
MADRID ONE
PLATE AT A TIME.

*Words and photography
by Monica Pitrelli*



“ A BUEN HAMBRE NO HAY PAN DURO.

Translation: For the hungry, there is no such thing as hard bread.

Hard bread is generally not considered to be a good thing. Unless, that is, you happen to be making *pan con tomate*. The trick to this ubiquitous Spanish dish is to use stale bread (in a pinch, toasted bread can work, too).

I'm in **Allium**, a slow food restaurant in Barcelona's medieval Jewish quarter, learning to make this simple bread, tomato and garlic dish to accompany a plate of *pulpo Gallego*, a Galician specialty of octopus, boiled potatoes and paprika so popular that it's often called "Spain's fish and chips".

Allium is the third restaurant of the night: the first, **Etapas** in art-nouveau Eixample, for cava, *mi-cuit foie gras* with peach *confiture* and black truffle *canalons* (Catalan's "national" dish introduced by the Italians in the 1800s) followed by an hour at beer-factory-turned-gastro-bar **Moritz** for peppery, sweet *fuet* sausage and bio-dynamic wines from Catalan's prestigious Priorat region.

Dinner is officially in its fourth hour but there is still more stop yet: to **Barra** for a glass of *jerez* and a small plate of Spanish butter cake with lime basil ice cream – yes, tapas for the dessert course, too.

“ ARROZ QUE NO SE MENA, SE QUEMA.

Translation: Rice that is not stirred will burn.

Spain's phrase urging activity and dissuading sloth doesn't apply to a good plate of paella. A stirred paella will never form the *socarrat*, that beloved layer of toasted, caramelised rice at the bottom of the pan. Paella is serious business here (though not nearly as serious as in Valencia), and it comes with its own set of rules. First, never order paella on Las Ramblas, the mega shopping

thoroughfare and tourist magnet. (In fact, never order anything on Las Ramblas – not a beer, not an ice cream, nothing – if you care about quality in the very least.) Second, never eat at a restaurant that serves paella for one – proper preparation requires a portion for at least two. Third, never order paella that is ready in less than 20 minutes.

If so, you can be sure

you're getting a reheated dish.

Eating "paella at the port" is up there with photo pinching the top of the Taj Mahal and kissing the Blarney Stone. The neighbourhood of Barceloneta, with its matchstick-thin streets and seaside restaurants, draws in the tourists – and for good reason. An afternoon at **La Gavina** sipping cava by the Mediterranean Sea over shrimp *carpaccio*, *calamari en beignets* and a *paella aux fruits de mer*, and you won't even care that the city's best paella is cooking in Barcelona's less picturesque backstreets.

“ MAS VALE IR BIEN COMIDO QUE BIEN VESTIDO.

Translation: It's better to go well fed than well dressed.

Some Barcelonians really take this one to heart – but no one more than the city's infamous Elephant Man. As the face – and phallus – of the city's liberal slant, this gentleman doesn't dress to impress – in fact, he doesn't dress at all. It's said that the Elephant Man sports tattooed elephant ears on his stomach and tusks on his legs – the trunk is his junk in all its dangling glory, of course – but it's difficult to verify this. (Google at your own peril.)

If Singapore is a dress shirt, starched and buttoned up to the neck, Barcelona is a butterfly-collared number, open to the navel. You can still find public nudity – even cycling ones (*wince*) – even though it was officially banned in 2011. Marijuana is legal in small amounts, and public drinking is widely tolerated. And *castells*, those backbreaking human towers built in town squares without any wires or safety apparatus of any kind – you'll find them here too.

As the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona is a city of fiercely nationalist people. Catalonia has its own history, and its own language; calls for independence from Spain grow louder every year. The topic is highly controversial among Spaniards, so if you happen across an illustration of a donkey, Catalonia's symbol, doing indecent things to a bull, don't ask about it unless you're prepared for an impassioned discussion about politics.

Previous page, clockwise from top:

Barcelona's alternative side; a sip of wine in the streets; cava at Parés Baltà winery; plating a dish at Barra; paella in Barceloneta's La Gavina

Opposite page, clockwise from top:

Brandade "sweets" from Moritz; the Barcelona Cathedral; black truffle canalons; dessert tapas; a heavy metal shop in El Raval; Gothic quarter graffiti



If Singapore is a dress shirt, starched and buttoned up to the neck, Barcelona is a butterfly-collared number, open to the navel.



“
**A COMER, BEBER,
 BAILAR Y GOZAR
 QUE EL MUNDO
 SE VA ACABAR.**

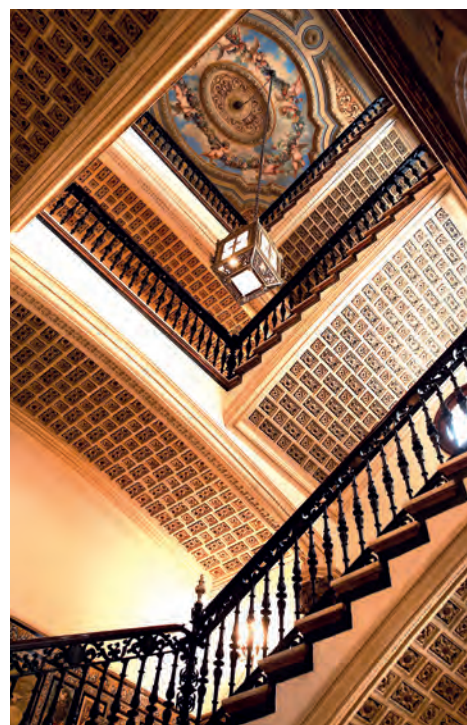
Translation: Eat, drink and enjoy, for tomorrow the world will end.

Or in English: “Life is short, and then you die.” I prefer the Spanish version though – their way encourages me to eat *crème catalana* (a *crème brulee*-esque dish) and *mel i mato* (a Catalan cheese and honey dessert) before I kick the bucket. Speaking of death, it’s 43 degrees Celsius today in Seville. People aren’t sitting by the water fountains; they are dunking their heads in them.

It’s mid-afternoon and the hottest part of the day has hit, so I divert down a back alley and stumble upon **Casa Morales**, a dark and ageing restaurant with the best *salmorejo* (an Andalusian tomato bread dip), *pisto* (Spain’s version of ratatouille) and *pringa* (roasted beef and chorizo) thus far. What a find. Who could have guessed? Only me. Oh, and Frommer’s. And apparently Lonely Planet. And a group of tourists on a tapas tour that just marched in.

I’m meeting an acquaintance named Javier for lunch at **Casa Robles**. It’s his favourite spot in town – mainly because of the *revuelto de matanza*, a punchy dish of scrambled eggs, potatoes and chorizo. I suggest a bowl of garbanzo beans and lentils, too. “If you eat a plate of lentils in this heat, you’ll die!” he says. Uh oh – there’s that link to food and death again. I better let him do the ordering.

Clockwise from top: Seville Cathedral at night; tapas at Casa Morales; spiral steps of Hotel Alfonso XIII; jerez tasting at Hotel Alfonso’s American Bar; Seville tilework





“ COMER Y RASCAR, TODO ES EMPEZAR.

Translation: In matters of eating and scratching, it's all a matter of getting started.

Spain lays claim to some of the world's best restaurants – El Celler de Can Roca, Mugaritz and Arzak to name a few – but you don't have to mortgage the farm to get a good meal in this country. For instance, I'm half way through one of the best meals of the trip, straight from the parchment paper it came on. No maître d', no Michelin stars – just me and my pastry on a roadside curb outside **Horno La Santiaguesa** panaderia in Madrid.

I'm taking all meals on the go today; *churros* and chocolate for breakfast and a build-your-own *bocadillo* picnic with *jamón ibérico de bellota* – the famous cured meat cut from acorn-eating, free-range Iberian pigs – in Parque Del Retiro for lunch.

Tomorrow I'll return to the restaurant circuit – to the remarkable **Zerain** for a Basque-style *piquillo* pepper *tortilla bacalao* (red pepper cod omelette) and a tender *chuletón* (T-bone) steak and to **Sol Mayor** for suckling pig in the touristy Plaza Mayor.

“ COME POCO Y CENA TEMPRANO SI QUIERES LLEGAR A ANCIANO.

Translation: Eat a small and early dinner if you want to get old.

Apparently no one in Spain wants to get old. I haven't come across anyone who believes it normal to begin dinner before 9pm. What's a jet-lagged tourist to do? Chase a siesta with a double shot of *café cortado* and throw portion-control out the window, I suppose.

Clockwise from top left: Jamón Ibérico de Bellota; breakfast at Horno La Santiaguesa; an artist on the streets of Madrid

WHERE TO STAY:

BARCELONA: Neri Hotel & Restaurante is a Relais & Chateau boutique hotel in Barcelona's Gothic Quarter that matches a superb location with equally impressive interior décor and gastronomy. The hotel is located off of Plaça Sant Felip Neri, a quiet, shady square that has seen everything from firing squads during the Spanish Civil War to shoots for films like *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. hotelneri.com

SEVILLE: Built to house dignitaries for the 1929 Ibero-American Exhibition, the Neo-Mudejar **Hotel Alfonso XIII** is a destination unto itself. The hotel pays homage to the city's heritage with rooms in three different styles – Moorish, Castalian and Andalusian – and a lobby replete with intricate hand-painted Triana tiles, sweeping arches and geometric designs. The history of the building is laid out in a special wing alongside photographs of world leaders that have graced its halls. The hotel is part of The Luxury Collection, a group of 75 properties around the world that combine local history, architecture and interior décor with unparalleled service and amenities. hotel-alfonsoxiii-seville.com

MADRID: Opening in 1912, the 467-roomed **Westin Palace, Madrid** is blocks from Madrid's three most renowned art museums – the Prado, Reina Sofia and Thyssen-Bornemisza – and two minutes from notable tapas restaurant, Estado Puro. The elegant yet comfortable rooms feature original mahogany doors, soundproof walls and marble bathrooms. The hotel has hosted everyone from Bowie and Brando to Einstein and the King of Pop. Sunday Opera brunches feature live opera performances, perhaps in a nod to Luciano Pavarotti, once a regular guest of the hotel who was known to belt out a few morning notes from his balcony – in his bathrobe. westinpalacemadrid.com/en



ALSO RECOMMENDED: Barcelona's Spanish Trails for tapas, wine and gourmet food tours as well as day trips and bespoke adventures. spanish-trails.com



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Bintan Break

By Rebecca Bisset

With most of us living in limited space in Singapore, having visitors stay can be a bit of a strain – especially if they're here for a reasonable length of time. You do eventually need to escape for a while, even if it's together as a group!

My mum comes every year for two months. Yes, I know I should appreciate it, and I'm very grateful that she's still able to do the trip at the age of 85; it's also much cheaper than paying for all of us to go to the UK. But when you know someone is here for a while, you do tend to slack off a bit and perhaps not do as much as you should do with them.

It's nice to give visitors who've made the effort of coming all this way a taste of something outside Singapore. One problem, though, is that older visitors usually don't feel like getting on another plane.

An easy solution is Bintan or Batam. We've taken quite a few guests to both places in the past. For my in-laws who hadn't travelled much and didn't want to venture off on their own, we once hired one of the **Indra Maya Villas** on Bintan. It was a large three-bedroomed villa with its own pool overlooking the sea. They were thrilled with it; they were still together with us as a family, not in a hotel room, and it was something tropical and slightly exotic, with a few sights and activities that were different from Singapore. It was also another country to tick off the list and talk about to folks back home.



With nice memories of it from that time, I hired two villas for my daughter's 18th birthday and she invited some friends. Each villa had its own kitchen, with separate living and dining rooms; there's also a larger four-bedroom villa called the Nirwana Villa.

My daughter and her friends were kind of independent, though I was a few minutes away down the road in another villa. The accompanying golf buggies for getting around the property also made them feel grown-up and were a huge novelty – luckily none of the buggies ended up in the sea!

The three-bedroom villa can sleep seven with an extra mattress, so it can work out fairly economically. The rack


rate is S\$1,000 a night for the three-bedroom one, but there's usually a deal on offer. Check on the website; recently there was an offer of \$590 including buffet breakfast, transfers from the ferry terminal, Wi-Fi and golf buggy.

We hired a barbecue for the night; you can cook the food yourself or get someone to cook for you. The catering – we had satay and fried rice – was Singapore prices, but that's Bintan for you.

As with most places in the region, do consider the seasons when you book. We sent friends to Bintan for their honeymoon while they were visiting us and it rained for the whole four days. "No problem!" you might be thinking, but they had their eight-year-old stepson with them. They played

lots of games of table tennis and cards to keep him occupied.

One or two of the villas could do with updating, but the space is good and if you get the sea-view ones it really is a spectacular place on a sunny day – you forget you are so close to the metropolis!

Indra Maya Villas is an easy option for a Singapore break; you can choose to cook in or eat out – whatever suits. You can send the others off to explore the mangroves or try the water sports while you lie by the pool or do whatever gives you your switch-off time. I think it's a great alternative for when you have visitors staying. 

indra.nirwanagardens.com





One Night in Bintan

AMY BROOK-PARTRIDGE finds out what you can pack into a two-day, one-night stay in Bintan.

Sunset at Kelong Restaurant

BOOK one of the recently renovated Deluxe Premier Rooms at the **Nirwana Resort Hotel**, a mere ten minutes from Bintan Ferry Terminal, and you can be sipping a cocktail at the pool bar by lunchtime. We stayed in a Deluxe Premier Queen Room for \$295. The price includes buffet breakfast for two, return land transfer from the ferry terminal to the resort and unlimited Wi-Fi access.

RELAX with a massage at the **Anindya Beach Spa** in front of the hotel. The spa has six beachside cabanas, and also offers in-room treatments. We opted for a beachside hour-long Balinese rub-down for \$70. The cabanas offer little privacy, but we were lucky – the pool area was not too busy or noisy, and we could relax into the treatment.

DINE at RIN, the hotel's Japanese restaurant. We were treated to *kaiseki*, a traditional multi-course Japanese dinner, which included our first taste of **gong gong** (sea snail), a delicious selection of **sashimi** with lime juice, wasabi and salt, and **chicken broth with dumplings**, all for \$68 per head. RIN also has a *teppanyaki* griddle in the main restaurant, which was the source of much entertainment for the children at the table next to us.

EXPLORE the mangroves at the **Aroma River Spa**, a 50-minute drive from the ferry terminal. Look out for monkeys, lizards and turtles amongst the mangroves, and if you feel the need for more relaxation, book yourself in for a massage in one of the spa's *attap* and bamboo huts. The mangrove tour costs \$35 for adults, \$28 for children; a 70-minute Riau massage costs \$38.

LUNCH at the **Kelong Restaurant**, a free shuttle ride away from the resort. As the *kelong* reference suggests, the restaurant is set up on stilts in the sea, and it serves a blend of Chinese and Indonesian seafood. We sampled its **Rising Sun** menu for \$34 per person (without drinks), which included a massive pile of **gong gong** (again!), **fried noodles Malay style**, and **braised crab with chilli sauce**. The food was good, but the best bit was the restaurant setting, with beautiful views across the South China Sea. 📷



Nirwana Resort Hotel's deluxe premier room



Seafood speciality at Kelong



RIN's sashimi plate



Teppanyaki at RIN

For more information about Nirwana Resort, go to resort.nirwanagardens.com.



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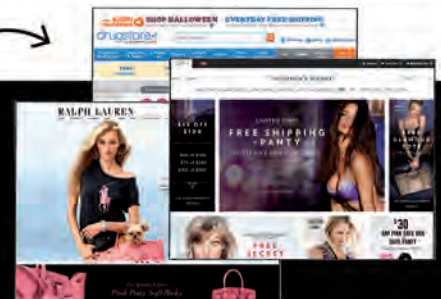
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Fashion

STYLE UPDATE



Step into the New Year with this season's favoured skirt length. Experiment with voluminous designs and patterned fabrics to give an edge to your back-to-work look.



French Chic

Just opened in Cluny Court, The Dots introduces French brand IKKS, which already has an international presence in fashion capitals such as Paris and New York. Its women's wear is a mixture of edgy, hip and colourful pieces for day and night. The

boutique also stocks casual and chic lines for men, women and children.

#02-20 Cluny Court

Work in Style

Australian brand Kikki K's collection of bags and accessories for work exude style and sophistication. Gone are the days of toting



your laptop around in a separate drab carrier - laptop bags from its third Stockholm Collection are large enough to hold your laptop and handbag essentials, and include a built-in cable tidier, internal key-ring, pen loops and all the zip pockets you'll ever need.

#44-46 ION Orchard



Amedes Jewellery

Each piece of Amedes jewellery is handmade with semi-precious stones, pearls or Swarovski crystal, and set in a choice of yellow gold, rose gold or 925 silver. The versatile range includes designs to suit anything from a casual brunch date to a gala evening.

#03-26 Mandarin Gallery

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Dr Wong Chin Ho is a consultant plastic surgeon with over 13 years of clinical experience. Dr Wong specializes in aesthetic plastic surgery and has trained extensively with world-renowned plastics surgeons in Asia, Australia and USA. He is actively involved in clinical research, publishing over 70 scientific articles in international peer reviewed journals. His works has been cited in key reference textbooks in plastic surgery.

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Dr Wang Yi Shi

MBBS(Melb), MRCP(U.K.), FAMS(Dermatology)
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Dr Wang Yi Shi is a consultant dermatologist with more than 12 years of clinical experience. Besides treating general skin problems, her areas of expertise include skin allergy, drug allergy, acne, pigmentation and lasers. She is also a visiting consultant at Changi General Hospital and senior clinical lecturer at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore.

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STYLE HUNTER

Forget the catwalk, the shop windows and the fashion bloggers. Sometimes, the best place for style inspiration is out on the streets. Julia Blank roams the island camera-in-hand, ready to snap expats who exude individuality and a style of their own.



SHIRT:
VAUGHAN FROM
GNOSSEM.COM

NAME: ROWENA
MICHAELS
JOB: BLOGGER AT
CHANGMOH.COM
FROM: UK

CLUTCH:
CHARLES & KEITH

JEANS:
GAP

SHOES:
ALDO

“I love how Rowena wears watermelon-coloured denim”



Julia Blank loves it because:

I love how Rowena wears watermelon-coloured denim instead of the conventional blue. Her cream peep-toe heels elongate her legs and give the outfit a sophisticated edge. A quick tip: If you haven't already, invest in a well-fitting pair of jeans – they should be a staple item in your wardrobe. A silk blouse also tends to look more expensive than a cotton one.

Julia Blank, Image Consultant, julia-blank.com

REVAMP YOUR STYLE

Get organised for the New Year and give your wardrobe a spring clean. Here are our top tips and recommendations for a successful sweep.



CALL ON A FRIEND

When it comes to closet clearing, there's nothing better than an objective opinion. Enlist the help of a close friend to give you honest advice as you try on clothes. Not only will you have a great bonding session, you'll be decluttering your wardrobe at the same time.

Otherwise, you can enlist the help of a professional to do a thorough wardrobe analysis and clear-out for you.

We recommend:

- Wardrobe re-vamp service from stylist and image consultant Julia Blank | julia-blank.com
- Wardrobe clear-out service by Chic Stash | chicstash.com

PUT SEASONAL CLOTHING IN STORAGE

This may seem obvious, but if you do have winter clothes hanging in your wardrobe, which are of course no use in Singapore, free up some space by putting them into storage. This could either be in vacuum bags in your home, or – if you have a lot of stuff to store – you could consider renting a self-storage space.

We recommend:

- Vacuum bags from Howards Storage World | hsw.com.sg
- Self storage at Lock and Store | lockandstore.com.sg

GIVE CHARITABLY

Once you've organised all your belongings and are ready to clear out that pile of clothes, don't forget that there are charity organisations in Singapore who accept your unwanted goods as donations.

- **New2U Thrift Shop.** An initiative of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, this thrift store is run entirely by volunteers and takes in pre-loved clothing, accessories, household items and books. Proceeds go towards its Star Shelter, which provides temporary refuge for women and children who are victims of violence. **96 Waterloo Street**
- **Salvation Army.** You can donate your unwanted clothes to any of the Salvation Army family thrift stores across the island. For a full list of locations, visit salvationarmy.org/singapore/dik_fts.

For more fashion tips, visit expatliving.sg/body_style/fashion.



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\$159t

For Her

1 Dress, Inverted Edge, \$304 2 Shirt dress, Otkúda, \$169 3 Onorio dress, Rosalie Pompon, \$435 4 Black blazer, H&M, \$79.90 5 Watch, French Connection, \$215 6 14-carat-gold-filled citrine and Swarovski crystal necklace, Amedes, \$290 7 Floral trousers, Tory Burch, \$325 8 Petal shoes, Melissa, \$105 9 Charm bracelet, Perlota, \$1,650 (price of charms not included) 10 Heels, Tod's, price on request



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For Him

1 Blue shirt, Shanghai Tang, \$315 2 Short-sleeve tunic with geometric gold print, COS, \$99 3 Shirt, H&M, \$17.90 4 Honeycomb-weave taupe tailored trousers, COS, \$115 5 Navy cardigan, Shanghai Tang, \$475 6 Men's leather-strap watch, Aigner, \$1,495 7 Belt, COS, price on request 8 Shoes, COS, price on request



Accessories

Get organised and refresh your look with these stylish back-to-work accessories.

1 Spree messenger in Icelandic Ash, Côte&Ciel at Cumulus, \$249 2 Leather iPad cover, Tramma bags, \$55 3 Leather A5 compendium, Kikki K, \$320 4 Classic shoulder-bag, Kikki K, \$450 5 Handbag, Tod's, price on request 6 Desk calendar, Kikki K, \$24.90 7 Robinson perforated double zip tote in black, Tory Burch, \$1025 8 Animal-print leather bag, Tramma bags, \$120 9 Lumia 1520, Nokia, \$999 10 VAIO Fit E laptop, Sony, \$1,499



Little Black Book

Aigner
#01-07 Paragon

Amedes
amedes.com

COS
#03-23 ION Orchard

Cumulus
#02-10 Wheelock Place

French Connection
Robinson's Centrepoint, Level 2

H&M
1 Grange Road, Orchard Building

Intrend Fashions - Master Tailor
02-38 Far East Plaza

Inverted Edge
invertededge.com

Kikki K
#B2-44/46 ION Orchard

MDreams (Melissa shoes)
#B2-03 Wheelock Place

Nokia
#01-08 Funan DigitalLife Mall

Otkúda
houseofotkuda.com

Perlota
1 Nassim Road, #02-04

Pure Earth
#02-28 Tanglin Mall
#02-48 The Centrepoint

Rosalie Pompon
#02-11 Cluny Court

Sam's Custom Tailors
#02-55 Far East Plaza

Shanghai Tang
#03-06/07 Ngee Ann City

Sony
#04-01 Wisma Atria

Tod's
#01-48 Paragon

Tory Burch
#02-28-32/54 Wisma Atria

Tramma Bags
trammabags.com

From Wherever!

Shopping in Singapore, whether offline or online, is plentiful, but sometimes it's just not enough. You can't always get your hands on the latest smartphone or tablet, that brand of jeans that fits you perfectly, or that discounted handbag. You've tried to purchase from online stores back home but, sadly, most don't offer shipping to Singapore. So, what then?

New freight-forwarding company **Borderlinx.com** has the solution. The principle is simple: sign up and get free personal shipping addresses in the US and the UK, which enable you to purchase from any website that delivers to those countries.

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Borderlinx.com also has multiple means of saving you money on shipping fees. For one, you can consolidate your shipments into one delivery. All you need to do is wait for your shopping to arrive at their hub (you'll receive a notification), and then ship everything home in one go. They also offer 30 days of free storage, so you'll have plenty of time to buy. If your type of credit card is not accepted, the Concierge Shopping Service can buy the item for you upfront for a small fee.

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STYLE ME *Beautiful*



Photo by Sugarlight Photography



JULIA BLANK, a Singapore-based personal stylist and image consultant, is on a mission to make the world a more beautiful place. We sat down with her to talk about her styling business and her tips for dressing in our humid climate.

What got you interested in a career as a stylist?

I think my interest came from a realisation that not everyone has an eye for style – for understanding how to look for clothes that flatter not just their figure, but their personality too. Along with this, I had a real desire to help people, so I chose to share my styling knowledge with others.

Tell us more about the services you offer.

As a personal stylist, my services include style consultations, wardrobe revamping, personal shopping with clients for everyday clothes or special occasions (such as weddings or gala dinners), beauty training and group image consultation workshops.

Which have been your most memorable styling projects?

Although I've had many interesting projects, including celebrity styling, my favourite ones have been working with ordinary people. Whether it's a stay-at-home mum stuck in a wardrobe rut, or a business executive looking to revamp her image for a new role, I find these jobs the most personally fulfilling.

Above all, the fact that I'm able to help someone look and feel more confident is the most rewarding aspect of my job. I feel the most satisfaction after I've completed a style


transformation, and my client starts smiling at herself and her new look in the mirror.

What are your top tips for dressing in Singapore's humidity?

That's one of the most common questions that I get asked! My main advice is to stay away from rubber shoes or flip-flops as they can rub against the feet, plus they rarely look flattering. Instead, invest in flat shoes with interesting details for maximum comfort and style.

Also, if you're bored with your current wardrobe, experiment with accessories. Beautiful statement jewellery is abundant in Singapore, and is an easy and cost-effective way to give an old ensemble a new lease of life. It's also a lot cheaper than buying a whole new outfit!

What are your main goals as a stylist?

To inspire and help others achieve their own style transformation. Your personal style is extremely important and shouldn't be undervalued – it can have a huge effect on your self-confidence, which in turn has a positive knock-on effect on other aspects of your life, from how you present yourself in the workplace to your personal relationships. 

julia-blank.com

To read our full interview with Julia, visit our website at www.expatliving.sg/fashion.

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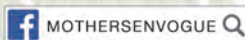
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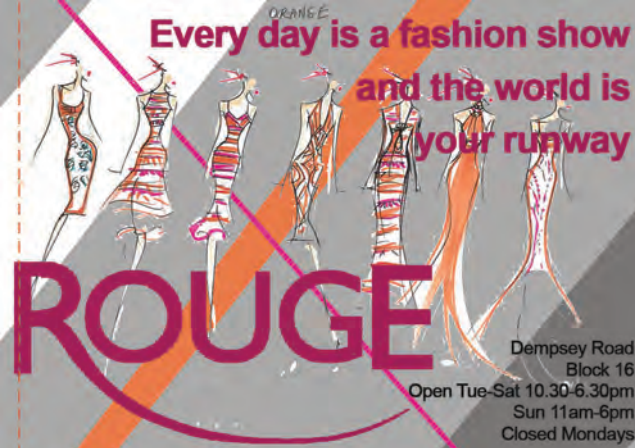
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Hair & Beauty



WHAT'S NEW All the latest hair and beauty treats



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GOLDEN JUBILEE

To celebrate 50 years of international experience, dynamic hair salon **Toni & Guy** – known for its fashion-forward hair styling and involvement in London Fashion Week for the past 18 seasons – has launched a new salon in Marina Bay Link Mall. #B2-22 Marina Bay Link Mall. toniandguy.com.sg ▲



LIFTING FACIAL

Auriga spa at Capella Singapore has just introduced an all-new **Natural Facelift Express Facial**, a pampering treatment touted to create an "instant facelift" effect. The 45-minute treatment begins with a thorough cleanse, followed by an application of Japanese Shinso skincare products, including a gentle exfoliation and a massage with serum essence to improve your skin's circulation. auriga-spa.com



Green Luxury

For those who love luxury organic products, **Luxe Organics** is a new online store selling brands that use only high quality, natural ingredients. Its products are not only beneficial to adult skin, but can also be used on children, and the company has set in place ethical practices to promote greener products with honest, no-nonsense ingredients. luxeorganics.com.sg ▲

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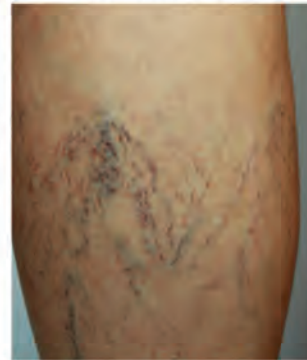
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AYURVEDIC ANGEL

Bindu comes from Kerala, India, and she delivers an exquisitely enjoyable and deeply therapeutic herbal oil-based massage that blew our socks off. We tried the Abhyangam (\$140 for 60 minutes), which relieves muscle and joint aches, calms the nerves and regulates the circulatory system. It's just one of the signature Ayurvedic treatments at the new **St. Gregory Spa at the ParkRoyal**, Beach Road, which also offers traditional Chinese therapies as well as a full range of classic face and body treatments using products from Elemis, a top-notch British spa and beauty brand. 7500 Beach Road. stgregoryspa.com



ANIMAL RIGHTS MILESTONE

Known for its long-standing campaign against testing cosmetic products on animals, **The Body Shop** has reason to celebrate this month as Chinese authorities are considering an end to mandatory animal testing on cosmetics. As the first beauty company to take action in this area in 1989, these reports mark a historic milestone for the company. All products from The Body Shop are vegetarian and none are tested on animals. thebodyshop.com.sg ▲

IN THE CLEAR

The new **Trouble Relief** line from Korean beauty brand Laneige has been specially formulated to treat acne-prone skin. Its key active ingredient, hinoki cypress polysaccharide extract, reduces the growth of acne-causing bacteria and helps to combat inflammation to soothe irritation, resulting in clearer, smoother skin.

Available at all Laneige boutiques and beauty counters. ▶



HYDRATED SKIN IN THREE STEPS

More than just your average salon treatment, the new 30-minute, non-invasive **Hydra Facial** at LE Privaté Clinic promises instant results and is ideal for anyone looking to maintain overall skin health or improve tone and texture. The three-step facial combines cleansing, exfoliation, extraction and hydrating actions, whilst delivering a dose of antioxidants and anti-ageing nutrients. The result? Skin that feels fresh, hydrated and ready to go. #08-04 Scotts Medical Centre. leprivateclinic.com

Skin Boosters for Tired Eyes

The Dermatology Practice has introduced a new ten-minute procedure to treat the delicate, thin skin around the eyes. Its new eye treatment, which uses Restylane Vital and Vital Light fillers, works to replenish hyaluronic acid in the skin, improving its condition, banishing fine lines and smoothing eyelids. Results can be seen immediately and can reportedly last for up to six months. #07/60-62 Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital. thedermatologypractice.com





Stefanie Kramer

WHO IS STEFANIE KRAMER?

From the tender age of 15, this beautiful blond certainly knows what she wants. She has been travelling Europe doing big events from a very young age, working with some of Europe's famous names like KARSTAD, Mohammad Gaff Markus Salm, Yannick Wolf – just to name a few, and the list goes on. Having travelled across Spain, Germany and Vienna, she is now in Singapore. Stefanie graduated from the Famous Face Academy (professional makeup artist, hair-stylist and wig-maker) at Frisurenwerkstatt Barbara Reichard, Schnittkunst.

Q: When did you realised that you wanted to become a hairdresser?

A: I was born in Lower Austria, in a small village called Falkenstein with 400 people. We don't even have traffic lights in this small village.

I was always different than the other girls in the village. Everyone knew that I was the girl who's brushing her Barbie dolls' hair. I was always very interested in make-up, hair, fashion and trends. You can imagine how the people react in such a small village. It was funny, they were always smiling at me because I was not an ordinary "country girl".

When I was 15 years old I decided to look for an education agency where I can get my hairdressing education.

Q: Can you describe your good and bad experiences?

A: I can't say what's my best experience or what's my worst because every experience for me is the best. I move on with every good one and every bad one. Every experience is a lesson. They are the reason why I am what I am and what I'm going to be in the future.

Q: How do you feel about working in Singapore?

A: I think it will be great to work in Singapore and show the customers that they can trust me. Every woman says "I can't find a good hairdresser, they never do my hair like I want it." I know it because I was also saying this before my education. What I'm trying to say is that, I want to be that one hairdresser every woman can trust, because I know how important it is to feel comfortable with your hairstylist.

Ladies, Stefanie Kramer will be in Singapore from 5th January 2014. If you would like to reserve a slot with her please call and book an appointment.

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Photos are courtesy of Verena Mandragora



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Facial cleansing brushes are a current craze in the skincare world. These beauty tools feature vibrating brush heads, and reportedly work to cleanse and exfoliate skin far more effectively than washing by hand or with a washcloth. They can, however, come with a substantial price tag. Are they worth the investment? This month, we chose *EL* readers with different skin complaints to test-drive one of the newest cleansing devices on the market, the **Philips VisaPure**.



**SKIN CONCERN:
HORMONAL ACNE
REAKOUTS DUE TO
PREGNANCY**

Being eight months pregnant, changes in hormone levels have not been kind to my skin. Recently, it has started to become very oily – especially around the T-zone – with unsightly pimples coming to the surface. My normal cleansing routine didn't seem to be doing the job, so I decided to give the Philips Visapure a try.

Using the brush head for normal skin, I started off on the low vibration setting, and paired it with my usual facial wash, cleansing twice a day, morning and night. After two days, I moved to the high setting, and within four days I noticed the oiliness starting to disappear.

After almost two weeks of use, my skin has completely cleared up. It feels much smoother and cleaner, and my confidence level is back to its pre-pregnancy high. I'll definitely continue to use the VisaPure as a part of my daily facial cleansing routine!



*Dana Kinghorn, business manager,
Australia*



The Philips VisaPure is available at all major electrical and department stores for \$229. Additional brush heads (including one for normal skin, sensitive skin and for exfoliating) range between \$14 and \$21. For regular users, brush heads should be changed every three to four months.

JOIN OUR PANEL!

If you would like to be on the Tried & Tested reader panel, email contribute@expatliving.sg. Just tell us your beauty problem, include your age and occupation and attach a picture of yourself.



SKIN CONCERN: SEEKING AN ALTERNATIVE CLEANSING DEVICE FOR CLEARER SKIN

I was keen to try the Philips VisaPure to compare it with the effects of a similar cleansing device that I already owned .

It came with two types of brush head to try, sensitive and normal, and it only took a short time to fully charge.

The design was extremely pretty, but it also felt quite fragile – I found it was hard to get a good grip of. It also took some time to get used to the way the brush vibrated.

Although the brush is smaller, I found it hard to get it to clean my nose and chin properly as it would keep oscillating away from my face. When compared to the device I had already been using, I didn't feel that my skin was much cleaner.

Cassie Renshall, marketing and business development manager, Australia



SKIN CONCERN: CLOGGED PORES AND SKIN OUTBREAKS

Pure is certainly how I felt after rolling this curious device all over my face for the first time. I used to think that my face felt clean after using my daily cleanser and toner at home. I now realise that I was actually more like a chimney sweep after a fight with a warthog – the feeling of cleanliness when I tried out the Philips VisaPure for the first time was unbelievable. I stroked my face so much afterwards that I may well have reversed its effects.

Due to that “washed-by-angels” feeling my face was experiencing, it was tempting to use the brush for far longer than advised, particularly because I have oily skin that can feel grubby after a long day at work. But ever the geek, I stuck to the instructions and haven't looked back.

It's no miracle wand – I still get hormonal spots when Mother Nature decides it's time to play havoc with my face; however, the small bumpy spots caused by clogged makeup and consistent sweating around town now clear up after one or two days of using the VisaPure.

Rachael Wheeler, online editor, UK



SKIN CONCERN: OPEN PORES AND LACK OF GOOD CIRCULATION

I thoroughly enjoyed using this beauty gadget. The brush (I used the normal brush head) massaged my skin very gently, and my face felt very clean and exceptionally smooth afterwards. I also found the 20-second timer very useful for switching between the different facial zones.

I use the VisaPure with my usual cleansing wash and the difference is tangible. In the evening, I add another minute to use the brush under my chin and on my neck. It's also great preparation before using a facial mask, as I believe it allows better absorption of the nutrients.

The brush design is fantastic, too. It's waterproof, very easy to keep clean and looks good in my bathroom. The clever design stops it from rolling over when you put it down, and it's very light, which comes in handy when packing for weekends away. Top marks!

Jarmila Frost, sales manager, Czech Republic 



Beauty Blitz

By Verne Maree

Party-poopied or just a little jaded? Is an excess of festivity showing in your face – perhaps just a little more than it did at the same time last year? If so, you're not alone. Here we recommend a few light, ultrasound and RF-based treats guaranteed to freshen your look for 2014.

Ultrasound, radiofrequency and laser could become some of your best friends, if they aren't already. Like the Three Musketeers of non-invasive anti-ageing, they're on your side, using the body's own regenerative response to rejuvenate your skin and its underlying support structures.

They're all forms of energy that create heat under the dermis, heating up the collagen proteins and inflicting micro-damage that triggers the skin's healing mechanisms: stimulating the production of collagen that rejuvenates the skin; improving its elasticity and so on. Existing collagen thickens immediately; and the production of new collagen over time is triggered.



Scarlet Woman

How does ScarLet work?

By delivering fractional bi-polar RF directly into the dermis through micro-needle electrodes, it stimulates collagen formation in order to improve the look not only of saggy skin, but also of wrinkles, acne scars and large pores.

Each pulse introduces a matrix of extremely fine needles into your skin to deliver RF energy; so fine are the needles that they don't leave visible marks and the tiny wounds heal very quickly indeed. The purpose of the needles is to enable deeper delivery of the RF into the skin. Both the speed and the depth of penetration can be adjusted according to the patient's needs and levels of tolerance.

I seem to have fallen into the pleasant habit of visiting Dr Valentin Low in December each year, just before festivities commence. His cherubic charm tends to uplift my spirit, while his arsenal of high-tech machinery is guaranteed to uplift brows, cheeks and jowls – and his sharp needles to smooth away the lines of stress deepened by the prospect of Christmas family gatherings.

Dr Low's own smooth brow wrinkles almost imperceptibly as he critically surveys the ravages wrought by the past 12 months. As I'd hoped, he prescribes some minimally invasive lifting.

"We have a variety of different options for tightening the skin," he reminds me. There's Ulthera, based on ultrasound; there's the highly effective Thermage, based on radiofrequency (RF); and now there's RF-based ScarLet volumetric tightening."

"I've been doing ScarLet for around a year, with great success," he tells me. "But it's very painful, so we'll need to numb the skin a bit."

What? This is an unprecedented warning from a man who usually acts as if topical anaesthetics are only for wusses. In my experience, he simply swoops in and gets the job done before I've even had time to say ouch.

While the anaesthetic is taking effect, I ask his assistant Yean – woman to woman – to be more specific about the pain. (There's still time for me to flee, after all, and my mind wanders to that party dress in the window at Topshop.)

"Does it hurt more than Ulthera?"

Yean looks thoughtful. "The pain is different – it delivers a superficial sting a bit on the surface, but the discomfort doesn't go as deep as it does with Ulthera."

To my vast relief, however, I don't find the ScarLet treatment at all unpleasant. Valentin applies the prickly head about 50 times to each side of my face, from the upper cheeks down to the jawline, and it takes no more five minutes. Skin texture should improve after several days, he says while the overall tightening effect continues for up to six months.

With cheeks only faintly pink and a soothing balm in my handbag to apply at bedtime, Topshop here I come.

Scarlet vs Thermage

They're both based on RF energy, but one session of ScarLet costs \$900, about a sixth of what you might pay for a session of Thermage. The two technologies are not directly comparable, though. You'd only need one Thermage session – perhaps repeated after a couple of years, while three or four sessions of ScarLet are usually recommended.

Dr Valentin Low Aesthetic & Laser Clinic

290 Orchard Road
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6720 3323 | ipskinclub.com

Two To Try

#1 Review

Way to Glow – Csutura LimeLight IPL (intense pulsed light)

Best for: Freckles, sunspots, melasma and other uneven pigmentation. It also promises skin rejuvenation.

My problem: Broken capillaries on the cheeks, freckles on the chest and general ageing.

Therapist: Patricia Sia

How it feels: Uncomfortable: “like the snapping of a rubber band” is how they like to describe it. I don’t mind. The more it stings, I reckon, the stronger the effect it’s having. No pain, no gain.

Before she starts, Patricia applies a layer of icy-cold ultrasound balm to slightly numb the skin. After pulsing the applicator head over my entire face, except for the eye area, she then zones in on the tiny broken capillaries on my cheeks. Before each targeted pulse in the problem area, she numbs the spot with the very cold applicator head: simple and effective. It takes about 20 minutes.

How it works: Where there is evident pigmentation, like on my chest, the result can be immediately seen: the zapped freckle darkens. That’s because the IPL broadband light has destroyed the melanin; over three to seven days, the spot fades and disappears as the blasted melanin fragments are absorbed into the bloodstream and naturally disposed of. The same principle works for broken capillaries.

Cost: Special discount price of \$193 for *EL* readers (UP \$321)

Points to note:

- Unlike laser, there are few restrictions on who can use IPL; any salon can do it. Cutera LimeLight, however, is delivered by a medical-grade machine that can only be sold to clinics.
- As with any light-based treatment, it’s important to avoid exposing the treated area to the sun for at least two weeks afterwards; or use a high SPF product.
- LimeLight is one of their signature treatments; the others are permanent hair reduction, and salicylic acid peels for acne.

Vanessa Harvey

GloAesthetics

10 Sinaran Drive
#09-30 Novena Medical Centre
6397 7012 | gloaesthetics.sg

#2 Review

Brand New Skin – Fraxel Dual Laser Treatment

Best for: Large pores, lax skin, uneven pigmentation and ageing.

My problem: General ageing and sun damage: fine lines, some tiny broken capillaries and noticeable pores on the cheeks.

Therapist: Dr Patricia Yuen

How it feels: A topical cream applied 30 minutes before the laser treatment makes the face feel cold and numb (the feeling lasts a couple of hours). After removing the cream and covering my eyes to protect them, Patricia vigorously pushes the laser applicator over my entire face while simultaneously blowing air onto it to cool the skin. After about five minutes the skin feels hot and there is a noticeable tingling sensation, but it is not especially painful.

The first round is done with the 1550nm laser, which stimulates collagen-building; then Patricia adjusts the levels and does a second round. For the third round, she uses the 1927nm laser, which targets pigmentation and evens out the skin tone. The laser treatment takes about 20 minutes.

How it works: Fraxel Dual is a new laser technology introduced to Singapore in 2013. Two different laser lengths penetrate the skin in columns, creating a pixellated effect. Treating only columns of the facial tissue, rather than the entire skin, means less damage and quicker healing. This treatment targets both deep and superficial skin layers and can be used on any part of the body.

Cost: \$4,500 for three sessions or \$8,000 for six sessions. Three to six treatments are recommended, depending on the skin condition.

Points to note:

- The skin looks sunburnt for about four days after the treatment, and the top layer gradually flakes off; so think about scheduling sessions around business and social engagements.
- Patricia will advise what cleansing and moisturising products to use for two weeks following the treatment; some brands need to be avoided.
- As with any light-based treatment, it’s important to avoid exposing the treated area to the sun for at least two weeks afterwards. Use sun protection with a high SPF.

Katie Roberts

Dermatology, Laser & Aesthetics Clinic

290 Orchard Road
#19-01 Paragon Medical
6883 6988 | pachealthholdings.com | drpatyuen.com

Treating Acne Scars

Q&A with Dr Andrew Khoo

Q Why is acne a particular problem in Singapore?

Our warm and humid environment is part of the reason. Besides the hormones associated with puberty, the causes of acne include a change in environment, stress and the menstrual cycle.

Q What is your first consideration?

Our initial approach is always to bring the acne under control. We do this with a mix of keratolytic facial cleansers, oil-control lotions including Epiduo and local antibiotic therapy. In severe cases, oral medication such as Ro-Accutane may be required.

Q How do you treat acne scars?

Fine scars are best treated with a combination of Erbium laser resurfacing and Fraxel fractional laser therapy. The Erbium micro laser peel is best described as the gradual removal of surface irregularities, much like sanding a piece of wood with fine grade sandpaper. Its beauty is that the amount of skin removed can be adjusted down to 5-micron increments. This allows the therapy to be done accurately and safely. The Fraxel is a laser that treats the deepest areas of the skin by drilling tiny pores into the skin. This stimulates the skin to produce new collagen to fill up the acne scars from below.

Broad-based scars, on the other hand, are treated with subcision. This is a process where the skin is detached from underlying scar and tissue filler is used to elevate the scar. Individual scars can also be excised and sutured so that the resulting linear scars are hidden in natural lines. ❧

Aesthetic & Reconstructive Centre
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HAIR&BEAUTY

THE *RIGHT* CUT



If there's one thing that's underestimated in the beauty industry, it's the importance of a good haircut. The right style can do wonders to flatter your features and balance the shape of your face, and it all comes down to geometry. A seasoned hairstylist will instinctively know what will suit you best, so we asked the experts at **Alikhan Coiffure** for their know-how.

OVAL

If you have an oval face shape – characterised by a narrower jawline and forehead, with slightly wider temples – then you're lucky: your balanced proportions mean you can carry off most hairstyles.

OPT FOR: whatever you want! The sky is the limit when it comes to hairstyles. Work with your hairstylist to choose a style that highlights your best features.

AVOID: dated hairstyles and centre partings.

HEART

A broad forehead coupled with a delicate, narrow chin and jawline are the distinguishing features of a heart-shaped face.

OPT FOR: a style that draws attention to the top half of your face, such as a stylish side-swept fringe. Also, chin-length or longer layered styles will flatter your face.

AVOID: very short hairstyles that emphasise the hairline, particularly blunt fringes.

ROUND

If your face is full and rounded at the chin, with curved lines, then you're in the round category.

OPT FOR: graduated layers – the perfect way to make your face appear slimmer and minimise roundness.

AVOID: blunt cuts and tight curls.

DIAMOND

A diamond face has high, broad cheekbones and is narrower at the eyes and jawline. It's less usual than most other face shapes.

OPT FOR: something to balance your chin and jawline, like a chin-length bob or shoulder-length curls. Side-parted styles will also help flaunt your cheekbones.

AVOID: styles that don't leave any hair around the neck or chin area.



SQUARE

Square faces are characterised by a prominent jawline and wide forehead, with relatively similar proportions at the width and length.

OPT FOR: styles that will soften your angular features. Soft curls work well with square shapes, as they provide good textural contrast.

AVOID: blunt and straight-cut bobs, which will only serve to emphasise harsh lines.

OBLONG

Oblong faces are almost twice as long as they are wide.

OPT FOR: styles that break up the length of the face, such as a brow-skimming fringe or graduated curls and waves.

AVOID: very long, straight styles and centre partings, which tend to elongate your face still further. ❌

30 Merchant Road
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6438 8801

COMPETITION



A hairstyling session
Worth \$250



This month, ten lucky readers will each win a hairstyling session, including a cut, wash and blow-dry, with Dwen from Alikhan Coiffure.

Malaysian-born Dwen graduated as a hairstylist from headQuarters Academy in Vienna, Austria. Recently, he worked as a hairstylist at Hairkunst, Malaysia and has over five years' experience in working with Caucasian hair.

Visit www.expatliving.sg/competitions to enter.
Closing date: 31 January 2014.



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Dr Christopher Ng

Obstetrician, Gynaecologist
MBBS (Imperial College, UK), FRANZCOG (Aust-NZ)
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NEW YEAR Nails

Nail treatments in Singapore have certainly come a long way since the standard mani-pedi. Now, a whole host of salons offering new services, from intricate nail art to shopping, coffee and cake, have cropped up all over the island. There's something to suit everyone. Here's our list of favourite treatments to see you into the New Year.

BEST FOR: LUXURY TREATMENTS

Polished Hand & Foot Spa
695A East Coast Road
6535 3665 | polished.com.sg

If the spacious interior and the professional attitude of the staff at Polished Nail Spa isn't enough to impress you, its luxurious hand and foot treatments certainly will.

The **Sweet Orange Rejuve (\$40-\$55)** eliminates dull, dry skin with a zesty orange-infused soak, followed by an invigorating scrub with orange essential oil, walnut shells and rice bran oil. Finally, jojoba oil is massaged into the skin to hydrate and restore, followed by a wrap in hotel-style towels.



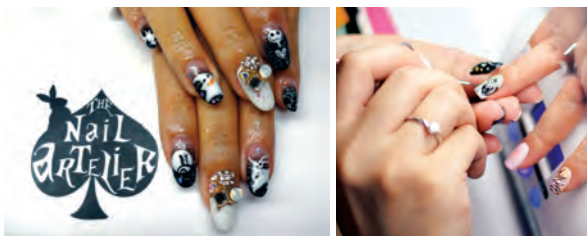
Another favourite, **Always On The Run**



(\$40-\$55) uses a detoxifying kaffir lime, ginger and cardamom scrub – which smells incredible, by the way – followed by a massage and wrap in cold towels to reduce any swelling. Both treatments finish with a classic manicure and pedicure.

Polished is one of only a few salons that distribute cult brand Deborah Lippmann nail polishes in Singapore. Frequently featured in top fashion magazines and recently used on models backstage at New York Fashion Week, colours include an unusual matt satin finish, speckled glitter or textured matt polish.

Importantly, the salon also prides itself in its use of hygienic, sterilised tools for each customer, down to the very last nail file, so you can rest assured you're in safe (and clean) hands.



BEST FOR: NAIL ART

The Nail Artelier
48 Haji Lane
6298 8028 | [facebook.com/thenailartelier](https://www.facebook.com/thenailartelier)

Since opening in the eclectic Arab quarter on Haji Lane, The Nail Artelier has built up a reputation as *the* go-to spot for nail art lovers, counting local celebrities and actresses among its clientele.

Unlike traditional nail salons that display designs for you to choose from, you can actually get your nail art tailored to your own specifications. Do you want your nails to match a snakeskin clutch for a big night out? Not a problem. Got a themed party? The manicurist will match your nails accordingly. Just provide a picture reference, and the well-trained staff will handle the rest. If you're not in a creative mood, the range of Japanese nail art magazines available will help spark your imagination.

Curious? Head down and opt for the **gel manicure** or **gel pedicure (\$55 each)** with **nail art** starting from a very reasonable **\$2** per nail. Just make sure to book your appointment beforehand, as it's usually a full house.

BEST FOR: SPA MANICURE & PEDICURE

Summer Haven
18 Cross Street
#01-04 China Square Central
6536 0400 | summerhaven.biz

A favourite of the *EL* team, this award-winning salon – which also has branches at I12 Katong and CityLink Mall – is well loved for its indulgent **Cuccio Spa manicure (\$78)** and **pedicure (\$88)**, where you can choose from a combination of four scents tailored to your skin's needs; for example, moisturising milk and honey or revitalising Tuscan citrus herb.

Summer Haven is also a great place to go to if you're looking for a spot of pampering with girlfriends, or even for kids' parties. For private events, they'll close the doors for two hours or more, depending on guest numbers, and throw in complimentary hot drinks – or if you fancy something more festive, they'll provide the wine glasses.



BEST FOR: A ONE-STOP SHOP

Manicurious
41 Beach Road
6333 9096 | manicurious.sg

A nail bar, café and retail space in one, Manicurious has nailed the concept store experience with a winning combination of nails, cake and shopping. What more could a girl want?

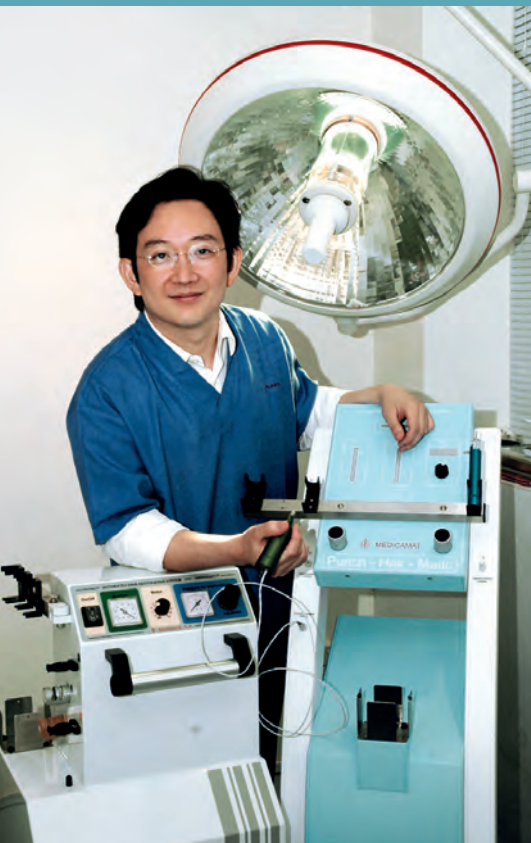
Before your treatment, you can grab Papa Palheta coffee and a cake (we recommend the strawberry lemon tart) or feast your eyes on the array of luxury bags at Bag Bistro, which stocks luxury brand names at up to 60 percent off the original price.

For the nails, choose from a range of classic services including **manicures at \$28**, **gelish from \$40**, an **organic hand and foot spa (\$38-\$48)** or, if you're feeling adventurous, you can opt for one of the nail-art designs. It also offers **BioSculpture gel nail extensions (\$80)**, a gel overlay treatment that not only lasts three weeks but also claims to strengthen and condition your nails.

If you're looking for some last-minute pampering before a night out, head to the new branch at **49 Tras Street**, which conveniently shares its shophouse premises with chic cocktail bar Jekyll & Hyde. That's pre-drinks sorted.



Don't Just Watch: Surgical Hair Transplant F.U.E



ALAXIS is a specialist clinic dedicated to hair restoration treatments and procedures. Alaxis has been performing FUE (follicular unit extraction) hair transplants in Singapore since 2007. We are also member of ISHRS and Dr Donald Ng is a Diplomate of the American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery (ABHRS). ABHRS sets the standard worldwide for certification and examination of doctors performing hair restoration surgery. We routinely perform 500-1500 grafts in a session (SGD\$3.5-8k).

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MBBS, Dip Derm(UK)

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Tel 62350880

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BEST FOR: COLLAGEN TREATMENTS AND FINISHING TOUCHES

FAVE Prestige
176 Orchard Road
#03-23 The Centrepoint
6235 7611 | [facebook.com/FavePrestige](https://www.facebook.com/FavePrestige)

If you're looking for something extra-special, a visit to FAVE Prestige is in order. Located conveniently at The Centrepoint, this nail spa specialises in hydrating treatments for hands and feet.

The popular **Collagen Mask treatment (\$30-\$40)** removes rough patches and smoothes fine lines, while the **Intense Hydrating Treatment (\$30-\$40)** uses an advanced therapy lotion and essential oils to lock in moisture. It also offers niche beauty services such as Japanese eyelash extensions and eyelash perming.

If you're partial to a bit of bling, you'll also love the diamond finish manicure, which uses products by Japanese brand 1carat.



BEST FOR: MANICURES & MAKEOVERS

Blow+Bar
7 Rodyk Street
#01-32 Robertson Quay
6238 7338 | [blowplusbar.com](https://www.blowplusbar.com)

Since opening in November 2012, Blow+Bar has become famous for its fabulous blow-out and drinks concept. Well-coiffed ladies have been heading there in their droves to get ready for anything from a night out on the town to their wedding day.

Aside from the comprehensive hair menu, the full list of nail services on offer includes a **classic manicure and pedicure (\$68)** or one with **gelish polish (\$158)**.

Busy mums will be happy to know that you can bring your little girl along for the **Princess classic nail service (from \$35)**, which makes for a good mother-and-daughter bonding session.

This year, the salon has gone one step further and added a convenient makeover service to its menu. The new **Blow+Bar Insta Makeover (\$200)** aims to get you looking and feeling glamorous in less than two hours. The package includes an express manicure, one of Blow+Bar's signature up-dos, full makeup and complimentary bubbly. 🍾

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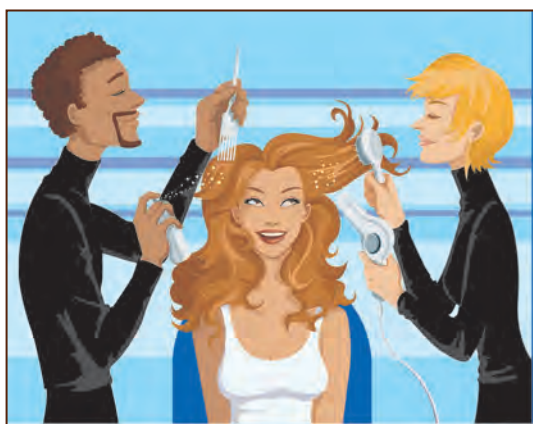


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WHAT'S NEW

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Image: Aarti Thapar

BIGGER IS BETTER

Fitness First unveiled its new flagship club this month. Located in the heart of the CBD, the 21,000-square-foot gym on Market Street sports a power zone, a boxing vault and 90 group exercises in three studios every month. The lounge offers complimentary drinks, magazines to browse, DVDs to rent and computer terminals with internet access. Watch out for new clubs at Metropolis in Buona Vista and 100AM in Tanjong Pagar in the coming months, too. 63 Market Street, Bank of Singapore Centre, Level 2. **Call 6438 3163 or visit www.fitnessfirst.com.sg.** ▼



New Year, **New You**

If you are ready to make a few lifestyle changes for the better, but don't know where to start, let **Nutritious N Delicious** be your guide. Mention *Expat Living* this month, and you'll get a free additional session when you book a six-week nutrition makeover with medical nutritionist and personal trainer, Karin G. Reiter. She's been educating her clients on the importance of natural, simple, naked (read: unprocessed) food since she founded the company in Australia in 2011. To register for a workshop on anti-ageing, detoxing, weight-loss, fertility and healthy foods for babies and kids, **call 9855 6643 or visit www.nutritiousndelicious.com.** ▲

DEAD HEAT

Having zombies on your tail is better motivation than most to finish a 5km obstacle course. **Run For Your Lives Asia** is like the original zombie run in the USA – runners navigate obstacles like a smokehouse, a maze and a blood bath while



attempting to shield three flags tied to their waists from blood-thirsty zombies. Lose all your flags and you join the realms of the infected; make it to the end with at least one "life" left, and you're a winner. 11 January at The Padang. 1pm to 11pm. Participants must be 14 or older. **runforyourlivesasia.com** ◀



BALANCE BEAM

PowerMoves Pilates in the Park is introducing **Pilates Balance**, a combination of Pilates and sports conditioning that targets the abdominals, arms and thighs. Classes use the fitball, weights and bands to build a strong core, perfect posture and improve muscle tone. **Call 6472 2221 or visit www.powermoves.com.sg.**

JUST FLOORED

Ionwood at Supreme Floors must be the world's first wooden flooring that looks spectacular, is scratch-resistant and... *boosts your health?* The floors are infused with pulverised high-grade negative ions from minerals, gemstones and compounds like germanium and tourmaline, which slowly release to promote blood circulation, reduce stress, strengthen your immune system and improve your sleep. **Call 6555 5522 or visit www.ionwoodsupsreme.com.**



TAKE OR TEACH

Union Yoga Ayurveda has deals for students and wanna-be yoga teachers this month. Mention *Expat Living* to receive \$500 off the price of its popular yoga instructor course or yoga therapy course (certified by Yoga Alliance). Also, the magic words get you one-for-one hatha yoga or yoga therapy classes (usually \$25 per class). Promo ends 31 January. **Call 8133 7608 or email unionyogaayurveda@gmail.com.** ▲

GREEN SCREEN

Catch a special screening of *May I Be Frank*, an indie movie about raw food, green juice and self-love, hosted by holistic health coach Sara Varela from **The Daily Juice**. Sara traded in wine for wheatgrass, gluten for green juice and processed food for plant-based food and lost 40 pounds after having a baby. Screening is at The HUB Singapore. To book a spot or for more information about raw food and juice-cleanse programmes, **email sara@thedailyjuice.tv.**



FOREVER YOUNG

If you're looking forward to old age about as much as you look forward to root canal treatment, then Cutis Medical Laser Clinics' age management programme, **Optimagenics**, could be the thing for you. The personalised plan, led by Dr Sylvia Ramirez, is aimed at combating those well-known, and downright depressing, signs of ageing including weight issues, thinning hair, lack of energy and drive, and low libido. Cutis Medical Laser Clinics will tailor a programme to you, pulling in experts in the fields of nutrition, exercise, hormonal optimisation and even improvement of mindset. **Call 6664 8119 or visit www.cutislaserclinics.com.**



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MBBS (Hons) (UNSW), M.Med (Surg), FRCS Edin (Gen Surg)

- Graduated from the University of New South Wales, Australia (1998)
- Senior Clinical Fellow in Vascular and Endovascular Surgery, Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney (2007)
- Registered as a Medical Practitioner with the Medical Board of Australia
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RUNNING COMMENTARY:

Why do I Run?

Just in time for New Year resolutions, here's the first of our monthly columns on running in Singapore. We'll share our favourite routes and talk about getting started, shoes, gadgets, nutrition, hashing, children's running and much more. VERNE MAREE kicks off with the question that baffles the unconverted.

Thirteen years ago, my first exploratory jog from our Orchard serviced apartment down to the river and the quays was a shock to the system. Fresh from a year in chilly London and flushed with the modest success of my first half-marathon, I'd been running and even racing regularly over 10K and 15K for more than 12 years. I thought I'd never cope in this exhausting fug – it was like running through treacle.

I did acclimatise over time, though. For me there was no choice: I find the tedium of a gym treadmill a kind of purgatory. Once a runner, always a runner – for as long as the knees hold out, that is.

8 Reasons to Run

#1 No skills are required.

Can't hit a ball? Can't throw a ball? Can't cast a fishing line? No, nor can I. But if you can put one foot in front of the other, you can run.

#2 Equipment is minimal.

Shoes, socks, shorts, vest, running bra. That's it.

#3 I can do it anywhere.

No need to drive to a field, a track, a court or a gym. Just lace up your shoes and head out of the door.

#4 It's time-effective.

It quickly elevates your heart rate and keeps it up. As little as half an hour, three times a week, is enough cardiovascular exercise to keep your heart and lungs healthy.

#5 I can do it alone.

Unlike tennis or squash, you don't need a running partner. Unlike netball or football, you don't need a team. Unlike spinning, Pilates, hot yoga or martial arts, you don't need a venue or a class. And if your day's too jam-packed, get up an hour earlier and do it in the dark.

#6 It's a great way to explore new places.

You can also do this by walking – but you cover twice as much ground in the same time if you jog.

#7 It keeps me sane.

Running burns up nervous energy, releases calming endorphins and keeps me grounded. And – unlike my friends who have taken up white-collar boxing – I don't have to hit anyone in the face unless I really want to.

#8 It's safe.

After running in South Africa with the constant fear of being attacked, the security of Singapore – even after dark – is blissful. (But I might give Sungei Boloh Wetland Reserve a miss, at least until they shoo away the three-metre croc found sprawled across the path last month.)

COMING UP

JANUARY

- 5 No Frills Run** 7.30am, 5km/10km, Punggol Park
- 11 Bizad Charity Run** 7.30am, U-Town Green (NUS)
- 11 Run for Your Lives Singapore** 1pm, 5km, The Padang

FEBRUARY

- 9 MediaCorp Hong Bao Run** 7am, 8km, venue TBA
- 15 Marina Run** 4.30pm, 5km/10km/21km, Gardens by the Bay
- 16 Terry Fox Run** 8am, 5km/10km, Big Splash at East Coast Park
- 16 Safari Zoo Run** 7am, 2.8km/6km/12km, Singapore Zoo
- 16 New Moon Khcycle MetaSprint Series 2014: Aquathlon** venue TBC, metasport.com

To ask a question, make a point or contribute to this page, send an email to verne.maree@expatliving.sg.

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Former President of Microsoft, SE Asia & Africa
Former Minister of Industry, Trade & New Technologies of Morocco*

*“The pain in my lower back is much
improved, benefits already in
temperament and positive thinking.”*

*Julian Van Kan
Head of Loan Syndications & Trading at BNP Paribas
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Stress Less

We all make New Year's resolutions that eventually fizzle out – hands up if you've already broken a no-alcohol vow; but this is one pledge that we really should abide by. Stress is a word thrown around flippantly, but managing and minimising stress is something positive we can and should do for our health, relationships and career. To start the year on an optimistic note, we asked some local specialists about the impact of stress on the mind and body, and advice on what changes to make.

By Katie Roberts

Your pulse races, the breath shortens, blood pressure rises and the body is flooded with cortisol and adrenalin. Whether it's after a run-in with a taxi driver, the kids misbehaving or a bad meeting with the boss, this fight-or-flight response is our body's natural mechanism to meet life's challenges, big and small.

Expat afflictions

Expats on international postings can be stressed by different factors from

those in their home country. For some, it's a more demanding career involving frequent international travel and late-night conference calls. **Jessica Lamb**, Assistant Director and Counsellor at **The Counselling Place**, explains this it can feel impossible to manage everyone's expectations and that this can put pressure on family relationships.

"Downtime can be infiltrated by work demands," she says, "making it hard to switch off, relax and focus on family activities. "Non-working spouses often face the pressure of 'single parenting',

while helping their family to adjust to the transition and making the adjustment themselves.

"For some who have previously had a career, there may be an identity crisis along with the ups and downs of making friendships and building up a support network in the expatriate community."

The competitiveness of expat life adds to the pressure. People feel obliged to make the most of their overseas posting by earning more, progressing professionally, exercising, living a healthy lifestyle and socialising.



Stress and kids

Children find stress much harder to articulate but demonstrate behaviour similar to that of adults, such as irritability, agitation, worry and over-thinking. They may also withdraw, experience disturbed sleep, start wetting the bed or appear anxious and clingy. They may complain about physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, loss of appetite or nausea.

Children often experience academic and social pressure, which can be compounded by missing family and friends. And, although Singapore is very westernised and largely English-speaking, there are still cultural

differences that, while interesting, can be testing on occasions.

Boiling point

Jessica says alarm bells should ring when you feel overwhelmed. "Symptoms include preoccupation, a lack of focus on the present, over-thinking and worrying, mental exhaustion and a lack of enjoyment of life, irritability and high sensitivity to criticism. There may be a focus on the negative and an inability to enjoy activities that were previously enjoyed. Other reasons for concern include unhealthy coping behaviour such as addictions, isolation, over-eating or under-eating.

"People often place very high expectations on themselves and, while many expats are high achievers with successful careers, their efforts can be undermined by irrational negative beliefs such as 'I have to be perfect', or constantly trying to prove themselves because of a deep-down insecurity."

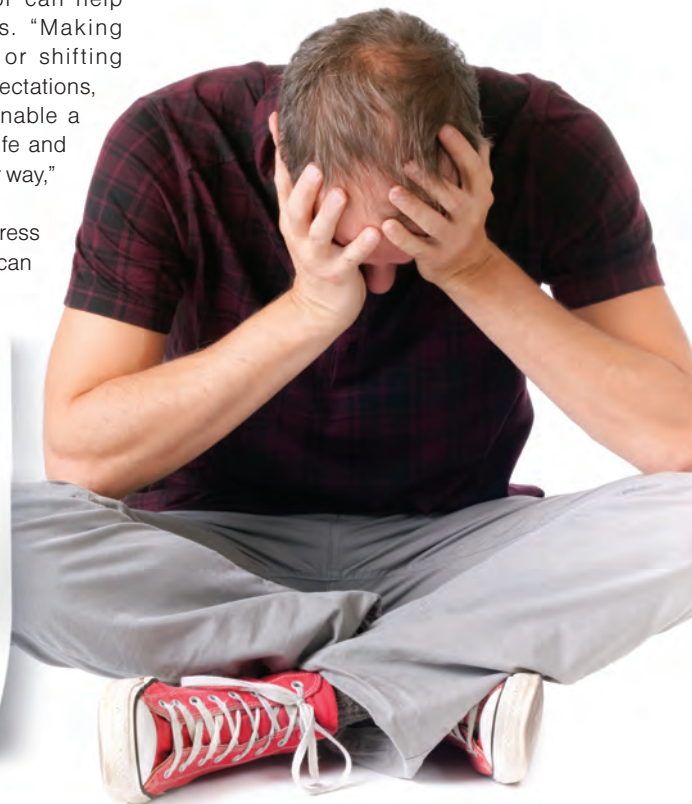
A qualified counsellor can help identify stress triggers. "Making changes in one's life, or shifting unhelpful beliefs and expectations, can relieve stress and enable a person to manage their life and life pressures in a healthier way," she advises.

Jessica also suggests stress mitigation techniques that can start immediately:

Learn to relax and self-soothe. Deep breathing exercises, visualisation, meditation and exercise can all help. Work on time management. Structure your lifestyle into manageable chunks and give yourself permission for recreational activities and free time.

Let it go

Clinical hypnotherapist **Nancy Ho**, from the **Regional Hypnosis Centre**, believes the underlying factor behind much of the stress that people experience is fear. "Fear comes from our thoughts, especially the 'what if' thoughts. These thoughts create negative emotions which trigger subconscious thoughts," she says. As many of us know, our worries and anxieties can be magnified a thousand times by constantly rehashing and replaying them in our mind – sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously – and it can become overwhelming if this persists.



Stress Trivia

1. Stress has only been recognised recently as a phenomenon. Scientist **Hans Selye** coined the term in the 1940s, and here's how he described it: "Stress, in addition to being itself, was also the cause of itself, and the result of itself."
2. Stress is one of the few English words to appear in languages that don't use a Romanised alphabet script.
3. In Chinese the symbol is made of two characters, one for opportunity and one for danger.

“Despite the signals people don't often identify their problems as stress



Nancy says unchecked mental stress has negative consequences, sometimes resulting in physical symptoms and even psychosomatic illnesses. While some people view hypnotherapy sceptically, much research has shown it to be successful in behaviour modification and change.

“Hypnotherapy is a safe, effective and practical way to work with the mind directly. While in a hypnotic, trance-like state, people are calm, focussed and often more receptive to suggestion,” says Nancy. She believes hypnosis unlocks subconscious information, such as our fears. “Finding the root cause, especially the fear factor, is the first step to deprogramming and then reprogramming the subconscious mind to deal with the fear, instead of perceiving it as a ‘sabre-toothed tiger’.”

Nancy reinforces her work by teaching patients self-hypnosis techniques to help them relax mentally. Using positive affirmations helps people remain optimistic. “I believe having a positive mindset can help people to view and deal with their problems as situations,

rather than as life-and-death issues,” she says.

Unlocking the spine

Stress is the most prolific problem that **Dr Lynelle Kerr** sees at her private practice, **Innate**. But despite the signals, she says, people don't often identify their problems as stress. “Often, during

a consultation the high-achieving, type-A people say, ‘I’m not stressed, but I have some physical symptoms going on and I can’t sleep’. I say, ‘Are you stressed?’ They often say, ‘No’.”

But, Lynelle says, deeper discussion reveals a stressful lifestyle that requires juggling a career, intensive travel and family. “Even high achievers complain

The next time you are feeling stressed, try this:

- 1. Focus on the moment.** Ask yourself: Will this really matter in two or five years' time?
- 2. Keep the situation in perspective.** A child's daily spelling mistakes may be inconsequential when children in the Philippines have lost their schools in a typhoon. Gratitude for what you have can mitigate stressful thoughts.
- 3. Breathe.** Even if you can't close your eyes, perhaps because you're driving, take 10 deep breaths. Try to relax the muscles in different areas of your body as you do so.
- 4. Look at the situation from a different point of view.** There's a flipside to every situation, and perhaps even a hidden opportunity if you open up your mind.



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“Alarm bells should ring when a person feels overwhelmed”

they are not enjoying life, despite their apparent success. They say they don't feel calm, they lose patience quickly, feel on edge, can't switch off, feel unhappy and are not enjoying life," she says.

"People wonder why they have physical symptoms, such as sciatica, headache, tension and poor posture. I believe lifestyle and stress are strongly connected, and this is manifesting itself in physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms.

"When the body is chronically stressed the brain simply disconnects, so the body cannot feel the effects of the stress and it can't switch off," she says. The sympathetic nervous system (which mediates the neuronal and hormonal stress reaction commonly known as the fight-or-flight response) gets flicked on permanently. "When people are in that state it is exhausting: their muscles are tense, their brains are racing, they are hyper-functioning and very tired, but at the same time they can't sleep."

Lynelle trained as a chiropractor, but

practises her own method that uses light spinal touches. "The spinal cord is a link between the brain and the body and I work with people at this core level to improve that connection." She believes in waking up the spine and coaxing the brain into a parasympathetic state (which promotes maintenance of the body at rest). "When the spinal cord is free of tension and functioning more effectively, people regain the flexibility and plasticity of their nervous system response.

"Once this happens they are equipped to switch the stress response on and off. When necessary, they can

function at a higher level, but are able to switch that off and return to the baseline relaxation state," she says. "If the body can interpret the stress factors more effectively, then people can have a different experience of stress. Rather than being victimised by it, they can use it to their advantage and thrive under it."

Lynelle says that once people feel their bodies relaxing and can distinguish between stress and ease, they start to say, "Wow, I was stressed after all and I didn't know it."

Now for some good news

In a recent **TED** talk, health psychologist Kelly McGonigal examined new studies which show that how you view stress can change how it affects your body. People who worry about the impact of stress are worse off, according to the health statistics. Hear what she says about rethinking stress and stress mindsets on the fabulous TED website. <http://blog.ted.com/2013/09/04/could-stress-be-good-for-you-recent-research-that-suggests-it-has-benefits/>

Heart to heart

Acute stress can cause an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, while chronic stress can also raise blood pressure and make the body more fatigued. **Dr Reginald Liew**, senior consultant cardiologist at **The Harley Street Clinic Heart Specialists** answers some questions about the impact of stress on that essential organ, the heart.

How does stress affect the cardiovascular system?

Stress can impact either indirectly or directly. For example, stress can cause blood pressure to increase (either suddenly in cases of acute stress, or chronically with persistent stress) which can put extra strain on the heart and increase the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Chronic stress can also cause persistent elevation of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, or cause chronic inflammation, which can increase cardiovascular risk.

How do repeated episodes of acute stress cause damage?

Acute stress is short-lived. Once the situation is resolved, the stress usually diminishes. It can be beneficial and create motivation, helping people focus on completing a task before



10 long-term ways to manage stress,

1. Be realistic about what you can do
2. Plan your time, commitments and activities
3. Eat a healthy, balanced diet
4. Think positively
5. Make time for yourself
6. Spend time with family and friends
7. Exercise
8. Learn some relaxation techniques
9. Get enough sleep
10. Space the major changes in your life

a tight deadline. On the other hand, acute stress may actually be detrimental, worsening anxiety and impairing one's ability to deal with the problem at hand.

Repeated episodes of acute stress can cause repeated high surges in blood pressure, which can put extra strain on the heart and circulatory system. If a person has an underlying abnormality of their brain circulation or other pre-existing heart problems (such as underlying coronary artery disease), acute stress could be the trigger for a heart attack or stroke.

Repeated stress can also cause damage in other ways, leading to fatigue, anxiety, palpitations or sleeping problems.

Are there any known links between stress and cancer?

There is no firm evidence linking stress with cancer. However, associations between the two conditions may be due to the behaviours adopted by stressed people, such as smoking, over-eating or drinking alcohol, which may increase their risk for cancer.

What lifestyle changes do you recommend?

General lifestyle advice includes eating healthily, minimising fat intake, limiting alcohol, stopping smoking, and exercising regularly. Also, it's advisable to identify the stressors and try to avoid them.





Baby blues

Despite decades of international research, the relationship between stress and fertility is inconclusive. One thing is certain: attempting but not succeeding to become pregnant can be a big cause of stress for many couples. **Dr Kenneth Wong** is a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at **The Obgyn Centre**. He says stress may affect couples who are frustrated by failed attempts to conceive naturally and, where there is no concrete cause for infertility, by the hurdles of undergoing unassisted conception.

Dr Wong reports a rising incidence in stress-related symptoms, especially with the growing awareness of conception techniques, both natural and artificial. It's accepted that couples should continue to try for one to two years before concluding that they may have a problem with natural conception.

But, he says, more women are resorting to artificially assisted reproduction to escape the stress of timed conception, even where a cause of infertility has not been established.

"Ironically, such unrealistic expectations and even the treatments themselves often increase stress levels, which in turn may compound the problem," he says.

Some research has suggested that pregnancy is more likely to occur naturally during months when couples are reportedly more relaxed. But the issue is cloudy for the success of fertility treatments, current evidence suggesting

that the success of fertility treatments is not affected by emotional distress.

"This is likely to be due to the fact that for couples with an established cause of infertility there is a high chance that a medical fix can overcome the problem. However, for couples with unexplained infertility, some doctors still believe that the effects of stress could be significant," says Dr Wong.

As for the impact on the female reproductive system, some doctors believe that hormones like epinephrine and cortisol remain high during periods of chronic stress, which could reduce blood flow to the uterus. In contrast, lower stress levels may increase blood flow or enhance proteins in the womb lining, which may facilitate implantation.

"In some studies, acupuncture has been shown to enhance success rates of IVF procedures, and some centres are currently researching the effect of massage therapy. My advice is to look at your own schedule; find time for breaks and relaxing activities which provide respite from everyday life."

Skin Deep

Dr KS Lim is a consultant dermatologist and medical director at **The Dermatology Practice**. He says the most well known effects of stress on skin are acne outbreaks, hair loss, hives and eczema flare-ups.

"It's known that stress can cause a surge in hormones, weaken an

individual's immune system and even alter the hair-growth cycle," says Dr Lim. To combat acne outbreaks, he suggests a balanced lifestyle with more sleep, exercise and water; severe cases may require a course of oral medication. For hair loss, again a healthy diet is recommended and special shampoos and lotions which minimise hair loss and stimulate hair re-growth can be prescribed. In patients with eczema, skin moisturisers and antihistamines are prescribed to relieve the itching.

Lifestyle factors are important. While it's easy to tell patients to take it easy and not to stress, that may be difficult to do in our modern society. "Distraction techniques for patients who tend to scratch their skin incessantly, like using a squeeze ball, can help. Our skins are also improved by not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol and eating a better diet," says Dr Lim. **■**

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Touching my daughter-in-law Carrie's beautiful belly – we're expecting our second granddaughter around the middle of this month – I'm reminded what a miracle birth is. On one hand, it's the most robust expression of human life, as basic as taking breath. On the other, it's an ineffably spiritual phenomenon that binds us all together as partners, families and communities.

By Verne Maree

Those who are able to take it for granted are the lucky ones; many others struggle to become pregnant or to stay pregnant. For them, modern medical advances can be the wonderful boon that enables them to realise the family they long for.

It's difficult to over-estimate the importance of choosing the right support during pregnancy and birth. Your decisions about where and how to give birth are deeply personal ones, but they will also be influenced by your doctor's professional opinion and advice.

However natural these processes may be, difficulties of various kinds are not unusual. And here's the good news: Whether you're in need of help with fertility issues or doctors to support you through the challenges of pregnancy and later to advise on and manage the birth of your baby, Singapore is a good place to be. One, you have a plethora of highly qualified and experienced doctors and specialists to choose from. Two, this little red dot boasts some of the world's most advanced medical facilities.

To all the mothers of expat babies that will arrive in 2014, we wish you the "Happy Birthday" that you deserve.

#1 MAKE IT HAPPEN

For would-be parents who are struggling to conceive because of fertility problems, DR KELLY LOI answers our questions on IVF, or in-vitro fertilisation.

Dr Kelly Loi

Who should consider IVF?

Because it is a fairly complex and stressful process with some risks involved, IVF is usually recommended only if simpler fertility treatment procedures have not worked. These simpler treatment procedures include ovulation induction with the help of fertility drugs, as well as intra-uterine insemination where sperm is placed directly into the womb by artificial means.

For some couples, however, IVF may be recommended earlier. This might happen in the case of severe male factor infertility due to abnormal sperm count or quality; or gynaecological conditions such as endometriosis, or disease or obstruction of the fallopian tubes. In endometriosis, tissue similar to the lining of the womb is deposited *outside* the womb, leading to painful periods and ovarian cysts.

Pregnancy success rates fall markedly after 40, so a woman who is approaching that age may also be recommended to try IVF earlier.

How do you decide whether to recommend IVF to a couple?

I perform a thorough assessment. For the man, a sperm analysis is needed. For the woman, investigations include:

- an **ultrasound evaluation** of the uterus and ovaries
- **blood tests** to assess her hormonal profile and ovarian reserve
- a test of **tubal patency** (absence of obstruction in the Fallopian tubes), either by means of an X-ray and dye test called a **hysterosalpingogram**, or during a diagnostic **laparoscopy**, which entails surgery under anaesthetic.



What does IVF entail?

A typical cycle starts from Day 2 or Day 3 of the menstrual cycle. Daily injections are given for 10 to 12 days to stimulate the growth of the eggs. During this stimulation phase, ultrasound scans are done to monitor the growth of the eggs. Once the eggs have reached a good size and are ready for harvesting, they are retrieved through the vagina using a vaginal probe. As this procedure is performed under sedation, there is minimal discomfort. After four to five days, the best embryos are selected for transfer back into the uterus.

What is the success rate of IVF?

Pregnancy rates range from 30 to 40 percent, depending on age; success rates fall with increasing age.

What does it cost?

Generally speaking, around \$12,000 to \$15,000.

What is your message for couples who are struggling to become pregnant?

Investigations and treatment take time, so seek consultation early.



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#2 ENJOY THE JOURNEY

According to DR JASMINE MOHD, the best thing you can do is to relax and enjoy your pregnancy. Calm mums-to-be tend to have smoother labours, she adds.

How should a woman choose her obstetrician?

Choose someone whom you can communicate with effectively and feel comfortable with. Some obs have a more traditional, "doctor-directed" approach, while others are more flexible. Find someone who has enough time to address your concerns fully.

What is your approach to the various birthing options?

If the pregnancy is uneventful and the woman is well, it only makes sense to go for a natural vaginal birth. Recovery is faster than after a caesarean section, and it makes any subsequent births very easy: they are likely to be vaginal deliveries too.

An epidural is safe for both baby and mum. It does reduce the sensation to push at the end, though, so there's a higher chance of the birth needing to be assisted with vacuum or forceps.

The use of an epidural doesn't mean it isn't a natural delivery, and it can be a handy option, especially where the labour is longer than expected. A mum isn't any less of a mum if she had an epidural. That said, I see plenty of women who sail through delivery with just gas and air, or no pain relief at all.

What would you advise someone who wants a completely natural birth, with as little intervention as possible?

I would support this if she is fit and healthy, and the baby is not too large. There are factors that make certain labours harder and longer than others, however, such as a first delivery, a larger baby, high maternal BMI (Body Mass Index), or complications like gestational diabetes – some of which may not be within one's control.



One tip that I would give women to increase their chances for a smooth natural birth is to come into the hospital only when in active labour and to avoid induction of labour unless necessary.

When is a caesarean birth the best option? What are the drawbacks, if any?

Planned caesarean deliveries are indicated in certain situations, for example placenta previa, where the placenta is overlying the cervical opening and labour progress would result in severe haemorrhage; or breech presentations that could not be turned. Emergency caesareans are also sometimes performed during labour.

Recovery from a caesarean will invariably be a little longer than that from natural birth, but most mums do well.

Where do you practise, and how many babies have you brought into the world?

I deliver mostly at Thomson Medical Centre, where my clinic is located, but

also at Mount Alvernia, Gleneagles and Mount Elizabeth hospitals.

For the past five years, until recently, I have been delivering between 25 and 30 babies every month. In my new practice, I focus on a smaller number. This allows me to spend much more time with my patients in the antenatal period, as well as during their labour.

How important is the support of one's husband or partner?

Very important! The presence of a birth support partner has been shown in many studies to improve birth outcomes. Secondly, if the partner isn't there, he might never hear the end of it!



Dr Jasmine Mohd
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 339 Thomson Road,
 #01-01 Thomson Medical
 Centre
 6235 4122
 drjasminemohd.com

#3 DOUBLE LUCK

Soon after Australian DEANNE COWL moved to Singapore from Melbourne in mid-2012 with her husband Simon and their son, she found she was expecting – twins! Obstetrician and gynaecologist **Dr Christopher Ng** and his team supported her through her pregnancy and caesarean delivery.

How did you feel during your pregnancy?

For a twin pregnancy I was pretty lucky. Initially, I had awful morning sickness, but when that passed the main objective was to carry the twins as close to term as possible.

I must admit I struggled quite a lot with the heat and humidity and spent a good portion of my last trimester walking up and down our condo pool. It was also

one of the few ways I could get to cuddle and hold my two-year-old son – in the weightlessness of the water.

Tell us about the birth of your twin girls.

They were born on August 20, 2013 at Gleneagles Hospital. I've never been readier for anything in my life – or more scared. It wasn't my first delivery, of course, but twins! That was going to be a new journey.

Millie Ann Cowl was born first weighing 2.8kg, followed by Lucy Laura Ellis Cowl at 2.64kg. Millie was the more active twin in utero and Lucy the quieter one; that hasn't changed.

They are thriving so well, and we are all loving getting to know each other. My son doesn't seem too fazed by the chaos of twins and has taken to his role of "big brudda" (as he would say it) amazingly well.

How was your experience of caesarean birth?

I was quite nervous beforehand, as my son had been delivered naturally and I was worried about the recovery and how I would manage with both the twins and my son. In the end, it was a positive experience overall, and I completely trusted Dr Chris Ng and his team. He talked me through the surgery and recovery process step by step, and answered my many questions.

When the girls were first born I was both thrilled and amazed by them – in awe of the miracle they are. It was quite an overwhelming and surreal moment and it took a little while to process it all.

The total experience in Singapore has really been wonderful. Even though we've been away from home and family and friends, we've felt so supported here by our doctors, our wonderful friends and the mum and twin support groups. 📍



66 We've felt so supported here by our doctors, our wonderful friends and the mum and twin support groups

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Water Wheels

By Amy Brook-Partridge

Spinning in water? As a self-confessed addict of spinning on dry land, I just had to give it a try. Here's what you can expect from an Aqua Spin class.

Before the class

As the classes take place in open air swimming pools (are there any indoor ones in Singapore?), slap on the sunscreen, your swimmers, socks if you think your feet may be sensitive to the pedal fins, and don't forget your towel. Bring drinking water if you like, but they do provide cups of water halfway through the session.

In the pool

Trainers and Aqua Spin owners Yannick and Alicia place the stationary bikes (ten in total) in the pool, well spaced out. They're submerged, apart from the handlebars, and the pedals have a yellow "fin" covering them. I swiftly find out that this makes them even harder to pedal in the water.

Alicia stands at the end of the pool, music blaring to get us going, and the warm-up begins, working the legs at 50 percent, 75 percent and then 100 percent capacity. We're clearly instructed to move into various positions, working at different levels to target several areas of the body and build up our cardio fitness.

The class isn't all legwork, although there's plenty of that, with more variety than in a normal gym

spinning class. We work on biceps and triceps, and even do a series of sit-ups whilst lying back on our seat with our feet gripping onto the handlebars.

The class finishes with a series of high-intensity sprints, culminating in us using our hands to keep us balanced in the water, while giving 100 percent with our legs.

After the class

I'm not going to lie: the class was tough, and I expected to feel some soreness or tightness in my legs the next day. However, the fact that you're exercising in water actually means you're also getting a gentle massage at the same time, and this helps to reduce the amount of lactic acid build-up in the thighs and consequently reduces muscle pain.

The best bits

According to Yannick, you can expect to burn 800 calories or more in a class. What's more, it can help break down cellulite and reduce the risk of varicose veins and water retention.

And finally...

Due to the buoyancy of the water, the exercise is suitable for any level of fitness, from novice to triathlete. Aqua Spin has also just launched dedicated prenatal classes, on Monday mornings at the Polo Club. The exercise is ideal for mums-to-be: you can keep cool while exercising, and the water reduces any stress on the body.

Times and Cost

Aqua Spin classes are run from Monday to Saturday, at the British Club, the Polo Club, the Swiss Club, Serangoon Country Club, One Degree 15 and the Tanglin Club. Classes can also be arranged in private pools, with group sessions starting at \$70 per person for a group of three, to \$45 for a group of six or more. [A](#)

aquaspin.sg

Georgette Chan Breast Clinic

For appointments, please contact:

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Early diagnosis and treatment are key to dealing with serious conditions such as breast cancer. Breast problems are often ignored, as women feel shy or are hesitant to talk to someone about the discomfort or pain they may be feeling.

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Dr Georgette Chan
Breast and General Surgeon
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Dr Gerald Tan is a MOH board-certified urologist with over 17 years of clinical experience. He completed a 2-year fellowship in da Vinci® roboticsurgery for prostate cancer at Weill Medical College, Cornell University, New York, and is internationally renowned for his expertise in minimally invasive robotic surgery for prostate, kidney and bladder diseases. He has received numerous top local and international awards for clinical and academic excellence, and was named the Outstanding Young Urologist of Asia by the Urological Association of Asia in 2012.

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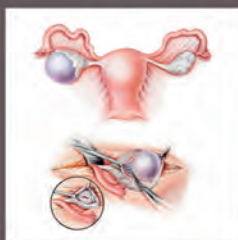
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CAPRICORN

December 21 – January 19

You're in an exciting, if unsettling, cycle of growth that began in June 2013 and continues until mid-2014. However, with the Capricorn New Moon, which encourages you to assess how far you've come and rethink your goals, actually taking place on the year's first day, being open is key. Respond to January's unsettling developments with inquisitiveness. Some are opportunities in disguise, others mere shakeups, but all broaden your horizons. Focus on learning from who and what you encounter and save decision-making for later.



AQUARIUS

January 20 – February 17

Events are swirling around you yet your own existence is oddly quiet. That's as it should be. Changes in the lives of others may upset your routine but, ultimately, you're confident it will all work out. Better yet, you're helping those who're anxious or confused deal with ongoing shifts. While yours are coming, they're in a different form. The profound personal insights that accompany the Aquarius New Moon, on 30 January, both make sense of recent changes and transform your perspective on the future.



PISCES

February 18 – March 19

Recent plans seemed perfect, but now you've no choice but to rethink them. While worrying initially, begin exploring existing options and January's many new ideas, and you'll realise there's so much more to discover and choose from. Knowing that, focus on learning what you can and meeting those who'll enrich your life, now or in the future. Lasting decisions? If others are anxious, make tentative plans. But, mostly, solid arrangements must wait until both circumstances and your own priorities are clearer.

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ARIES

March 20 – April 19

January's theme is togetherness. Relationships, at home and out in the world, take on greater importance. Often, projects and plans rely on others' support. This means discussing even simple plans frequently and having ongoing exchanges about your ideas, views and priorities. While irritating, ultimately this proves amazingly illuminating about circumstances, the individuals involved – and you. This also means developing patience, which isn't always your strength. The effort required is justified by the progress you make but even more, by what you learn about yourself.



TAURUS

April 20 – May 20

Once you understand that January's first half is about exploration and discovery, not decision-making, you'll relax and focus on learning about those you meet and the new, and often puzzling, ideas you encounter. Thus, when things come together midmonth, not only will circumstances have changed, your perspective will have, too. Importantly, you realise that because certain arrangements remain in transition, plans are best kept flexible. Although close relationships are shifting, too, they lend you vital stability during this period of transition.



GEMINI

May 21 – June 20

Obviously, you're annoyed when those whose understanding of pivotal situations is limited are allowed to make crucial decisions. Yet as December ends and during January's first half, that's exactly what's happening. When you realise others are short of facts and facing power struggles, your irritation changes to relief. You recognise your time's far better spent reconsidering the practical and financial elements of your own life. These are complex yet surprisingly dull. Still, what you learn could save you both money and anxiety.



CANCER

June 21 – July 21

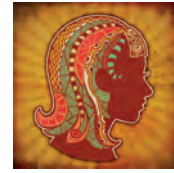
Urgent as many of the tricky situations that arise in late December and continue until mid-January seem, each is forcing you and others to review not only existing arrangements but also your views on the people and ideas involved. This may seem a distraction. But by the Cancer Full Moon on the 16th, which both heightens your feelings and brings facts together, the resulting insights could substantially alter your priorities. While this means rethinking even straightforward practical decisions, you're confident changes are vital.



LEO

July 22 – August 22

If you feel that both existing plans and your ideas about the future are being challenged, often by pointless matters, you're right. Yet when you look back, both on what you learned and the resulting changes, you'll be thankful they took place. Many are calling your attention to shifts around you and in the circumstances of others. All are crucial. Having acknowledged these, you'll be eager to get things settled. Be patient. Things are unlikely to come together until mid-February's Leo Full Moon.



VIRGO

August 23 – September 22

There's no denying that the current planetary emphasis is on life's pleasures. While, obviously, you'll enjoy this, you could feel guilty or experience conflicts about your priorities. Forget analysis and instead do something out of character. Go with the flow. Yes, this could mean making compromises. By midmonth, your perspective will have changed, enough that what so worried you won't matter. Better yet, you'll also discover new joys, personally and with others, some of which will remain rewarding for a very long time.

JANUARY

By Shelley Von Strucknel



LIBRA

September 23 – October 22

Rarely has the symbol for your sign, the scales, been more appropriate than now. You're trying to balance your personal desires, the needs of others, at home and out in the world, and practical matters. This is complicated by ongoing changes in the actual situations you're dealing with. Knowing that, ensure any plans are flexible enough to accommodate this transition. This exchanges anxieties for a more positive attitude about this disarray and, better yet, allows you to venture into unfamiliar territory with confidence.



SCORPIO

October 23 – November 21

Keep two things in mind and you'll sail through the unsettling period from late December until mid-January. First, neither events nor the decisions of others will make sense. Second, you've little control, even in those situations where you should. Unfair as this seems, confusion makes you thankful matters aren't in your hands. Meanwhile, your task is to explore, especially when options take you into unfamiliar territory, personally or intellectually. By January's close not only are those mysteries solved, everything will come together magically.



SAGITTARIUS

November 22 – December 20

Although you'll have learned a lot from the amazing ideas or offers triggered by the fantastic alliance between your ruler Jupiter and practical Saturn, on 13 December, you've plenty more to explore. Yet even this fortunate cycle doesn't excuse you from the twists and turns that arise during January's first half. While everybody's struggling, each dilemma proves instructive, so much you'll be thankful for what you learn. Focus on that rather than making and acting on plans, and you'll soon be enjoying the process.

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Air Rage Begins at Home

By Dave Fox



Budget airlines. They kind of make you feel like you felt during that dysfunctional relationship you had when you were 19. You hate them because they are totally stupid, except that they are also sweet and nice, and sometimes even a little bit cool in an annoying sort of way, and you just can't bring yourself to break up with them.

Welcome to the homepage. Be sure to read every word before you click through to the next screen in your online booking odyssey.

Keep in mind that those amazing 39-dollar fares you've seen advertised do not include airport taxes, credit card fees, or the service charge for flying on a Tuesday preceding a full moon.

Want to check in your luggage? Excellent! Do you wish to check in 10 kilograms or 12? Or 17.86? Jeez, man, what do you mean you don't know?

Oh, you're just going to pack light and pay for the smallest amount of checked luggage? Good plan. Then be sure to click that dropdown menu beneath the box that says you want to check 15 kilos – because there's a hidden cheaper option if you squint hard enough. There is, however, also a fee for squinting too hard, so don't overdo it.

Or maybe you should just go with hand luggage. Fine. Don't forget to uncheck the pre-checked box in which the airline has agreed, on your behalf, that you will pay to check two suitcases plus the bicycle of the guy seated behind you. And be prepared to jettison your old shoes at the airport if your backpack turns out to be 0.7 kilos over the limit. Because while you could have paid 15 dollars online to check a bag, if you wait until you're at the airport, the fee quadruples. Also, the airline now gets to keep your first-born child or your left kidney. (Their choice.)

Insurance? You want travel insurance? If not, then remember to uncheck that other pre-checked box. Afterwards, please click "Yes" to confirm that, no, you do not want travel insurance. Then click "Cancel" to verify that you really, seriously, swear on the life of your second-born child (which the airline does not want and accepts no responsibility for) that you wish to recklessly surrender your right to travel insurance. But understand that in doing so, you agree the airline cannot be held liable if the first officer is having a bad day and punches you. If you are unflinchingly positive that you want to waive your right to not be punched

by the first officer (a savings of seven dollars), then go ahead. Click the "Cancel" button.

Oops. Wrong "Cancel" button. Please return to the homepage to begin your booking. Or just plan an exciting MRT ride to Chinatown.

Dave Fox is a Singapore-based writing coach and a freelance travel and humour writer. For more of his stories, visit www.globejotting.com.

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