

SINGAPORE

April 2015

expat **LIVING**

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From Sulawesi
to South Africa

Free-Flowing
BRUNCHES

THE HDB OPTION

Core Issues
**REAL LIFE
STORIES**

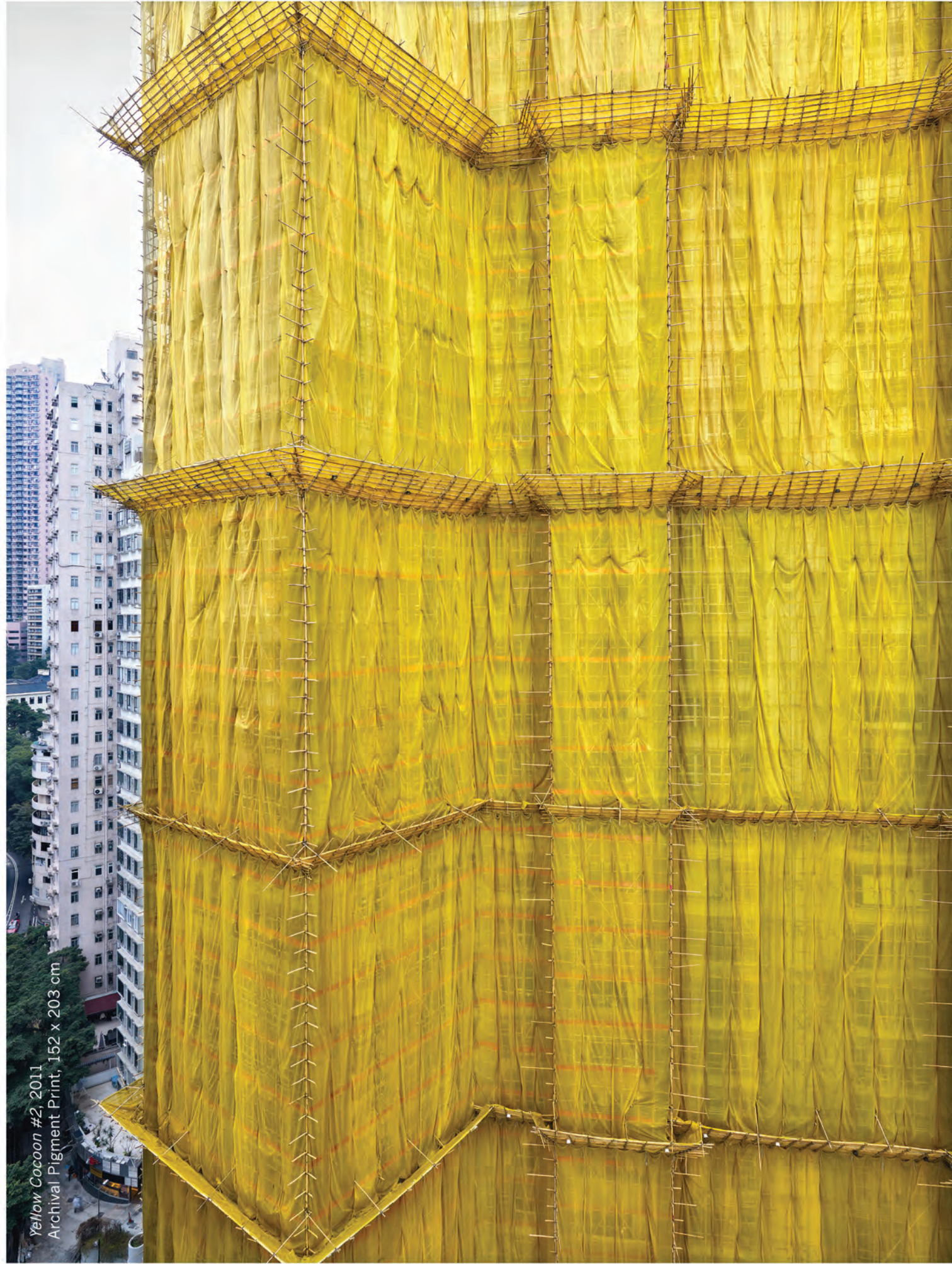
What's On
STAGE & SCREEN

At School
**HANDWRITING &
HOMEWORK HELP**

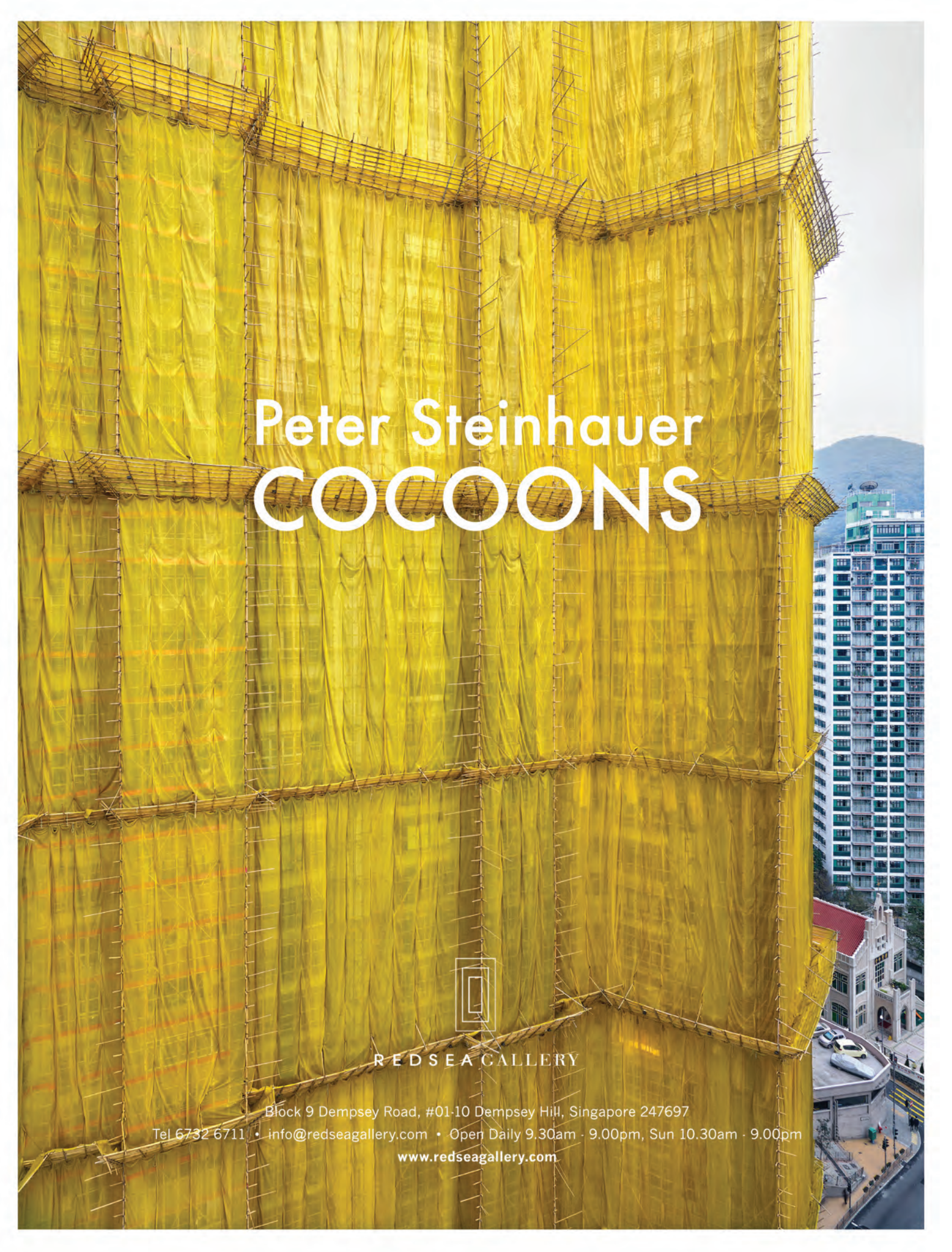
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FIT-Nite Wednesday	7.00pm - 8.00pm	Yoga/ Pilates	Sports Hub Lawn Bowls
		Zumba	100PLUS Promenade (Gate 2, Outside National Stadium)
FIT-Noon Thursday	12.30pm - 1.30pm	Kickboxing	100PLUS Promenade (Gate 2, Outside National Stadium)
FIT-Sundown Friday	6.00pm - 7.00pm	Yoga	Sports Hub Lawn Bowls
FIT-Saturday	9.00am - 11.00am	SuperFit® Functional Training - Fundamental	100PLUS Promenade (Gate 2, Outside National Stadium)
FIT-Sunday	9.00am - 10.00am	Cardio Blast	100PLUS Promenade (Gate 2, Outside National Stadium)

Please refer to **www.sportshub.com.sg/experiencesports** for latest updates



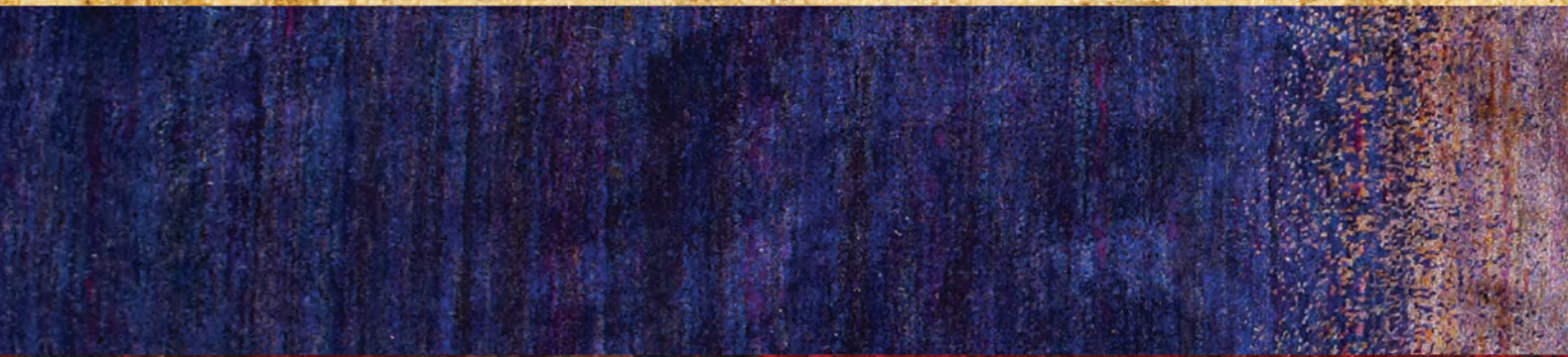
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Editor's Letter

Well, I'm done with moving home and it was all rather gory, but I will leave that story for next month. In any case, it has been totally overshadowed by our photo competition!

The response to the competition was tremendous, and trying to pick only a handful of winners out of so many good entries was just so difficult. We ended up choosing three in each category this time around, to acknowledge more people, but even so there were plenty of amazing images that we couldn't include.

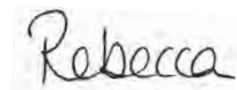
The photos were all so different and some were hdifficult to place in a category – I think we'll have to extend the categories next year. It made judging even more of a challenge. A big thank-you to the judges, all the entrants, the prize-givers, and our own Amy and Anthia who pulled it all together. Find all the results on page 164.

With more holidays coming up soon, you can start building up your portfolio of great snapshots for next year's competition!

We sometimes get asked to be more "real" and not gloss over aspects of life that we don't want to look at – well, not very often anyway. This issue features two research articles; one is on a couple of divorce cases here and how the nature of expat life can influence events; the other is on the labour-related issues that are common in Singapore and the region – it's scary to think that these kinds of problems are still prevalent in the 21st century. We hope you find the articles interesting; as usual, please do send us your views and feedback.

Now I need to go and buy some Easter eggs. Not sure what happened to February and March – they went somewhere!

Happy Easter!



REBECCA BISSET
Editor-in-Chief



Photo by Littleones Photography
(littleonesphotography.com)

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NEWS

Keeping you up to date with the latest news and promotions around town, plus heaps of online-only content.

Tip: For fabulous EL travel deals, go to expatliving.sg/travel.

EVENTS CALENDAR

You'll never miss a concert, play, sale or exhibition again. Plus, upload your own events for free by hitting "Post an Event" on the homepage (top right).

WHERE TO BUY A COPY

Head to expatliving.sg/about_us for a list of retail outlets where you can buy the latest copy of *Expat Living*. Better still, subscribe at expatliving.sg/shop.

HOW TO SELL YOUR OLD STUFF

Looking to sell off items online or in the magazine? Post all the details and photos by hitting "Post a Notice" on the homepage (middle left).

EXPAT LIVING EVENTS

COFFEE MORNING:

Wednesday 29 April

TIME: 9.30am to 11.30am

(Presentation starts at 10am)

THEME: Making a house a home

VENUE: Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery, #07-02 Tan Boon Liat Building, 315 Outram Road, Singapore 169074

COST: \$10, includes refreshments and goodie bag. Online booking is essential; go to expatliving.sg/coffeemorning



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PS We've covered HDB flats in this issue, and our next issue will focus on black-and-white colonial homes. Anyone keen on shophouses? They're next in line!

NEXT MONTH'S MAGAZINE

Black & Whites • Movers • Bones & Joints

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Editor-in-Chief

REBECCA BISSET

Group Editor

SHAMUS SILLAR

Executive Editor

VERNE MAREE

Editors

HOME, PROPERTY: AMY BROOK-PARTRIDGE

LIFE & FAMILY: KATIE ROBERTS

HEALTH, LEISURE & DINING: AMY GREENBURG

HAIR & BEAUTY, FASHION (L/M): SUSANNAH JAFFER

EDITORIAL INTERN: ANTHIA CHNG

Online Editor

CHERYLENE CHAN

Web Developer

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Client Services & Production

LEANDA RATHMELL | LIANA TALIB | NURULKHASANAH BINTI AGOST

Graphic Designers

MICHAEL BERNABE | BEATRICE NG | JEANNE WONG

Circulation

ANNA TSERLINGAS

Subscription & Administration

VALMAI DHIR | GRACE BANTARAN

Regional Business Development Manager

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Brand Communications Manager

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Advertising Sales, Singapore

KARIN GALLEY-DICK | DANIELLE ROSSETTI | LARA SAGE | JACQUI YOUNG

Finance & Administration

COLIN PURCHASE

HR

JULIET KEYS

Contributing Writers

BEATE BALDRY | CAROLYN BEASLEY | RAELEE CHAPMAN
SHELLEY VON STRUNCKEL

Contributing Photographers

EMILY CORNELIUS
KEN TAN (WITHINIMAGES.COM)

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CONTACT US**General Enquiries**

+65 6259 0058 | info@expatliving.sg

Advertising Sales

+65 6259 0058 | sales@expatliving.sg

Subscription

+65 6478 7153

subscription@expatliving.sg

Production

+65 6478 7169

production@expatliving.sg

Editorial & Media Releases

editorial@expatliving.sg

Calendar of Events

calendar@expatliving.sg

Events

events@expatliving.sg

Expat Living Hong Kong

info@expatliving.hk

sales@expatliving.hk

subscription@expatliving.hk

Websites

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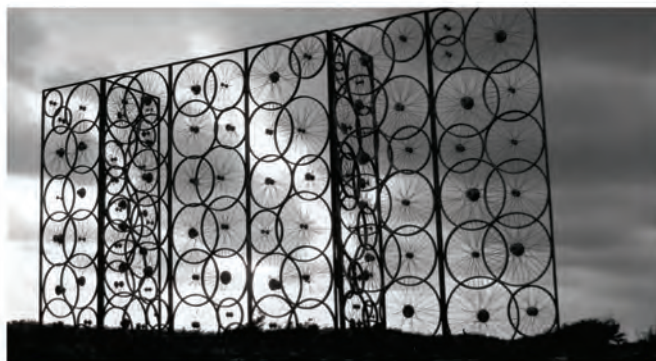
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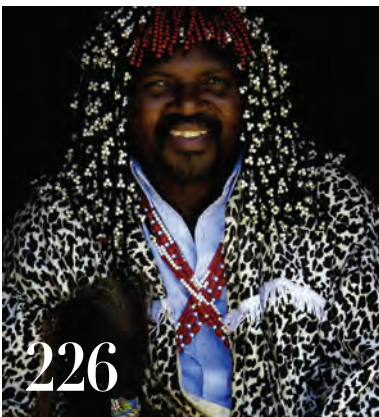


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UPFRONT

New ideas for things to do, buy and try

Sailing In luxury

Whether you're seriously browsing or simply dreaming, there are 120 boats and yachts to swoon over at the fifth **Singapore Yacht Show**, on from 23 to 26 April. See over 150 exhibitors and brands, from super-yacht builders to brokers and luxury lifestyle displays. Single-day admission ticket, \$48; multi-day entry, \$148. ONE°15 Marina Club, Sentosa Cove. singaporeyachtshow.com ▼



TULIPMANIA

No, this is not Holland. But thanks to the climate-controlled Super Domes at Gardens by the Bay, it is a floral feast, with over 40 varieties of tulips set to bloom at the annual **Tulipmania**, from 20 March to 10 May. This year's display has a fairytale theme, with

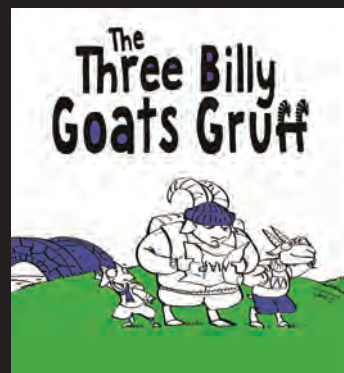


captivating blooms like the scarlet "Red Riding Hood" set in Cinderella's carriage, Rapunzel's tower, and Hansel and Gretel's gingerbread house. Flower Dome, Gardens by the Bay. Admission charges apply. gardensbythebay.com.sg



SHOPPING SENSATION

Boutiques at The Pit Building is back, and for the first time this popular fair is happening over a weekend. The largest Boutiques event ever will host 120 independent designers and boutiques including fashion, jewellery and bags, home and lifestyle décor, and children's fashion. 25 and 26 April from 10am to 6pm. The Pit Building, 1 Republic Boulevard. facebook.com/BoutiquesSingapore ▲



GRUFF GOATS

Can the **Three Billy Goats Gruff** outsmart the monstrous, greedy troll in a fight for survival? Singapore Repertory Theatre's The Little Company presents one of the world's most loved fairytales, a family adventure with catchy tunes and laugh-out-loud moments. Catch it from 2 April to 10 May; 10am on weekdays and 11am and 2pm on weekends. Singapore Repertory Theatre is at 20 Merbau Road. **6733 8166 | srt.com.sg**

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Time Travel

Outdoor fun on the beach at Sentosa is great, but what if it rains? Take a journey to discover Singapore's story from past to present at **Images of Singapore Live**. Through 15 immersive themed areas, you'll travel back in time with a mix of live actors, a boat tour and special effects. Joint tickets with Madam Tussauds available. Imbiah Road, Sentosa. Tickets \$15, adults; \$10, children. imagesofsingaporelive.com ▼



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Get ready for a new flight experience when Qatar Airways' long-awaited A350 begins flights between here and Doha in June. Singapore will be the second destination for its newest aircraft, which was a collaboration between aircraft manufacturer Airbus, engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce, and the five-star airline. According to reports from lucky passengers on its first route to Europe, the A350 provides outstanding levels of comfort. qatarairways.com



Arty Months

If you're keen to see the **Singapore International Festival of Arts**, mark 9 April in your diary: that's when early-bird tickets go on sale. This year's festival is in two editions. The first, from 17 June to 4 July, kicks off with The O.P.E.N., a pre-festival encompassing international film screenings, talks, exhibitions and an "augmented reality memory tour" of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station. Festivities will continue from 6 August to 20 September with new commissions and international productions. The early-bird offer runs from 9 April to 10 May, with 20 percent off ticket purchases. Tickets from Sistic. sifa.sg ▼



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CALENDAR

APRIL 2015

THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

(2 APRIL-10 MAY)

After a terrible drought, the Three Billy Goats Gruff decide to venture across the bridge in search of fresh, green grass to eat. But terror strikes when they realise that a goat-gobbling troll waits under the bridge – how will they outsmart the beast? Full of catchy melodies, this comical children's musical by Singapore Repertory Theatre's The Little Company will have kids in peals of laughter. **DBS Arts Centre, 20 Merbau Road. Tickets from Sistic. For more information, visit srt.com.sg.**

QUE SINGAPORE OPEN 2015

(7-12 APRIL)

Catch some of the world's top badminton players like China's Zhang Nan and Spain's Carolina Marin smash it out on the court at this premier badminton tournament, which returns for another exhilarating season. Countries such as Japan and Korea will be sending over powerhouse teams to take part in the fast-paced shuttlecock action. **Singapore Indoor Stadium. Tickets from sportshub.com.sg.**

PUBLIC ENEMY

(9-25 APRIL)

As a town is becoming famous for being a world-class resort spa, a scientist discovers that its water supply is swarming with bacteria. What happens when he tries to reveal the shocking truth? Can one man stand up to the power of the masses? A compelling and classic play based on the 1882 work by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, *Public Enemy* explores questions of democracy and freedom of expression. Directed by Glen Goei, and presented in the year of Singapore's 50th birthday, this satirical production stars veteran actors Ivan Heng and Lim Kay Siu. **Victoria Theatre. Tickets from Sistic. For more information, visit wildrice.com.sg.**

FAULTY TOWERS

THE DINING EXPERIENCE

(9-12 APRIL)

Based on the hit British comedy series *Fawlty Towers*, Faulty Towers The Dining Experience turns the audience into guests at Faulty Towers' dining room, home to the bizarre misadventures of hotelier Basil, his wife Sybil and their perennially luckless waiter Manuel. Enjoy a yummy three-course meal and lots of laughter at the classic gags and outrageous table service in this interactive performance. **Casuarina Suite A, Raffles Hotel Singapore. Tickets from Sistic.**



Faulty Towers The Dining Experience



The Three Billy Goats Gruff



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– Cherie



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CONCERT: RODRIGO Y GABRIELA**(11 APRIL)**

Mexican acoustic guitar duo Rodrigo y Gabriela returns for a sizzling night of instrumental music. Known for their frenziedly energetic performances, the powerful pair has gone from busking in Dublin's streets to touring the world and scoring blockbuster films. Expect an intense blend of rock, metal, jazz, and nuevo flamenco melodies. **Esplanade Concert Hall. Tickets from Sistic.**



Concert: Rodrigo Y Gabriela

KUMAR STANDS UP FOR SINGAPORE**(22-26 APRIL)**

Singapore's favourite drag queen and comic Kumar takes to the stage to celebrate Singapore's 50th anniversary. Leading the audience through the country's early days as a quiet, swampy island all the way to today's swarming metropolis, his biting wit will have you doubled over. **Esplanade Theatre. Tickets from Sistic.**

CONCERT: MEGHAN TRAINOR**(23 APRIL)**

Up-and-coming American star Meghan Trainor will be jetting to Singapore to perform her first show here. Known for her sassy attitude and songs touching on everything from heartache to body image, the vivacious young singer will be giving fans a memorable night full of hits like "All About That Bass" and "Lips are Movin". **The Coliseum, Hard Rock Hotel Singapore. Tickets from Sistic.**

CHARITY LUNCH: MODERN-DAY SLAVERY AND HOW YOU CAN HELP**(23 APRIL)**

Gain insight into the reality of modern-day slavery, a pressing issue that affects more than 21 million people worldwide. This buffet lunch will include a Q&A session moderated by award-winning journalist Marina Thomas, who covered Canada's first human trafficking trial. Attendees will also learn about how Lotus Culture, a social enterprise, helps women who have been rescued from forced labour to rebuild their lives. Products made by these women will also be on sale. **The Fireplace, Tanglin Club, 5 Stevens Road. To register, email sylvia.lee@emancipasia.org.**

THE 39 STEPS**(23 APRIL-10 MAY)**

Adapted from a novel by John Buchan, this fast-paced whodunit is a hilarious cross between an Alfred Hitchcock thriller and Monty Python. The two-time Tony Award-winning play follows the adventures of Richard Hannay, a dashing hero falsely accused of murder, as he comes across evil villains, dubious double agents and gorgeous women. Over 100 characters will be played by just four chameleonic actors. **Drama Centre Black Box, Level 5, National Library Building, 100 Victoria Street. Tickets from Sistic.**

STAMFORD AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE**(24 APRIL)**

Meet celebrity chef Emmanuel Stroobant at Stamford American International School's Open House and learn how his team prepares and serves up fresh, delicious and nutritious food to the students each day. Experience Stamford's state-of-the-art campus, which includes three swimming pools, two indoor sports arenas, a Golf Academy and a 500-seat theatre. **1 Woodleigh Lane. To register, visit sais.edu.sg/open-house.**



Concert: Meghan Trainor



Charity Lunch: Modern-Day Slavery And How You Can Help




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AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION'S NEARLY NEW SALE
(25 APRIL)

Browse a bevy of gently used and delightfully affordable maternity wear, baby and kids' clothes, toys and more at the American Women's Association's family-oriented sale. While you shop, the little ones can keep busy with fun activities hosted by Camp Asia. **Stamford American International School, 1 Woodleigh Lane.** For more information, visit awasingapore.org.

MOTHERLANZ MUSIC FESTIVAL
(25 APRIL)

Held on ANZAC Day, this festival is a lively toast to all things Australia and New Zealand. Aiming to bring together Singapore's expat community, the all-day affair features music, comedy, food, games, a marketplace, massage sessions and live television coverage of rugby, rugby league and AFL matches from back home. Headlining musicians include Ian Moss and The Jordan Luck Band. **Wave House, Siloso Beach, Sentosa.** For tickets and more information, visit motherlanz.com.

BOUTIQUES AT THE PIT BUILDING
(25-26 APRIL)

Gather your friends, colleagues, spouses and kids for the first-ever weekend edition of this wildly popular, well-curated shopping fair. With over 120 independent designers and bespoke shops peddling their best wares, you'll find a huge variety of gorgeous fashion, jewellery, home décor and more. The Pit Building, 1 Republic Boulevard. For more information, visit facebook.com/BoutiquesSingapore.

SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK: THE TEMPEST
(29 APRIL-24 MAY)

Absorb the splendour of Shakespeare's final play as you lounge and picnic under the stars. This magical alfresco experience brings you into the world of Prospero, the Duke of Milan, whose sorcery and illusions meddle with the fate of those around him. **Fort Canning Park.** Tickets from Sistic.



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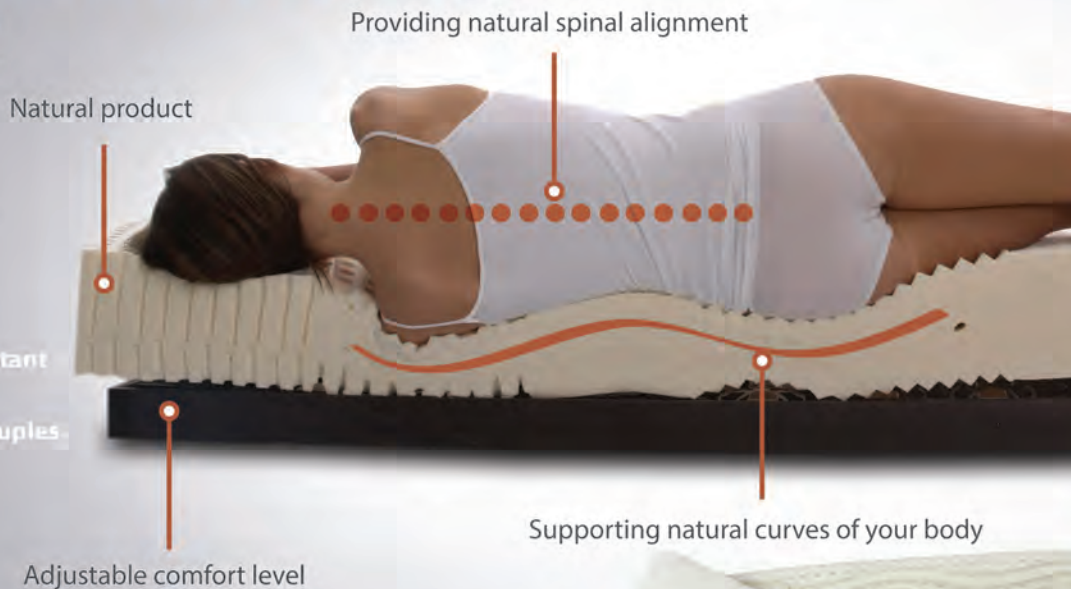


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CALENDAR

Plan Ahead

MAY 2015

CONCERT: BACKSTREET BOYS

(2 MAY)

Get ready to relive your teenybopper days! The Backstreet Boys, America's favourite boy band of the 90s, will be performing an intimate set in Singapore. Sing along to smash hits like "I Want It That Way", "As Long As You Love Me" and "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)" and swoon over their unmistakable dance moves. **The Star Theatre. Tickets from Sistic.**

NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE

(UNTIL 2 MAY)

Theatre fans won't want to miss this series of screenings that brings four critically acclaimed, star-studded British plays to audiences worldwide. This year's edition includes *A Streetcar Named Desire*, featuring Gillian Anderson as tragic Southern belle Blanche Dubois, and *Of Mice and Men*, which stars Golden Globe winner James Franco. **Esplanade Theatre. Tickets from Sistic.**



National Theatre Live



An Evening With Michael Bolton

THE GINGERBREAD MAN

(20 MAY-7 JUNE)

When an old lady and an old man decide to bake a gingerbread man to brighten their day, their sweet little creation comes to life and causes all sorts of chaos. This kids' play features adorable costumes, colourful sets, catchy songs and some interesting lessons for all ages.

Jubilee Hall, Raffles Hotel. Tickets from Sistic.

AN EVENING WITH MICHAEL BOLTON

(28 MAY)

Multiple Grammy award-winning rock crooner Michael Bolton will be in Singapore for one night only, to charm his fans with soulful renditions of his classic hits. Sway in time to heart-tugging ballads like "When A Man Loves A Woman" and "How Am I Supposed To Live Without You". **Grand Theatre, Marina Bay Sands. Tickets from Sistic.**

SWAN LAKE

(28-31 MAY)

The St Petersburg Ballet brings its magnificent production of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, undeniably the world's most famous ballet, to our city. Watch the stirring tale of a young prince who falls in love with the cursed Swan Queen come to life with dramatic choreography and moving music. **Sands Theatre, Marina Bay Sands. Tickets from Sistic.**

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LETTERS



Readers' thoughts and comments about *EL*

Best Letter

We want to hear from you! Send us your thoughts on the magazine, or on any subject under the sun. For highlighting the plight of domestic helpers, **Meghan Rivers** wins a bottle of champagne.

Crying Shame

Results of the recent survey by HOME (Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics) on the mental health problems suffered by domestic workers in Singapore are a stark reminder of the miserable conditions in which so many of these women are forced to live. Almost a quarter of the 700 Filipino, Indonesian and Myanmar women surveyed were found to be suffering from depression, psychoticism or other mental disorders.

Loneliness and homesickness are just two of the stressors. Some 73 percent reported restrictions like having their phones confiscated, or being barred from talking to other maids; 74 percent had experienced restrictions on their movements, like not being allowed to leave the house or being locked up in the house or in a room. Fifty-one percent reported verbal abuse; 35 percent economic abuse.

These are shocking statistics. Kudos to organisations such as HOME that provide shelter for maids who run away from abusive employers. Surely, though, much more could and should be done.

Meghan Rivers



Returning Reader

My family spent two all-too-short years in Singapore from 2010 to 2012 before accepting a three-year posting to London. As thrilled as we are to be back here, this time on a local contract, I was just as excited to see my first copy of *Expat Living* in three years – just as fresh, just as glossy, and still filled with up-to-the minute information on where to go and what to do.

Your March issue stories on gorgeous homes in Malaysia were food for thought: that might just be a good option for us in the future. My foodie husband so enjoyed the feature on Mexican food, and we both drooled over the travel pages, especially the Maldives article.

Luckily for us, some of the good friends we made during our first Singapore stint are still here – and *Expat Living* is one of them!

Marie Wessels

Ed: Nice to see your name on the new subscribers' list – welcome back!

Rats!

I so enjoyed Rebecca Bisset's hilarious story in the March issue Editor's Letter about her dog getting stuck in the rat glue! While I felt sorry for her young pet, as a dog lover myself, I couldn't stop laughing at the mental image of camouflage Luke, and his enjoying the crunchy peanut butter.

Sabrenu Dutt



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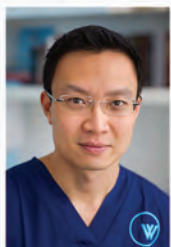
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SCENE AROUND TOWN

Recent events, openings and parties



An Evening of Theatrics

Guests enjoyed a night of drinks and dancing at the Singapore Repertory Theatre's annual The Theatre Ball, held this year at The Clifford Pier in The Fullerton Bay Hotel. Following the theme of "1933 The Red Lantern Pier" and a dress code that called for "voyagers, vagabonds, divas and dandies, tai-pans and temptresses", the event welcomed a host of fun characters including Amelia Earhart, Charlie Chaplin, Pan Am flight attendants, the entire crew of *Star Trek* and a steampunk navy admiral.



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Oriental Celebration

Pan Pacific Hotel Group ushered in the Year of the Goat with a traditional *lo hei* in the ballroom of the Parkroyal on Beach Road. Highlights included signature dishes created by Pan Pacific and Parkroyal hotels and serviced suites, including pan-fried foie gras and roast pork belly.



Race Revelry

International business leaders, prestigious guests and world-class jockeys gathered for the inaugural 2015 China Equine Cultural Festival (CECF) Singapore and to fete mainland China's first generation of international racehorse owners. The two-day event included thoroughbred racing at Singapore Turf Club, including the CECF Singapore Cup and the CECF Singapore Prestige Classic, and culminated in a cocktail party and performance by local singer Kit Chan.





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Posh Collection

Guests enjoyed cocktails at Asiatique's Dempsey Hill boutique while perusing L'Objet's new collection of luxurious home décor and dinnerware. L'Objet Chief Executive Officer James Mun was on hand to meet and greet guests.



An Inspiring Session

Recognised for his efforts to prevent the use of nuclear energy for military purposes, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, a 2005 Nobel Laureate for Peace, visited the Australian International School (AIS) to lead a dialogue and roundtable discussions with secondary students from AIS and four other local schools.



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WHAT'S NEW

Hot shops and what to buy right now

BOLD Bedspreads

Looking for a fresh new take on children's bedding? Say goodbye to fluffy bunnies and rocket ships with funky Australian brand Scout, available exclusively at Ni-Night. The capsule range includes printed duvets and sheet sets and screen-printed cushions available in sizes for everything from cots to double beds, and all in its unusual graphic aesthetic. Check it out at **Ni-Night, 7 Joo Chiat Place**, or head to **Boutiques at The Pit Building**, 25 and 26 April. ni-night.com ►



SOFA SO GOOD

L-shaped, two-seat, three-seat, or even with seats facing in opposite directions, the **Bomba Collection** sofa system offers every configuration. Available at Schiavello, the modular collection also comes with or without backrests, and can be integrated to include American oak side tables. The Schiavello showroom can be found at **1 Magazine Road, #01-05 Central Mall**, or go to schiavello.com. ▼



COMPETITION



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New Owners

FairPrice Antique is under new ownership, and promises to continue to offer carefully chosen collections of Chinese antiques, as well as high-grade reproductions. Founder Helle Espersen has moved back to Denmark, making way for successor Constanze Hohmann (*left*). Opening hours have been extended and are now from 11am until 6pm. Keep in touch with further news at fairpriceantique.com, or visit the showroom at **315 Outram Road, #01-10 Tan Boon Liat Building**.



COLOURFUL COLLECTION

Artful House's new collection showcases a range of sideboards, consoles, media units and display cabinets. The trademark style features interesting patinas, ranging from smoky wood finishes to wood stained with vibrant hues that exude warmth and character – for example, the sideboard pictured here has a smoked oak frame complemented by cherry-red doors and turquoise drawers. Visit the showroom at **315 Outram Road, #08-04 Tan Boon Liat Building** to view more of the collection. ▲

CRUISE CONTROL CLEANING

Samsung's new Powerbot VR9000 promises to be 60 times more powerful than a conventional Samsung robotic vacuum cleaner, so you can sit back and relax while it does all the hard work. Costing \$1,499, the Powerbot is available at most consumer electronic stores. For more information, go to samsung.com/sg. ▼



STACKABLE STORAGE

New brand **Sagitine** presents a mix of style and flexibility in its storage solutions. Available online at sagitine.com, the boxes come in three sizes and in either black or white, and are made from high-grade sustainable cardboard with monogrammed leather handles. You can buy them singly, and there's also an aluminium stand for maximal stacking. ▲



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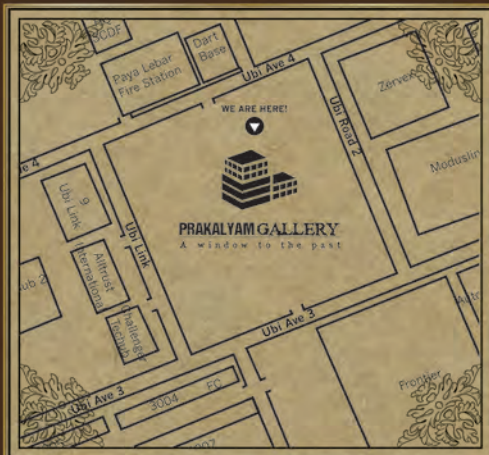
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Light and Colour

By Verne Maree; photography by Ken Tan

When Londoner FIONA PENTNEY's career in finance brought her to Singapore in 2008 for "a short time", little did she think she'd still be here seven years later, the happy owner of a light-filled quayside apartment that enjoys glorious views of the Singapore River.

Light is a huge issue for Fiona, she tells me. "When I first started working in London, I lived above a shop in student digs that had no light whatsoever; it was at the end of the Northern Line. That made a big impact on me; ever since, the one thing I've looked for in a home is lots of light!"

Her Rivergate condo is "a nice space, with a good feel," she says. "I love the surrounding greenery, and the river views are an added bonus." Though she was initially a bit worried about living so high off the ground – 20 floors up! – she's become used to it.



Two unusually big balconies, one off the living room, the other off the master bedroom, seem to “ease you into the height”, she says, lessening the potential for high anxiety.

Fiona can walk to her office near Raffles Place, or into Orchard. Good restaurants abound at nearby Robertson Quay, and she says that she loves being able to pop over the road to the new PS Café that’s just opened.

Colour

After six years of renting, says Fiona, she’d had enough of white walls. Moving into a place of her own was a welcome opportunity to change all that.

“Having decided I wanted to do something with colour, I realised that a novice like me with absolutely no idea about interior design would need some help. I came across your *Expat Living* showcase article on the home of Elizabeth Acland of E&A Interiors, so I went along to speak to her and her partner, Chloe Elkerton.

“They were very pleasant and amenable – and to my relief, they didn’t expect me to articulate what I wanted right off. Instead, they let me browse through the décor options on their own website, asking me to ‘like’ the ones that appealed to me and, if I could, to tell them why.”

Givens

As is quite usual, the designers had to work with and around Fiona’s existing possessions; especially items that were important to her, such as two old wing-backed armchairs that had belonged to her grandparents.

“They were Marks & Spencer beige,” she says, “and now they’ve been reupholstered in a lovely greenish-blue fabric. My beloved old chairs have been given a new lease on life.”

Also important to Fiona is her eclectic collection of artwork from all around the world. “Travelling is my big thing,” she explains, “and I always like to bring something back.”

In the corridor, two wonderfully detailed pen-and-ink drawings of baobabs catch the eye; Fiona explains that she bought



them in Plettenberg Bay during a trip to South Africa, because they reminded her of a previous trip to Botswana.

"In the guest bedroom, the picture of Tower Bridge takes me home. In the sitting room, the painting of sunflowers brings back memories of the year I spent in France as a student. The silk-embroidered teapots remind me of more recent travels in China; and the sand painting of monks is from Burma, as is the lacquered cabinet in the living room."

Favourites

What does Fiona like most about what E&A Interiors has done for her?

"Just everything!" she enthuses. "I especially love snuggling into the cushions on my huge new L-shaped sofa. I guess the real beauty lies in all the details, too – the lighting, the curtains, the blinds and so on.

"And the kitchen's fantastic! I'm not much of a cook, so it'll probably stay new for a long time."



Q&A with Elizabeth from E&A Interiors

What was Fiona's design brief to you?

She told us she needed new furniture, and also asked for help with space-planning and colours. It was a fairly extensive renovation, which included ripping out and replacing the tired-looking kitchen and master bathroom.

Tell us about the new kitchen.

For the floor, grey-blue, natural stone-effect tiles were cut down and laid in a herringbone design. The white-gloss carpentry and clamshell-coloured Caesarstone countertops give a fresh, Hampton-esque appeal, as does the blue-and-white bamboo-patterned blind. All the appliances are Bosch.

What did you do for the main living area?

We built a new shoe cupboard in the entrance hall with a nice marble top, and, above that, shelving for knickknacks.

The L-shaped sofa was custom-made for this space, and the cushions feature fabrics from our extensive library. The whole place needed new lighting, which we selected from the beautiful, top-quality Vaughan Designs range that you can find in our showroom (or at vaughandesigns.com).

Also custom-made, the new living-room cabinet features antique mirroring and fretwork with a distressed paint finish. On the sofa console, new lampshades in an embroidery pattern add texture and interest.



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THE WEEK-END EDITION

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To spruce up Fiona's existing dining table and chairs, we sprayed the formerly orangey wood black – “ebonising” it – and reupholstered the chairs. Pendant lighting over the dining table gives a cosier feel.

One of our Indian dhurrie rugs is under the dining table; for the living room, we chose one of the Moroccan-style Berber rugs that we're known for. We love these rugs: you can custom-order the colour, and though they have a shaggy pile, they're made from 100-percent natural wool that's just perfect for this climate.

What about the bedrooms?

For the master bedroom, we custom-made all new furniture, including the base, the headboard, the blanket box and the pink-patterned slipper chair in the corner. The original orangey parquet has benefitted from a dark walnut stain; it contrasts beautifully with the silky-soft, custom-made white rug.

Fiona's study features whitewashed carpentry for the new cupboards and built-in desk, complete with a pin-board that runs the length of the desktop.

And the terrace?

We sourced the four-seater table, the lounge and the side table from Teak & Mahogany. The flooring is original; it just needed an acid wash.

What sets E&A Interiors apart?

For one thing, we don't have a house style; instead, we try to get a vision of what the client would like and do our best to deliver that vision.

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46 Kim Yam Road

6702 4850 | eandainteriors.com

Teak & Mahogany

(for outdoor furniture)

#02-02 Century Warehouse

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6273 8116 | teakandmahogany.com

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Kitchens & Bathrooms

From cool kitchen countertops and stylish trolleys to minimalist teak sinks, or even ways to hang your towels, here's our roundup of what's hot on the market to dial up your kitchen and bathroom style.

Bamboo pendant lamp and customised elm-wood bar stools, **Just Anthony**, 379 Upper Paya Lebar Road, 6283 4782, [facebook.com/justanthony.sg](https://www.facebook.com/justanthony.sg)





1 Montana modular bathroom storage, **Danish Design**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #08-01 Century Warehouse, 6270 8483, danishdesignco.com **2** Kitchen utensils, **Make Room**, 315 Outram Road, #10-01 Tan Boon Liat Building, 9113 1274, make-room.net **3** Kitchen counter stool, **Ethnicraft Online**, showroom in Eunos by appointment only, 9272 1545, ethnicraft-online.com.sg **4** Mormor crockery, **Danish Design**



5



6



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5 Buffet cabinet, **Artful House**, 315 Outram Road, #08-04 Tan Boon Liat Building, 8112 6127, artful-house.com **6** Sari Medi cabinet, **OriginAsia**, 372/ 372A River Valley Road, 6733 7384, originasia.com **7** Amai crockery in handmade porcelain, **Galanga Living**, 211 Henderson Road #01-02, 6475 2633, galangaliving.com **8** Pruna cabinet, **OriginAsia** **9** Chinese kitchen chicken coop in teak, **Expat Auctions**, 102F Pasir Panjang, Citilink Warehouse #02-04 & #01-01, 6278 0511, expatauctions.com.sg



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GALLERY 278
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10 Elmwood shelf, Art Deco mahjong table and porcelain drum stools, **Just Anthony**, 379 Upper Paya Lebar Road, 6283 4782, facebook.com/justanthonyysg
11 Normann Copenhagen stepladder shelving in ash wood, **Lifestorey**, 1 Kim Seng Promenade #02-15 Great World City, 6732 7362, lifestorey.com **12** Maitre trolley, available in various colours, **Galanga Living**, 211 Henderson Road #01-02, 6475 2633, galangaliving.com **13** Element stand with rattan basket, **Gallery 278**, 278 River Valley Road. 6737 2322, gallery278.com



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14 Chopping boards and breadboards, **Make Room**, 315 Outram Road, #10-01 Tan Boon Liat Building, 9113 1274, make-room.net **15** Amai crockery in handmade porcelain, **Galanga Living**, 211 Henderson Road #01-02, 6475 2633, galangaliving.com **16** Universo Positivo tray, **Ethnicraft Online**, showroom in Eunos by appointment only, 9272 1545, ethnicraft-online.com.sg **17** Drift-log end teak board, available in various sizes, **Teak & Mahogany**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #07-02/03/04 Century Warehouse, 6273 8116, teakandmahogany.com **18** Handmade glass jars with genuine buffalo leather, **Galanga Living** **19** Universo Positivo fruit bowls, **Ethnicraft Online**



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20 Glass jars with wood lids, **Singapore Trading Post**, 315 Outram Road, #07-01 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6221 4619, singaporetradingpost.com **21** Zone melamine bowls in silicone, **Teak & Mahogany**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #07-02/03/04 Century Warehouse, 6273 8116, teakandmahogany.com **22** Stainless steel cutlery, **Ni-night**, 7 Joo Chiat Place, 6440 7567, ni-night.com **23** Wooden salad bowl and cutting board, **Singapore Trading Post** **24** Kitchenware and accessories, **Arete Culture**, 63 Hillview Avenue, #09-08 Lam Soon Building, 6310 8098, areteculture.com **25** Enamel tin cups, **Singapore Trading Post** **26** Normann Copenhagen washing-up bowl, **Lifestorey**, 1 Kim Seng Promenade #02-15 Great World City, 6732 7362, lifestorey.com



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27 Gubi Adnet mirror, with leather and brass finishing, **Danish Design**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #08-01 Century Warehouse, 6270 8483, danishdesignco.com **28** Ila washbasin by Karpenter, **Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery**, 315 Outram Road #07-02 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6224 7176, mountainteak.com **29** Sarah washbasin, by Karpenter, **Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery** **30** Dizzy hanging basin, by Karpenter, **Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery**



31 Crema Valencia flooring, Rosalia walls and Rosso Alicante vanity top, **Hot Spring Stone**, 34 Sungei Kadut Street 1, 6362 0085, hotspringstone.com **32** Cream Pearl flooring and walls, Ivory Onyx vanity top, **Hot Spring Stone** **33 & 34** Vanity towers with rattan baskets, **Gallery 278**, 278 River Valley Road. 6737 2322, gallery278.com

33



34





35 Bornholm towel rack, **Teak & Mahogany**, 100E Pasir Panjang Road, #07-02/03/04 Century Warehouse, 6273 8116, teakandmahogany.com **36** Yukata robe in combed cotton and satin piping, **Ploh**, ploh.com **37** Mozi bath salts, **Ni-night**, 7 Joo Chiat Place, 6440 7567, ni-night.com **38** Carved teak shelving, **Expatauctions**, 102F Pasir Panjang, Citilink Warehouse #02-04 & #01-01, 6278 0511, expatauctions.com.sg **39** Towel hanger divider by Karperter, **Mountain Teak Furniture Gallery**, 315 Outram Road #07-02 Tan Boon Liat Building, 6224 7176, mountainteak.com **40** Kitchenware and accessories, **Arete Culture**, 63 Hillview Avenue, #09-08 Lam Soon Building, 6310 8098, areteculture.com



RENTING FURNITURE

in Singapore

Whether or not it's possible to lease furniture in Singapore is a question that gets asked a lot, especially by new arrivals. The simple answer is yes. Here, the team from furniture rental specialist Lian Huat Furniture Rental explains how it works and why it's a great alternative to buying.

For many expats, the idea of renting furniture is a foreign concept. Back home, many would be more likely to inherit their grandma's hand-me-downs than to sign up for household essentials on a month-by-month basis. The prospect of doing this in Singapore, however, is a totally different story. With many expats being in transition and apartments often coming unfurnished, leasing furnishings makes a lot of sense. But how does it all work?

Lian Huat Furniture Rental was originally set up as a furniture store in the early 1960s, but founder Ng Chai Choo spotted the growing need for furniture rental as more expats flocked to Singapore's shores in the 1980s. The business subsequently moved away from retail and into rental.

Now under the management of Philip Ng, Chai Choo's son, Lian Huat's 13,000-square-foot showroom is the place to go for fuss-free furniture and furnishings. It houses a huge selection of furniture, from dining tables, desks, chairs, cupboards, sofas and storage, to wall art, appliances, linen, kitchenware and rugs.

The main reason to lease furniture in Singapore is, naturally, to save both time and money. But where do the benefits really come in?

Ten reasons why renting furniture makes sense

1. Renting cancels the cost of that shipping container which lugs your stuff to Singapore – and then all the way back!
2. Not having to wait for a container means you can spend less time in a serviced apartment. Pick your products from Lian Huat's showroom as soon as you arrive and move straight into your newly furnished home.
3. You can enjoy filling your home with quality furniture and appliances without a hefty upfront investment (moving to Singapore is expensive enough).
4. Lease payments are tax-deductible, hurrah!
5. Leave the toolbox behind as Lian Huat will service, repair or replace items under lease with no hidden costs
6. It's incredibly flexible; you can have a lease period of anything from one to 36 months. This applies to everything from a single item to a houseful of furniture. Rates include transport, installation and maintenance.
7. If you fall in love with your rented items, you can snap up your favourites under Lian Huat's lease-to-own scheme once your lease expires.
8. Want something specific? Chat to a leasing consultant about custom-making an item of furniture or resizing an existing piece.
9. If you fancy a change of style once your lease is up, you can simply pop back to the showroom and see what's new.
10. Most of all, renting furniture in Singapore is budget-friendly. From new to reconditioned furniture, the team at Lian Huat are professionals at helping expats furnish their pads according to the outlay their customers have in mind.

Lian Huat Furniture Rental

53 Kaki Bukit View
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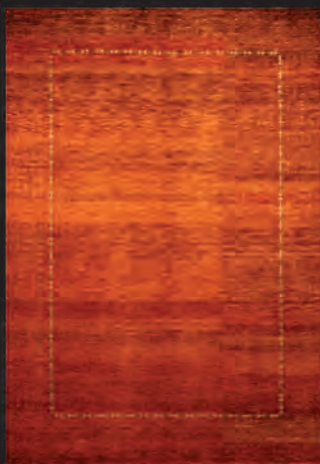
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AT HOME WITH SARA KHAFI

KEEPING KOSHER IN RIVER VALLEY ROAD

Singapore's Jewish community traces its history back to the Jewish Baghdadi traders who were doing business here even before Sir Stamford Raffles claimed the island for Britain in 1819. Iranian SARA KHAFI, who was born and grew up in Hamburg, talks to **Verne Maree** about her "miraculous" family, the orthodox Jewish lifestyle and keeping kosher in Singapore.

What brought you to Singapore?

While I was at university in Geneva, my father Chemuel Sameyeh – who was already running his international carpet dealership from Singapore – persuaded me to visit over the holidays to help him with an exhibition.

At the synagogue, my father had met a cheerful, handsome Afghani Jew called Savi Khafi Z'I, who invited us to his home for Friday night services and dinner (Shabbat); he was famously community-minded, and his home was always open to both Jews and non-Jews.

In Geneva, I'd been subsisting on a vegetarian diet because I couldn't be bothered to go to the kosher butcher, so at that first Shabbat in Singapore I was too busy tucking into the delicious

food to realise that I'd caught the eye of Reuben, the son of the house. But he came to visit me in Geneva a couple of times and the relationship developed. We were married in 1990 in Israel, where most of Reuben's family lives.

Tell us about your family.

Reuben and I looked forward to having children, but for more than five years we had difficulty conceiving. After treatment failed, a Singapore physician told me I could never have children and would not recommend further treatment.

Reuben and I were both devastated, but I refused to give up. After undergoing treatment in Israel, I finally conceived and gave birth to Devorah (now 18). I felt as though a miracle from heaven had

answered my prayers. As it turned out, I was naturally very fertile indeed, as the next four pregnancies showed!

Devorah is about to study international relations at a London university, and our second, third and fourth children are schooling at UWCSEA. David (17) will soon be doing his National Service here in Singapore; Naomi (15) is our musician, taking music for her IB; Svia (9) is our ballet dancer; and Daniel (5) is the baby of the household.

So, my message to young couples who may be struggling to conceive is not to give up, but to persevere!

You must have seen great changes in Singapore during the past 25 years.

I've seen phenomenal change. To be honest, it took a while before Singapore felt like home. Having come from Germany, I was used to the European lifestyle and good coffee, and there was very little of that when I first arrived.

Before I had kids, I worked with my father in his carpet business. More



recently, I've worked as a property agent; I was with Expat Realtor for five good years.

Fortunately, it's flexible work that can be fitted in with the needs of my children, though I have to be very organised. I'm lucky, too, to have my parents here to support me. Also, we keep the Sabbath, meaning we don't work at all on Saturdays, or even drive anywhere. That gives me time for my family, and helps me strike a balance between career and children.

Tell us about your home.

We bought this four-bedroom flat in River Valley Road some 10 years ago, off plan, luckily just before real estate prices went up quite steeply.

In a kosher Jewish household, the kitchen is the heart of the home. We had to extend and completely renovate the kitchen so as to provide for two sets of everything – one for dairy and one for meat – which is essential for keeping kosher. We have two sinks, two fridges, two sets of pots and pans, separate cutlery and separate crockery. Our helpers have to be taught kosher food preparation, too, and that's an important part of their work.



There must be a story behind your gorgeous old silver.

I do love silver! On the sideboard are our two Shabbat candlesticks and a candelabra, which have been in the family for a long time. In the cabinet is a collection of Kiddush cups in various intricate designs, Hanukkah lights, a menorah, a special serving dish for Passover, and more.

For our special Friday night Shabbat dinners, we use another formal set of

serving dishes that we keep in the big sideboard in the dining room.

Do you do much entertaining around this 12-seater dining table?

Yes, we do entertain a lot, continuing in the hospitable tradition of Reuben's family. I do the cooking, with the assistance of my two helpers. I cook mainly Persian food when we entertain – kebab, *tahdig* rice, stews with greens, and so on.



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Unfortunately, the only kosher restaurants in Singapore are the one in the Jacob Ballas Centre, next to the main synagogue in Waterloo Street, and a new kosher Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf in Orchard Central.

That means everything our family eats – for all three meals, including school lunches – has to be prepared at home. Also, entertaining at home is really our only option.

Which community structures are you involved with?

My husband is very involved with the Jewish community. We go to both the main synagogue in Waterloo Street and the one at Oxley Rise. At the Sunday school, our children have

studied Hebrew and learnt about Jewish heritage and traditions. They spent their kindergarten years at the Sir Manasseh Meyer International School in Belvedere Close, where David still goes, before moving to UWC for Grade One.

Our first three children have already gone through their coming-of-age *barmitzvah* (for boys) or *batmitzvah* (for girls). For this ceremony, the child has to learn the portion of the Torah that relates to the year of his or her birth, and read it aloud to the congregation; then there's a big party, of course.

What is it like to be an Iranian Jew in Singapore?

To give some background, Singapore's current Jewish community is made up of

locals, Israelis and expats. The original Baghdadi Jewish community has shrunk to only about a hundred, as people have moved to the US, to Israel and to Australia.

Afghani Jews like my husband are very few and far between; and if you're looking for an Iranian Jewish woman in Singapore, that's me! I'm the only one.

I love my community and my rabbi here; but sometimes I miss my family and the Iranian Jewish friends I grew up with in Hamburg. They too have moved, though, to Israel, to Los Angeles or to New York.

In recent years, the influx of Israeli and other Jewish expats has grown. What's more, they seem to be staying longer and becoming a longer-term part of the community – and that's a welcome development! 



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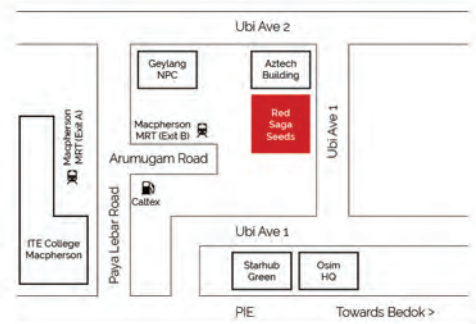
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Shopping FOR STONE

By Amy Brook-Partridge

Using natural stone such as marble or granite not only gives your bathroom a sleek, luxe look, but its hardness means it can also stand up to the inevitably hot and humid conditions in this room.

When choosing stone, you could opt for full-on luxury and deck the whole room in marble, or you could go down a less costly road by using it only for a vanity top, a shower seat, or even to cover just one wall. Here are some more tips for using this hardwearing and natural material.

Why use stone?

With no two pieces exactly the same, stones such as granite or marble add distinctiveness as well as an organic, natural element.

Which stone?

Flame-finished granite works well as shower flooring due to its non-slip texture. High-polished marble works on walls and vanity tops, and its attractive veining can add glamour to your décor. Porous stone such as limestone and sandstone should not be used in a bathroom, unless they are properly sealed.

Which finish?

A leather finish has a more textured appearance, and is often used on dark-coloured granite. It hides smudges well, and is useful in high-traffic areas. A honed or matte finish is satin-smooth and is achieved by a sanding process. A polished finish gives a sleek and slippery surface that is not the best for a bathroom floor; also, it needs greater attention when cleaning.

Looking after stone.

Stone such as marble stains quickly, so immediately clean up any spillages that might mark it. Wipe with a soft cloth; don't scrub, as this could scratch the surface. Use a natural soap or specific marble cleaner; never an acidic solution such as vinegar, as this may cause corrosion. For scratches, you could try rubbing the area lightly with very fine-grain sandpaper. And if all else fails, call in a professional marble cleaner.



Keep costs down without scrimping on style by choosing stone for just one part of the bathroom, such as this vanity unit in Serpeggiante Sivabella marble.



The floor and walls are in Desert Beige marble.

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Contemporary Colonial

Think that antiques belong to the past? Think again, says MARIE-HÉLÈNE VAN HOUTEN of **The Past Perfect Collection**, just the right person to show us how to create a contemporary home that oozes style – colonial style, that is.

By Verne Maree

Antiques are a great way to enhance any living space, believes Marie-Hélène, from homes to offices to public spaces. Incorporating one or more pieces into your home is not difficult, and it can make a huge impact on any room.

"That holds true regardless of the style of the building," she continues. Provided its size suits the space, an antique can look just as good in the sleek, austere confines of modern condos and houses as it will in a more traditional house, such as Singapore's covetable black-and-white bungalows.

We're sitting at her desk in the gorgeous Bukit Timah showroom, surrounded by a vast collection of the exquisitely restored colonial furniture and contemporary accessories that she and her husband Peter have made a business of bringing in from India since 2007. (Even this work-station is a thing of beauty: I make a rather self-conscious point of not placing my cup of Dutch coffee on its gleaming surface.)

Mix and match

"Remember that you don't have to aim for a houseful of antiques," says Marie-Hélène. "In fact, it can be incredibly effective to mix and match the old and the new."

Clicking through her comprehensive website, she points out examples of how current designers are using a solitary, stunning antique in an otherwise contemporary environment. One of her favourites is the US designer Darryl Carter, who has perfected the look.

Examples include:

- An antique dining table surrounded by modern grey upholstered chairs and a stunning artwork portraying Maria Callas against the wall (*pictured middle right*)
- An elegant antique secretaire chest of drawers in an entrance hall full of light and whitewashed walls (*pictured bottom right*)
- A Louis Ghost chair that seems to hover in front of a distinctively ornate lady's antique writing desk
- A single, stylish antique chair taking pride of place in an otherwise modern living room.



Left: Marie-Hélène van Houten

Below and opposite: Dorothee ter Kulve's black-and-white house; see our May issue for a full showcase





5 Reasons to Love Antiques

1. **Antique furniture is generally very well made**, with high quality materials and craftsmanship that's either difficult or impossible to find nowadays.
2. **Antiques are green**, reflecting an ethos of preservation and recycling that is highly desirable in today's atmosphere of conservation and sustainability.
3. **Antiques have a story**, as they carry the secrets of past communities and reflect the patina of a bygone era.
4. **Antiques offer trend-proof decorative impact**; they never go out of fashion.
5. **Antiques retain their value or increase in value**, unlike other luxury items that drop in value the moment they leave the store.

In each example, the antique stars as an accent piece. Its inclusion delivers an edgy jolt of freshness and energy, just as Marie-Hélène promised: the complete opposite of dull and stuffy!

Colonial style

Forgetting for a moment the unfortunate *punkah wallah* (a servant tasked with the manual operation of ceiling fans to cool the sahib and memsahib through the gin-and-tonic hour, during dinners and possibly also post-prandial naps), British colonial style is endlessly appealing.

What's more, as Marie-Hélène rightly points out, it's perfect for our own tropical climate, and its unique combination of practicality, innovation and decorative appeal makes it eminently suited to our own time.

British colonial style incorporates traditional themes together with a touch of the tropical and a dash of the exotic. It features the distinctive Western-style furniture – particularly for seating – that was produced during the colonial era in East and Southeast Asia, from the 16th century, when the first European settlers arrived, to the 20th century when these countries gained their independence.

The classic rattan planter's chair – traditionally placed on the wide, deep verandah of a planter's bungalow – is perhaps the essence of colonial style. A close second is the typical colonial easy chair, with a seat and back of the same cool, open-weave cane that allows air to circulate, yet has some of the comfortable “give” of an upholstered chair.

Get the look

To get the look, says Marie-Hélène:

- Choose rattan framed furniture
- Go for a mix of darker woods like rosewood and mahogany, commonly used because they were native to the region
- Add textural interest with rugs, bedding, baskets or pillows
- Keep walls light in colour, with shades of white, pale green or sea-blue
- Display a few antique maps, globes or navigational devices along with traditional Asian collectibles
- Liven up your room with greenery, especially ferns or other tropical plants
- Less is more – aim for an uncluttered look.

The Past Perfect Collection
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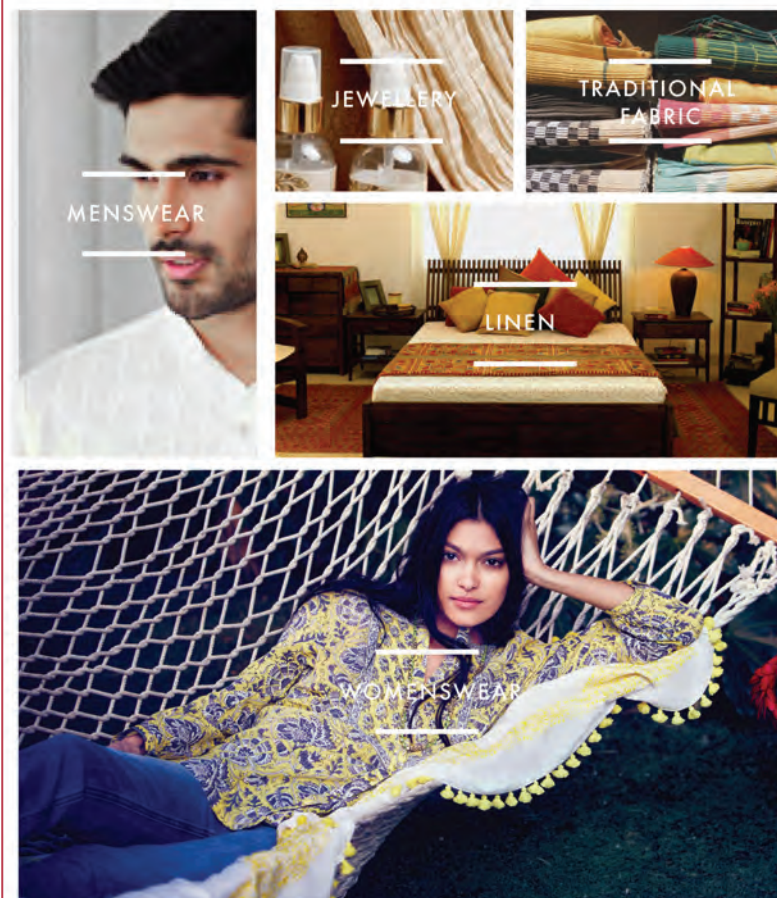
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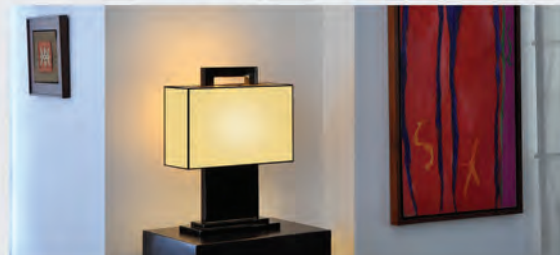
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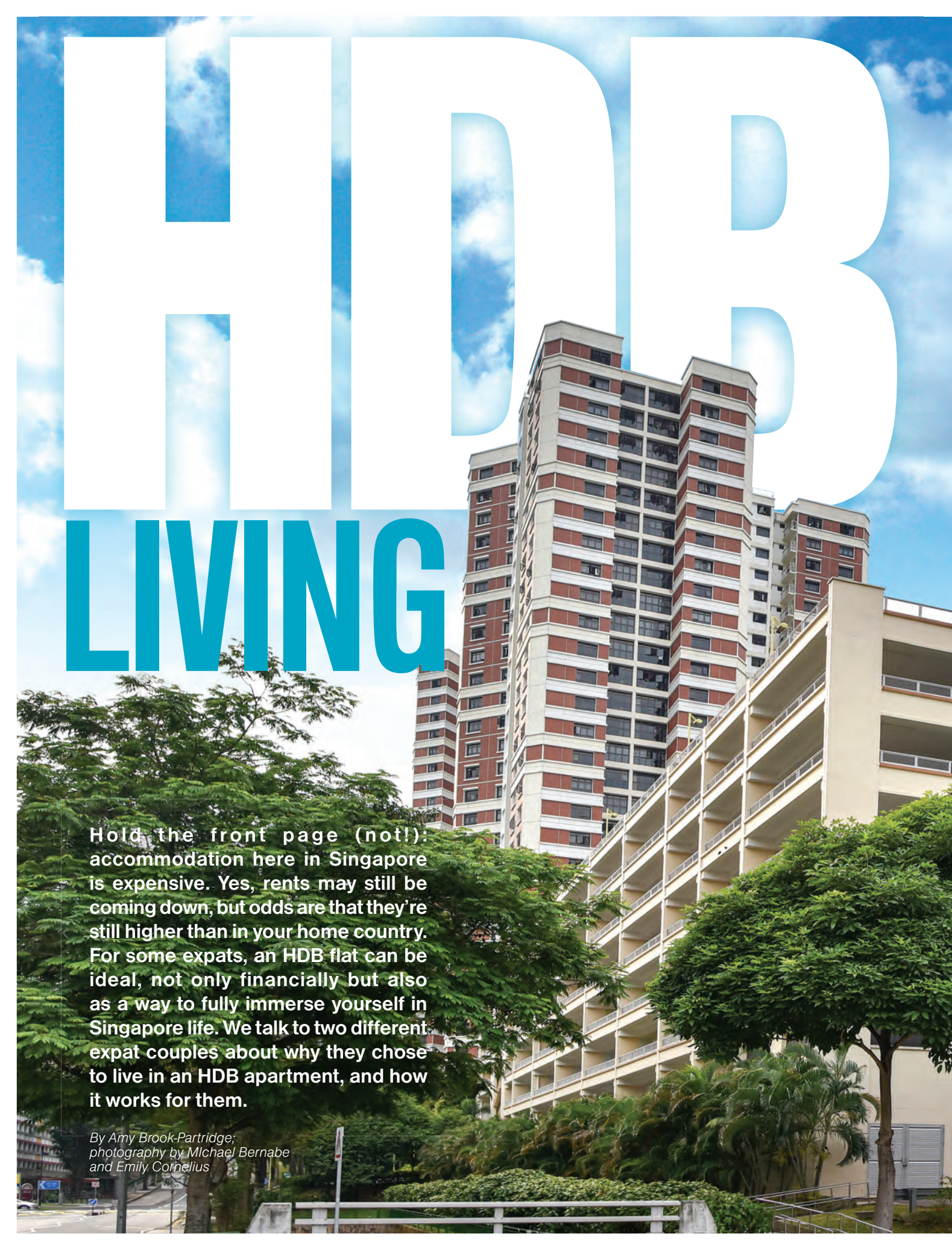
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Fraser Suites, River Valley

Property

HDB LIVING



Hold the front page (not!): accommodation here in Singapore is expensive. Yes, rents may still be coming down, but odds are that they're still higher than in your home country. For some expats, an HDB flat can be ideal, not only financially but also as a way to fully immerse yourself in Singapore life. We talk to two different expat couples about why they chose to live in an HDB apartment, and how it works for them.

*By Amy Brook-Partridge;
photography by Michael Bernabe
and Emily Cornelius*

HDB history

The Housing & Development Board (HDB), responsible for public housing in Singapore, was formed in 1960 to address the issue of housing shortages and resettle residents into subsidised state-built housing. Around 82 percent of Singaporeans now live in public housing. Social cohesion and patriotism were policies that HDB housing aimed to promote, and from 1968 citizens have been allowed to use their pension fund (CPF) to buy these homes; an incentive to work hard so as to own a stake in their own country.

Owners are eligible to rent out their flats, with written approval from the Board. Issues arising between the owners and subtenants are considered a private matter; that includes rental amounts, payment or forfeiture of deposits and the right to terminate a tenancy.

REDHILL RESIDENTS

British expats Katie and Michael

Peace have been in Singapore since 2012; their one-year-old son James was born here in February 2014. The couple relocated from the UK with Michael's job, and started Singapore life on an expat package.



"We lived in a condo out near Newton, but to be honest it was a bit ill-advised as it was still a bus ride away from the MRT station, so not wholly convenient," says Katie. "Our agent warned us that it got lots of sun, and she wasn't wrong – our bedroom was like an oven!"

Both Michael and Katie work full-time, and so found they didn't meet many people from their condo, particularly as many of the flats had their own private entrance. "I had the car as I was driving over to Malaysia for work quite frequently," says Michael. "It was okay for me, but I think Katie found it quite isolating."

After 18 months, Mike's company began discussions to relocate the couple back to the UK, but with Katie enjoying her job and both of them loving the Singapore life, they took the decision to ditch the expat package and for Mike to find another job in Singapore.

The HDB hunt

The couple realised they would have to leave their first condo and find something to suit their new circumstances. "Our key requirement was that it had to be close to an MRT station," explains Katie. They were hoping to have a baby, and so were looking for three bedrooms and air-conditioning throughout the apartment. This ruled out about 75 percent of HDB apartments, the majority of which have units only in the bedrooms.

"We didn't know anyone else who lived in an HDB. We had a look at Property Guru, but saw some real horrors," says Katie. "When dealing with agents I found it easier to communicate via SMS. I was asking three key questions: does it have air-con in the living space (which I later found out actually refers to the hall),





"We usually have play mats down here for James, but we sometimes swap them for this grey rug from IKEA."

does it have an oven, and does it have a bath. I'd get one positive answer out of three if I was lucky."

Michael and Katie had earmarked a few of the big heartland areas that were conveniently located in terms of transport to town, so they felt that somewhere along the East West (green) and North South (red) MRT lines made the most sense, even though they weren't quite sure where Michael would be working.

"We knew Tiong Bahru and Buona Vista, but we weren't so familiar with this area," says Katie. The apartment they

ended up choosing is in a block directly opposite Redhill MRT, and Tiong Bahru is one MRT stop or about a 15-minute walk away. Close by is Alexandra Canal, which Katie enjoys running along and which can take her all the way into the city. There's a hawker centre and market within a two-minute walk, as well as plenty of other convenience stores.

Within the HDB are two playgrounds and an outdoor gym. The facilities at Delta Sports Centre, along Tiong Bahru Road, include a swimming complex and an indoor play area, Tickle Tickle, ideal for James. Slightly further afield are

Tanglin Mall, the Botanic Gardens and Dempsey Hill, all either a short bus or taxi ride away.

So, with all of this convenience on their doorstep, are there any downsides? Integrating with the local residents could have been a concern, but the Peaces are already proving popular, particularly little James. "He's adored by all of the local aunties and mums, and he's got loads of friends. I made sure I met the mums and helpers and we set up a WhatsApp group to arrange regular play dates," says Katie. "I think it helps that we aren't seen as keeping ourselves to ourselves."



The bomb shelter is hidden by the front door, along with more storage space, including the shoe cupboards.



The living room has a huge amount of storage, including the cupboards at the back, which aren't used at present. There's also a bar that can be pulled out. "There's so much storage in all of the rooms that we simply can't use it all."

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The apartment came semi-furnished. The bed belongs to Katie and Michael; the side tables and all other pieces are the landlord's.



"We got these lovely stickers for James's birthday, and we were given the wall paintings by a neighbour!"



"Other apartments we saw in this HDB didn't have this wall that creates a walk-in wardrobe. The room has a lot more storage space.."



"We don't have a bath, which I'm a bit sad about. Very few HDBs have them. Many HDBs also don't come with an oven. We bought a free-standing one, and it manages rotisserie chicken, baking cakes and other cooking pretty well."

The kitchen has been renovated and is a good size, with a utility area at the back. Washing can be hung inside or out, but Katie advises getting special pegs to slot your clothing onto the pole, "to make sure they don't fall down!"

RECOMMENDATIONS

Redhill Food Centre

Wei Zhen Ban Mian ("for the best fried fish noodles and *ban mian*")
#01-09

Hao Cheng Hot & Cold Beverages ("for the best sugar-cane juice")
#01-23

Makansutra ("for the best chicken wings; there's always a queue and all they serve is chicken wings and *bee hoon*")
#01-19

I Taste ("for fresh bread, muffins and cakes")
#01-358

Other local eateries

Spruce ("great for brunch and has a kids' play area")
Phoenix Park,
320 Tanglin Road
6836 5528 | spruce.com.sg

ButterScotch ("an amazing brunch spot; their butterscotch soufflé and churros are worth getting out of bed for!")
Block 164, Bukit Merah Central
#01-3625

Open Door Policy ("still a firm favourite and just one stop away by MRT")
19 Yong Siak Street
6221 9307 | odpsingapore.com

For James

Tickle Tickle ("fab indoor play centre")
Delta Swimming Complex

The Playhouse
7 Rochester Park
6776 6683
rochesterhouse.com.sg

Tiong Bahru Park ("has an amazing outdoor adventure playground shaped like a train, complete with flying foxes and sand for the little kids to play in")





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COMMONWEALTH CONVENIENCE

Sid and Prudence live in a one-bedroom flat in Queenstown, one of the first HDB estates to be built in Singapore. It's estimated to have just over 83,000 residents; here are the couple's views on being a part of this community.

Sid and Prudence's ninth floor flat is a breath of fresh air, quite literally. With the windows open from front and back the breeze whips refreshingly straight through the apartment. This was one of Australian expat Prudence's requirements.

"I really wanted somewhere with a breeze; I wanted floor boards, not tiles; and I wanted white," she says emphatically.

The couple met at a party in Bangkok just over two years ago; and when Prudence knew she would be passing through Singapore again 14 months ago, en route to a three-month placement in Cambodia that was part of her



"The apartment came fully furnished; the only things we bought were the carpet and this couch from Craigslist. We wanted a simple couch, and there's not a huge amount of room in here; but whatever it's made of is not that comfortable – it's a bit sweaty and it's disintegrating!"





law degree course, they reconnected. "I had to focus on my placement, but after I met Sid I also realised I wouldn't be going back to Sydney to start my Masters," says Prudence.

Sid, originally from India, has been living in Singapore for over three years, initially in a condo in Farrer Park; but when the couple got together, they started to look for alternative accommodation. They found the flat through a friend of a friend, and Sid

sent Prudence, who was in the US at the time, photos and a description of the apartment before letting on that it was an HDB.

"From the pictures I thought it was amazing," says Prudence, "and although it actually works out costing slightly more than a condo, without having all those little extras, I thought the sacrifices were worth it purely for the feel it had compared to some of the condos he'd sent me information on."

Above: The bathroom is hidden from the living area, behind the dark wooden door at the back. Prudence likens the apartment space to a jigsaw puzzle, where everything just fits into place.

Below: Sid and Prudence use this area as a bedroom when they have guests, as well as an office. They searched everywhere for a screen and ended up buying this one in Mustafa for \$20.

Below, left: "The dining table is the landlord's. It's different, and it fits perfectly."





The funky bookshelf (below) in the master bedroom is the landlord's, and the sliding doors give the couple privacy when they have guests.

HDB life works well for Sid and Prudence. "Number one, it's really convenient," says Sid. "There are two MRT stations close by, plus a shopping centre and a hawker centre; and once you're inside there's really no difference between being in an HDB or a condo."

For Prudence, who experienced Singapore condo living during two of her high school years, there's a positive difference. "There's a sense of authenticity about living here, and being part of Singapore, rather than in a bubble, however nice that bubble is," she jokes.

When it comes to meeting the neighbours, Prudence admits she's no wallflower. "I'm a bit of a Harry-have-a-chat," says Prudence. "Most of the time, I'm ready to have a conversation. I know that a few doors down there's a unit that used to be occupied by the current tenant's grandfather. We've always found people friendly here."

Before the couple moved in, the flat had been fully renovated; a wall had been knocked down to reduce the number of bedrooms from two to one and create more open space. It came fully furnished, and the design seems to fit with Sid and Prudence's own tastes. "We've added a carpet and the sofa, but that really is pretty much it," she says.



Adventures in the area

When I first meet Prudence we bemoan the fact that we've smashed our phone screens; hers is far worse than mine, but for a far more exciting reason. "I love mountain biking, but my phone doesn't!" She frequently rides up around Bukit Timah, and along the Green Corridor and surrounding trails.

One activity she does miss is swimming, and as yet she hasn't ventured to any of the local public pools. "I do have a friend who lives in

Robertson Quay who goes away quite often, and when I cat-sit I get to use her condo's facilities, which is great."

For food and drinks, they amble up to Holland Village at least two or three times a week. As vegetarians, they frequent an Indian stall in the food court, and sometimes have drinks in Wala Wala; or they visit eateries in Dempsey. "Living here means we don't have to jump in a taxi and head from one spot to the other; we can explore more, and we like that," says Prudence.



The pebbles give the area an outdoorsy look, and the bar table is a great idea for the small space.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Rodalink Bike Shop
 ("for getting the bike fixed")
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 #01-14/15 One Commonwealth
 6475 4833 | sg.rodalink.com

Cha Cha Cha
 Mexican Restaurant
 32 Lorong Mabong
 6462 1650 | chachacha.com.sg

Two Chefs Eating Place ("it's just
 downstairs from where we live")
 116 Commonwealth Crescent
 #01-129

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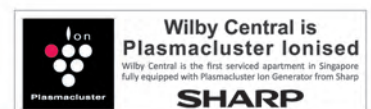
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LOCATION: It's just a short drive to The Grandstand and its many restaurants and leisure facilities, as well as Sixth Avenue and Holland Village. Apart from the range of dining places along Bukit Timah Road, the property is also close to some of Singapore's top schools, including the Hollandse School Singapore and the German European School Singapore.

WHAT'S NEW: Complimentary weekday continental breakfast is now available.

Wilby Residences Bukit Timah
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Fraser Suites

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FACILITIES: It has a 24-hour gym, a children's indoor playground, barbecue facilities (charges apply) and a relaxation hideout spot, complete with massage chairs. Daily breakfast, daily housekeeping and one-way airport transport (for stays of one month and longer) are also provided for residents. Each apartment has a well-equipped kitchen, complete with Nespresso machine, and a comprehensive home entertainment system.

LOCATION: Situated along the riverside corridor of Clarke Quay and Boat Quay, these apartments give great accessibility to the business and leisure districts. Orchard Road is a five-minute drive away; and at Valley Point shopping centre, a three-minute walk away, you will find health clinics, food outlets and a supermarket.

WHAT'S NEW: The property has received a handful of awards, including being named Preferred Serviced Apartments by *Human Resources* magazine, and earning a Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor.

Fraser Suites Singapore
491A River Valley Road
6270 0800 | singapore-suites.frasershospitality.com

MARKET Update



DEBORAH LAW

Executive Director,
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Singapore hasn't been the best place for property investors over the past couple of years; at the same time, Singaporeans have become the largest investors in overseas properties. Last year they invested a whopping US\$11.9 billion, according to one report.

What's more, this has once again been voted the most expensive country in the world to live in. So if you're looking for good value for your investment dollar, do see our overseas property listings (at expatrealor.net). We have some exciting investment properties, and a new kid on the block by way of Grove House in Manchester, England, as well as further opportunities coming soon.

It's refreshing to see old properties being saved from destruction and given a new lease on life through renovations and refits. A couple of developers in Singapore (Far East Organisation, for one) have done this – for example, with The Cairnhill and Nassim Regency. This saves valuable resources and at the same time preserves the precious history of this relatively young city.

With the oversupply of rental properties, tenants continue to enjoy taking their pick, and landlords are having to resign themselves to a longer-than-normal downturn in rental yield. Now is the time for landlords to update their properties and keep them competitive.

Hot Properties

Enjoy living in this rare and lovely ground-floor corner unit on the luxurious island of Sentosa. Surrounded by greenery, it has spacious and bright rooms, including a living room and large balcony that both have a pool view and a peaceful outlook.

Peaceful Marina

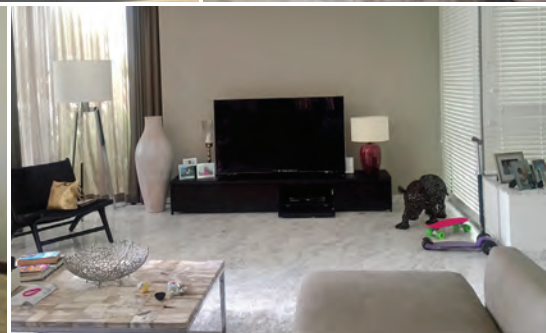
\$14,000 RENT

Size: 2,519 sq. ft

Bedrooms: 4

Type: Condominium

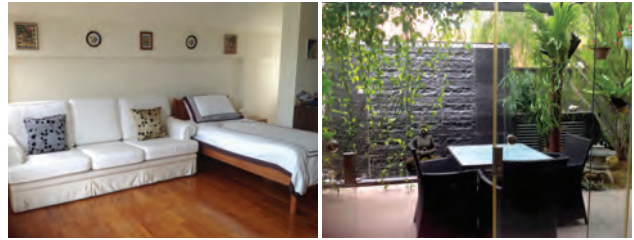
District: 4



This beautiful one-bedroom apartment is situated in a fantastic location, a walk away from Somerset MRT station. It offers high-end finishes, a private lift, a great view and a quiet aspect. This particular apartment comes partially furnished with kitchen appliances, sofa and queen-size bed, all in perfect condition.

Perfect One

\$4,200 RENT
Size: 581 sq. ft
Bedrooms: 1
Type: Condominium
District: 9



Natural Villas

\$8,000 RENT
Size: 3,750 sq. ft land;
3,200 sq. ft built
Bedrooms: 4+1
Type: Landed
semi-detached
District: 28

This beautifully renovated three-storey, semi-detached house has a large garden and a private double garage. All rooms are fully furnished with tropical furniture, and come with balconies and ensuite facilities fitted with Hans Grohe rain showers.

Located in the popular Seletar Hills Estate, the house is a 20-minute drive from the CBD on the CTE and TPE motorways, while a regular shuttle service takes you to Ang Mo Kio and Yio Chu Kang MRT stations. It's close to Seletar Aerospace Park and a short drive from the French, Australian and Stamford American international schools, as well as local schools such as the illustrious Raffles Institution and a number of well-regarded primary schools. For shopping, it's a three-minute drive to Greenwich Mall's supermarkets and convenience stores.

Haven't found a home that suits you yet?

Let us know your needs and we will sift through every property on the market to find a place that fits your profile.

Email us at property@expatrealtor.net or call **6255 1027** for more information.

International Property

UK Investment: Grove House

Manchester has outstripped London as the best place to invest in UK property. Rental yields are hitting all-time highs of nearly 8 percent, and capital growth smashed through 20 percent for 2013. The world's first industrialised city has become a supercharged magnet for investors, and average prices per square foot are still less than half of those in the capital.

Grove House, a new residential project in Manchester that's due for completion by March 2016, has 72 units over nine floors, with prices starting at £110,000. It offers a mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments, with high-quality fixtures and fittings, a secure entrance, on-site parking and landscaped common areas. The development is in a sought-after location, with fantastic transport links to the city, and it's just a 20-minute walk to Manchester United Football Stadium.

For buyers, income is assured at 7 percent per annum for the first two years. Rents are expected to rise by 4 to 5 percent per year, so £650 per month now could reach £700 in two years, giving a net yield in excess of 7 percent.

A rich vein of history runs through Manchester; household names such as Rolls-Royce, Oasis, Happy Mondays, The Smiths, Joy Division and Marks & Spencer all come from the former "Cottonopolis". The notable Manchester United and Manchester City football teams are the corner flags of the city, and Greater Manchester is home to more multi-millionaires than anywhere outside London.

Manchester University is the largest in the UK, with a student population of more than 37,000. A significant number of students remain in the city, providing a well-educated workforce and a steady stream of new tenants. The election of a mayor for Greater Manchester in 2017 is sure to further accelerate growth in this iconic city. Evidently, the UK's northern soul is thriving.



If you see a property that interests you, whether it's in these pages or somewhere online or even in the newspaper, call us **FIRST!** We can connect you with the agent and guide you through the process, right up to the end of the contract, and at **NO COST**.

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Australian *Investment*



If you're looking to purchase property Down Under, boutique real estate agency Hinternoosa has details of a rural retreat that will definitely catch your eye.

Bellbird Homestead offers a luxury escape in a stunning setting. It's within easy distance of the spectacular beaches and restaurants of Noosa, on Australia's Sunshine Coast, while located in the peaceful Noosa hinterland amidst 370 acres of beautiful landscape, pristine rainforest and thriving dams.

The layout of the 790-square-metre home is spread out across three pavilions. The landscape can be enjoyed from any room of the house through the floor-to-ceiling glass doors and large windows. The working farm encompasses multiple dwellings adjoining 3,300 acres of state forest, and currently operates as an environmentally sensitive commercial beef farm and desirable residence.

Quality education facilities are located close by, and the property is positioned 40 minutes from the Sunshine Coast airport or 90 minutes from Brisbane International Airport. With the significant drop of the Australian dollar in the past year, this can be viewed as a great time to buy a dream property to either live in or have managed as a working farm, wedding centre and luxury country stay.

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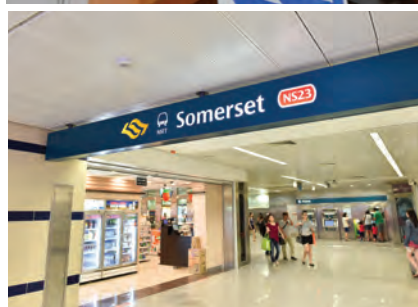
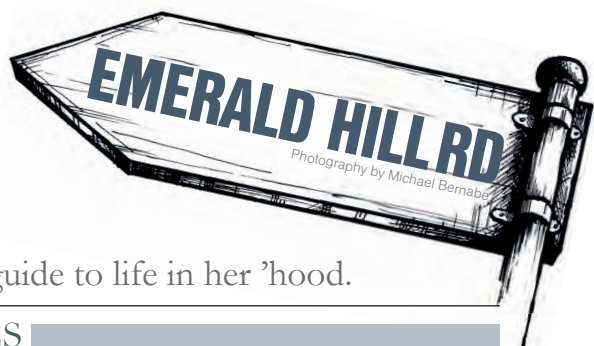
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STREET TALK

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

THE SPECIFICS



NAME: JACQUELINE CHANG DUNPHY

FROM: "Born in Shanghai, China; but Boulder, Colorado, is my hometown in my adopted country of citizenship, the US."

OCCUPATION: "I used to make a living in marketing; now I hope my baby boy's modelling career will take off, so I can be his manager!"

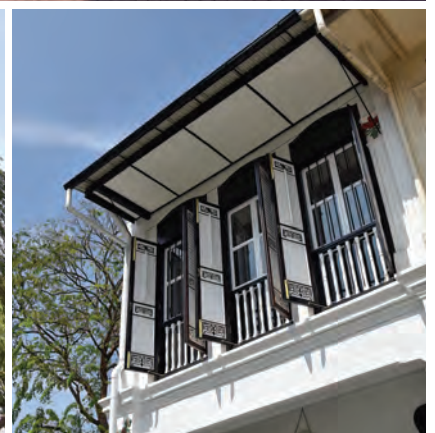
What street do you live on?
Emerald Hill Road.

Exact words you tell a taxi driver to get home?
"Emerald Hill Road near Orchard Centrepoint"; sometimes I'll add "off Cairnhill Road".

Closest MRT station?
Somerset.

How long have you lived here?
Two years.

Why here?
People may think we selected our house for its location; it's close to downtown and Orchard Road. In fact, we fell in love with the shophouse. After moving in, we realised that the street is postcard-perfect and peaceful – a tranquil oasis compared with the busy excitement of Orchard Road.



THE SCENE

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

The beautifully restored shophouse of my neighbour, Mr Andrews. His home is marked by elegant Chinese character signs accented with gold leaf. On any given day, it's common to see tourists taking pictures of his house. I always find myself thinking, "Hmmm, what's wrong with my house? Why aren't you taking pictures of my house?"

The closest store to your front door is:

The three popular bars at the end of our street that are filled with punters from early afternoon until 2am. Despite having these bars just steps away, can you believe I've still not managed to find the time to visit?!

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

Desperate Housewives.

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

Odd, creative parking solutions! Our street is a small, tight lane and it doesn't take much to disrupt the traffic flow.

The unofficial uniform of your street is:

Large, dangling cameras. Whether they're tourists, or fashion photographers trying to capture the neighbourhood backdrop, we see the full spectrum of amateur to professional camera paraphernalia on display.

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

Martha Stewart, ready to tackle the Singapore edition of *Living with Martha Stewart*. Or Kim, Kanye and North, ready to make *The Kardashians take Singapore*!

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

Skip off to the wet market in Tiong Bahru to capture the daily rhythm of local life in Singapore.

If you're missing home, you:

Slip over to Chinatown for a quick dose of my hometown culture, as I was born in Shanghai. I also enjoy eating at Din Tai Fung.

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

The Singapore Zoo and its resident pandas. We end the day with a stop at Newton Circus Food Centre to sample Singapore's diverse food culture.

A common myth about your neighbourhood is:

That it's noisy and occupied by expats, because of its location off Orchard Road. Neither of these assumptions aligns with our experiences. While it is a little touristy at the junction with Orchard Road, if you keep walking, it is surprisingly peaceful. And more than half of our neighbours are Singaporean.

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

My restless 18-month-old son.



THE SUPERLATIVES

Your favourite neighbourhood joints are:

The Library at Orchard Gateway – time disappears when you indulge yourself in reading a good book; Sacha & Sons, a New York delicatessen in Mandarin Gallery; and the Food Court in 111 Somerset.

You won't find better local food than at:

Noodle Palace in Orchard Gateway.

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

The professional photographers who organise fashion shoots on almost a daily basis; it took us a while to get used to them. The models are often dressed in outrageous outfits. On one day I saw three different photo shoots taking place at the same time.

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

The food court on the ground floor of 111 Somerset Road; it's very clean, has delicious food at affordable prices, and it's never overcrowded. It's a hidden gem.

The guiltiest pleasure in your area is:

The Cold Stone Creamery; who can resist the temptation of ice cream? There are so many pleasures here, but this is the one that makes me feel guiltiest.

One thing you'd never change is:

The beautiful heritage architecture of the shophouses lining our street.

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

Disruption from the high-rise construction on Cairnhill Road, because it's the only vehicle access road to Emerald Hill Road.

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

Tackle two challenges: give all the shophouses, walls and gates a fresh and colourful paint job; and make the street more kid-friendly by adding some playground areas and installing more safety barriers to keep children safe from vehicles. **11**



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



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Life & Family



Photo competition entry: "Beach Swing" by Sarah Purchase

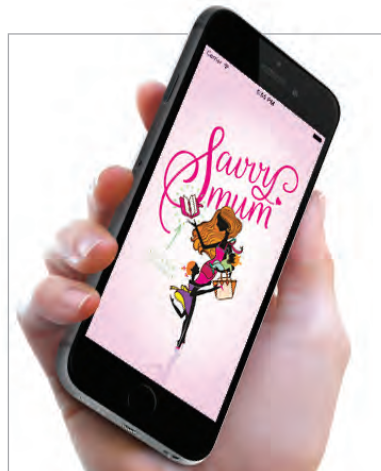
WHAT'S NEW

Latest updates for parents & children



WONDER KIDS

New to the extensive class programme at children's fitness and development centre **The Little Gym of Singapore East** is The WonderKids Club. Choose from a three-hour session focused on interactive learning experiences, structured play sessions, or an exploration of children's innate sense of wonder. All classes are suitable for three-to-four-year-olds. Joining WonderKids Club doesn't require a long-term commitment; enrol for a term of once- or twice-a-week sessions. 6 Raffles Boulevard, #03-163/164, Marina Square. **6336 9734 | thelittlegym.com.sg**



Super-Organised

"Organisation!" is the catch cry of all busy mums as they juggle kids, work and partners. Enter new app **Savvy Mum**, a clever way to make life more manageable. To-do lists are sorted by 12 categories, a social planner keeps track of invitations and there is a handy checklist for home parties. The scheduling and reminders for homework, school trips, projects and play-dates are useful too. Download on iTunes. **savvymumapp.com**



Safe Ride

About to purchase a car, or have a baby? An essential item to consider is an appropriate car seat to suit your child's age and your vehicle. New from car seat manufacturer **Britax** is ClickTight technology, which has made installation as simple as buckling a seat belt. The system utilises both the ISOFIX, or car anchor point, and the vehicle seat belt to provide a tight and secure ride, in conjunction with other safety features such as an impact-absorbing base and a stabilising steel frame. Available from First Few Years, 290 Orchard Road, #05-40/41.

6836 3693 | firstfewyears.com.sg ◀



READY, SET, SUMMER!

Quayside Isle Preparatory School is partnering with **Centre Stage School of the Arts** to offer a summer camp programme for little ones. The arts-based, creative programmes run from 15 June to 10 July and are open to children aged three to six years. Spaces are limited. Quayside Isle Preparatory School, 31 Ocean Way, #01-17 Quayside Isle. **6235 7527 | quips.sg** ▲



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Cleaning Clan

Global home-cleaning business **Helping** recently launched its easy and reliable service in Singapore. Helping is an online marketplace that matches customers with independent domestic cleaners. Founded in Germany just a year ago, it now operates in over 150 cities. The hourly rate is \$20, with no hidden charges or registration fees. helping.com.sg ▲

Oh, Behave!

Minding your Ps and Qs, even when others don't. Kristen Graff, founder of Manners in Mind, answers your sticky social questions.

Can you suggest a reasonable and polite way to deal with people who won't let me into the MRT lift with my pram or stroller, when they're perfectly able-bodied and capable of going down the escalator? I've also seen a woman with a disabled person waiting to get in the lift as lots of able-bodied people were using it. Is there an appropriate response?

In these situations of lack of consideration, I find a direct approach works best. Politely look at the person and say, "Excuse me, can my baby and I get on the lift, please, as we have no other way down to the platform?" Typically people will (sheepishly) look back at you and let you by. Of course, once they do, a sincere thank you is in order. If someone tries to jump the queue in front of you, hovering by the door, try saying directly, "Excuse me, can we please get by to get into the lift." This will usually work.

Should kids (and adults, for that matter) cough into their hand, or into a handkerchief or something else? I know there's a lot of sensitivity among other mums if your child has a cough. Or should I get my child to wear a face-mask?

There is always a fear of spreading germs among little ones. Teach your kids to cough into something, preferably their elbow. If your kids cough into their hands, march them into the bathroom for a good hand-washing. While a face-mask will help keep your child from spreading germs to other kids, it can be awkward, and it can be difficult for a congested child to breath through. Better to keep junior at home for some healing rest.



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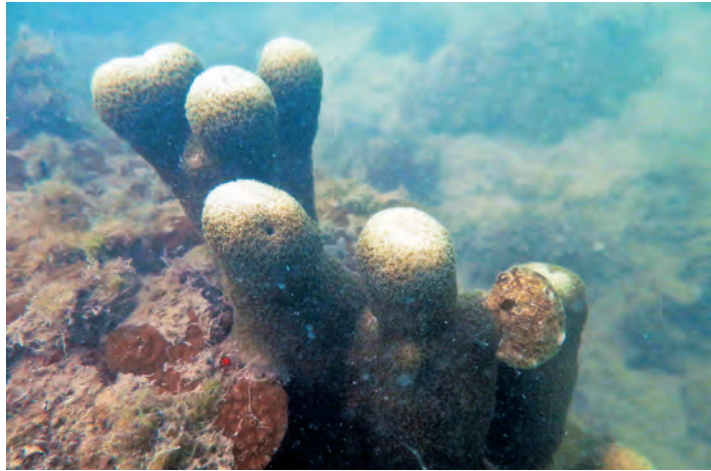
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ENVIRONMENT

CORAL SURVIVAL

It seems a contradiction to write the words “coral” and “waste disposal” in the same sentence. But Singapore has cleverly found a way to preserve coral, while taking care of the island’s garbage. Development at Semakau Landfill, an offshore waste disposal facility, necessitated closing an existing gap in the island lagoon and relocating the fragile corals that had developed on the patch reefs in the area. It took four months to move 700 coral colonies to nearby Sisters’ Island Marine Park. While it’s not a place to go scuba diving any time soon, it’s clear that tremendous effort has gone into saving the precious organisms. Monitoring surveys will be carried out regularly to assess the health of the transplanted corals. nea.gov.sg ►



FORESTS FOR THE FUTURE

According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the equivalent of 36 football fields is lost to deforestation every minute. The devastating environmental consequences are well documented, in particular to tropical rainforests, which are home to much of the world’s biodiversity. A new report by **The Global Canopy Programme**, the Forest 500, identifies, ranks, and tracks the governments, companies and financial institutions that together could put a stop to tropical deforestation.

According to the report, tropical forest loss and degradation is predominantly driven by the production of globally traded “forest risk” commodities: palm oil, soya, beef, leather, timber, and pulp and paper. Through complex supply chains – from producers to traders, processors, manufacturers and retailers – these commodities end up in over 50 percent of packaged goods in supermarkets worldwide. The scale is huge; companies identified in the report represent revenues in excess of US\$4.5 trillion. The upshot, according to the report, is that these commodities can be produced sustainably without impacting tropical forests. forest500.org ▲



On Sustainability

In February, global non-profit **Forum for the Future** launched **The Futures Centre** in Singapore, a digital platform to help business, government and other organisations solve complex sustainability challenges. Users can tap into futures knowledge across diverse fields including land-use, manufacturing and ecosystem health; the site makes fascinating reading for anyone who is generally interested in sustainability issues. A specific focus on sustainable shipping is planned for release this month. The Singapore Exchange recently mandated that all listed companies (about 800) should publish sustainability reports by 2017 or 2018. thefuturescentre.org



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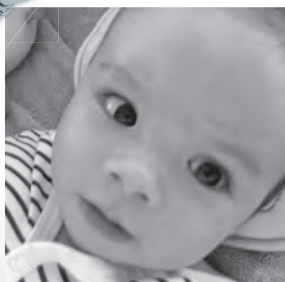
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NOTICEBOARD

Births, engagements and weddings, plus items for sale

FAMILY NEWS



Siew Bee and Andreas Balzer are delighted about the birth of their first child, Felix Felipe Rui, on 1 October.



Ihana Desai arrived on 2 December to the joy of proud parents Preeti and Anuj Keswani.



Tamsyn and Conor Elliott welcomed Halle Maeve into their family on 2 January, joining excited siblings Leo and Tabitha.



Richard and Laura Davies welcomed their daughter Jemima Rose into the world on 11 February.



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. Email us at editorial@expatliving.sg.



CONGRATULATIONS

All readers whose babies are featured on this page will receive a photography session with award-winning Littleones Photography, headed up by Kate and Emily, plus a complimentary framed image worth \$52 (littleonesphotography.com).

littleones
Photography

CLASSIFIEDS

Caddy golf bag

New black leather caddy golf bag for sale. Pick up from the Novena area. Asking \$400.

Interested?

Email kamjrb@gmail.com



Teakwood table

Beautiful teakwood table with glass top for sale. Size 75cm by 165cm, height 76cm.

Interested?

Email krislyg@gmail.com



Boori cot bed with mattress and bedding

Boori classic white cot bed with mattress and bedding. Bed and mattress are in good condition. Includes cute animal-print crib bedding including bumper, quilt and sheet cover. Self-assemble and collect at Upper Thomson. Asking \$600.

Interested?

Email erikang2@yahoo.com



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Interested?

Email thedavids@singnet.com.sg



Piano with stool

Piano for sale due to owner returning to Australia. Looking for prompt sale. Kawai CX-9 (serial number 1826188) in black finish. Re-conditioned in January with new cork on the hammers. Re-installation and tuning carried out by professionals; receipts available for verification. Comes with matching stool. Dimensions 145cm by 53cm by 109cm. Asking \$1,600.

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Fashion

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funkyfrog.com.sg

Elephant bodysuit,
\$29, Scarot
organicbabygifts.com.sg



Superhero cape,
\$95, Cuckoo



T-shirt, \$64, Cuckoo
6B Dempsey Road | cuckoo.com.sg



Shoes, \$69.95,
Minorsteps
minorsteps.com



\$149, The Shoe Company
Tanglin Mall, Great World
City and Delfi Orchard
theshoeco.com.sg



Seahorse set, \$39.90 & Skip-hop gown, \$34.90, Motherswork
motherswork.com.sg

Green Magical Midnight Dress, \$99.90 & Poppy Crinkle Dress, \$65.90, Jooniper
City Square Mall #B2-44
fb.com/jooniper.kids



Richter, \$139 & Bisgaard, \$159, The Shoe Company



Feather hairband, \$60, Cuckoo



Sandals, \$54.95, Minorsteps

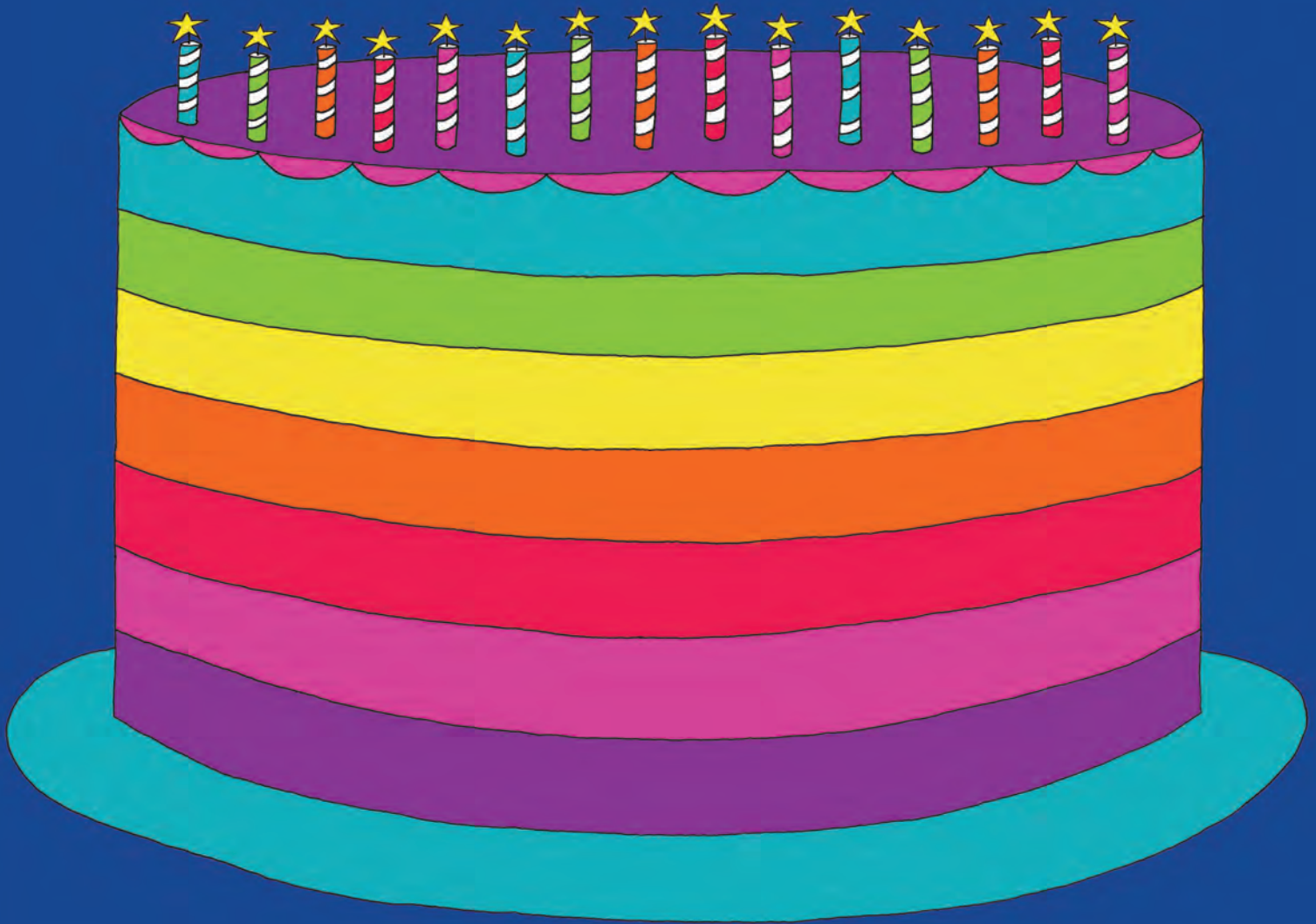


Nightdresses, \$59, Cuckoo



Royal tutu, \$115, Cuckoo

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HOMEWORK HELP

Whether it's reading or algebra revision, there's no escaping homework for children – and parents too. We asked **Canadian International School (CIS) Primary Years Programme Coordinator ANNA-MARIE MCALEER** for her tips.

There is international debate on the value of homework, particularly in primary school. What is the CIS approach?

Homework needs to reflect a student's stage of cognitive development and should strengthen the home-school connection. We believe our youngest students need daily home opportunities to talk about learning and play. It is beneficial for parents to connect the classroom with personal inquiries that their child may be exploring at the time.

We emphasise daily reading at home, because time spent reading is the most significant predictor of academic success. Reading routines can include parents reading aloud, shared reading or independent reading.

The aim of homework for Grade 1 to 6 students is to reinforce and extend new concepts, and consolidate essential mathematics and literacy skills. Homework is posted weekly to provide flexibility and promote a balanced after-school life. We also want students to be excited about extending their learning and ignite an intrinsic sense of ownership and engagement!

How much homework do CIS students do?

The time taken will depend on the learning tasks, the student's grade level, their home context and their ability and diligence. A general guide, inclusive of reading, is 10 minutes for Grade 1, 20 minutes for Grade 2, and so on up to 60 minutes for Grade 6.

When is the best time of day to engage kids in homework?

Parents know their children best. Some may find that their young child is simply too tired at the end of the day, and reading is enough. As a general rule, students need a break after the school day. Provide the child with a chance to have a snack, discuss their day and unwind from school. Find a routine that works well, and stick to it. If evenings are used for home learning, do make sure a child maintains an appropriate bedtime.



Homework trivia – did you know?

- Singapore ranks third in time spent by children on homework. The global weekly average is five hours, but 15-year-olds here spend 9.4 hours (OECD).
- Homework as a concept has inspired more than a few contemporary musicians. Fleetwood Mac's song "Homework" was a hit in 1968, French band Daft Punk released an album called *Homework*, and there is a Dutch house band named Homework.
- The famous excuse made by children who didn't complete a homework assignment, "The dog ate it", is thought to have originated in 1905 in Wales.

What are some strategies for calm homework time?

Home learning should be viewed as an opportunity to engage in learning together, not a task to be endured! So it's important to set up the parent-and-child homework relationship. For example, establish the reasons you as a parent are involved: to support your child, offer guidance with difficult or new learning, understand what your child is learning at school, or offer your insights.

Consider these strategies:

- Set up a routine so your child is aware of the time that will be devoted to homework;
- Create an environment where distraction is limited;
- Ensure necessary materials are on hand;
- Be aware of the expectations of the teacher;
- Ask your child how you can help;
- Try to engage in discussions about the learning, rather than arguments about what is to be done.

Importantly, practise patience. What may take one child five minutes to complete can take another child 30 minutes. **1**



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GET A GRIP

Modern technology has undeniably changed how we communicate. However, the skill of handwriting retains its importance in education, employment and our everyday lives. CHARLOTTE HUMPHREY, Assistant Principal and Head of Primary and Middle School at **Avondale Grammar School**, explains why it matters.

How important is handwriting in this age of iPads and computers?

Time devoted by teachers and parents to teaching young children the fundamentals of correct pencil grip and letter formation certainly has its benefits. This does not mean that we neglect or downplay the importance of keyboarding skills. Both handwriting and keyboarding have their place in all curriculums. The key, we believe, is balance in ensuring that the learning of children is meaningful, purposeful and relevant.

What is the relationship between hand and brain when it comes to composing thoughts and ideas?

Handwriting is important for a number of reasons. Research has shown that improving handwriting skills has benefits for cognitive and motor skill development. Indiana University psychologist Karin James says the “doing” part of drawing letters by hand increases activity in three areas of a child’s brain.

Research by psychologist Virginia Berninger at the University of Washington has shown that handwriting and keyboarding generate different brain patterns in children. Handwriting enables children to produce more words and ideas. The slower process involved in handwriting, and the eye’s focus on one letter at a time (as opposed to moving from keyboard to screen), may also aid cognitive development.

Should parents worry if their child’s handwriting is messy?

A child’s grip on the pencil is one of the first things looked at by teachers in the case of poor writing. The correct grip enables a child to write neatly, and at a reasonable speed. Children progress through different stages of pencil grip development, but as they get older the development of cursive writing skills requires fine motor control.

The writer has to focus on the process and the pace of writing. Children who have established good grip and posture are better able to concentrate on the size, shape, slope, spacing and speed of their writing. If a child has underlying developmental delays or other difficulties and his or her handwriting is untidy, additional assistance may be necessary. Consultation with the child’s teacher or an occupational therapist is recommended.



Is handwriting a core learning goal, or has this been overtaken by keyboarding?

There is a greater focus on handwriting in the new Australian Curriculum followed at Avondale, which highlights its significance. Important skills are involved in this complex task, including language, cognitive, visual and auditory processing, spatial awareness, and both fine and gross motor skills.

Keyboarding doesn’t eliminate the need for explicit teaching of handwriting. Once children have formed bad habits such as poor pencil grip or incorrect letter formation, these habits are hard to change. Just as important is a child’s access to keyboarding.

Simple and fun writing activities

For younger children:

- Using a paintbrush dipped in water, practise letter formation by painting letters on a wall or on the ground.
- Challenge children to form their names, or words, with Play-Doh.
- Write letters and words with a paintbrush dipped in glue; then pour glitter or sand over them. When the glue is dry, the child can trace the letters with his or her finger.

For older children:

- Record their experiences of a family holiday or special outing.
- Write a note to the child, and encourage the child to write back.
- Emphasising the pleasure to be gained from sending a handwritten letter to a family member or friend – and receiving one in return.

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The Story of a School

Compiled by Katie Roberts

The history of Tanglin Trust School (TTS), Singapore's second oldest international school, is also a tale of a growing nation; as the Republic of Singapore marks 50 years, TTS celebrates 90 years. It's a story that began in 1925, with one bold Englishwoman and just five pupils.



1920s

Anne Laugharne Phillips Griffith-Jones – or Miss Griff as she was affectionately known – arrived in Singapore in 1923, ostensibly on a three-month holiday with her brother. During World War I, she had been a welfare officer at a munitions factory in Wales, for which she was awarded an MBE.

Despite having no formal qualifications she turned her hand to teaching, and in 1925, founded Tanglin School with just five pupils in two huts in the grounds of The Tanglin Club. Children were generally sent away to boarding school in England at an early age, and Miss Griff saw an opportunity to provide a British-style education in Singapore so that parents could postpone the separation for a few years. The school flourished and was soon spilling out from the huts.

1930s



Miss Griff opened a boarding offshoot in 1934 in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands. It was thought that the cooler climate was healthier for

growing children. European children could now remain at Tanglin School until the age of eight, and then attend the Cameron Highlands Boarding School until they were 12 or 13, before heading to the UK.

1940s

The Japanese Occupation of Malaya and Singapore saw the Cameron Highlands School close from 1941 until 1946. Some families made their escape, while other civilians, including Miss Griff, were interned by the Japanese. Ever enterprising, during her internment at Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp she set about establishing a school.

Memories: Rosie Montefiore (née Wilson)

"My father Charles Wilson was one of the first five pupils at Tanglin School in 1925. There were no school buses in those days, so little Charlie would ride his mule to school. Upon completing his medical training, my dad returned to Singapore after World War II and was thankful to find Miss Griff had survived the war and re-established Tanglin School.

I started at Tanglin School on Holland Road when I was three years old. The school was based in army barracks near the Botanic Gardens, close to Taman Nakhoda. It was a small school with just one class per year group.

In 1958, when Miss Griff retired, my father and Laurette Shearman, two of the original five pupils, presented her with leaving gifts, and I was very nervous and secretly delighted to be chosen to present Miss Griff with flowers.

All of the pupils moved in 1961 to new school premises, a splendid black-and-white bungalow. My friends and I were delighted to have the space to play in the large school grounds.

My three brothers, John, Patrick and Alan, all attended Tanglin School as well, but at the age of eight moved on to boarding school in England as was usual for boys in those days. Being a girl, I stayed on till age 12 before moving to Cheltenham Ladies College to complete my school education.

In my early twenties, I returned to Singapore and got married. When it came to choosing a school for my son Robert, there was really only one option; he attended Tanglin Infants from 1982 to 1984. He was one of the first third-generation Tanglin pupils ever! We moved to Korea, then to the UK, and eventually I came back full-circle to Singapore."



1950s

The Cameron Highlands School continued to operate until 1950, when it was eventually forced to close for security reasons. Miss Griff sold most of the land and the school buildings to the British Army.

Meanwhile, Tanglin School in Singapore had gone from strength to strength and now occupied two buildings: one in Holland Road and one in Orange Grove Road, with a combined student roll of approximately 300.

In 1958, Miss Griff sold the private company Tanglin School Ltd to the British European Association (now the British Association of Singapore) for \$20,000 and retired to the Cameron Highlands. She died aged 83 at Ipoh hospital in 1973, and is buried in the foothills of the Cameron Highlands. For her service she was awarded an OBE and the PJK (Pingat Jasa Kebaktian) in 1962.



1960s

By 1960 the British European Association also operated the Raeburn Park School (set up for non-service expatriate children in 1954), with an enrolment of 210 students. The Tanglin Preparatory School was converted into a non-profit education trust, Tanglin Trust Ltd. In 1961 Tanglin Preparatory School opened in a black-and-white building on the corner of Tanglin and Jervois Roads, where the Brunei High Commission is now located.

Memories from former students and teachers reflect carefree days, staving off the tropical heat with afternoon naps on put-me-up camp beds, and sports events that incorporated very popular but not-so-politically-correct events such as the "bunny girls" race!



Memories: three generations of the Bird family

Grandmother Angela Bird, Tanglin School alumna, 1949 to 1955

"I arrived in Singapore in 1949 from a post-World War II, ration-card-controlled England. At that time, Tanglin had 60 students across five classrooms and was located in an old army barracks on Holland Road. As it was just after the war, supplies were short, and for our art classes we only had charcoal to draw with. When my daughters attended Raeburn

Park in the 1970s, Sports Day was the highlight of the year; afterwards we always went to The Satay Club on the Esplanade to celebrate."

Mother Tanya Bird, Raeburn Park alumna, 1971 to 1979

"In 1976, when Raeburn Park moved to Tanglin's current site at Portsdown Road, Weyhill Preparatory School was opposite. Initially, the playing field was shared, but the traditional rivalry soon resulted in staggered playtimes. I vividly recall my family's disappointment when, in 1981, the schools merged."

Daughters Olivia and Tia, Year 9 and Year 7 students, 2012 to the present

"Having heard our mum and our grandma talk about their school days, we can now understand what it really means and are excited to be following in their footsteps. Resources were tight in Grandma's time; now we have access to iPads to create digital art. Tanglin is such a special part of the family, we can't wait to make some of our own memories."

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1970s

Demand for school places exceeded all expectations, and in 1971 Tanglin Trust Ltd opened a second school, Weyhill Preparatory School, to absorb the numbers on the waiting list.

In 1974, Raeburn Park became the third school under the management of Tanglin Trust Ltd, and with the final withdrawal of British troops in 1976, the school moved to Portsdown Road opposite Weyhill Preparatory School.

Winchester School, the nursery managed by Tanglin Trust Ltd, opened in 1976 in Alexandra Park in a building occupied by Raeburn Park School from 1972 to 1976. For 20 years, until its closure in 1996, Winchester School acted as "a bridge between home and the bigger school, providing a setting for the first explorations of the young members of the family outside the family circle".



1990s

The schools were renamed Tanglin Trust School Ltd in 1996 following the amalgamation of Winchester School, Tanglin Infant School and Tanglin Junior School. A new uniform was introduced – the same design still in use today.

Also in 1996, Tanglin started to accept students in to the new Senior School, starting with Years 7 and 8. This was gradually extended to Year 11, enabling students to take the GCSE examinations. A new Senior building, along with a swimming pool, opened in 1999.



2000s

In 2003, the first group of students took their A Level examinations; three students had been at Tanglin for 15 years, since Nursery. Tanglin Trust School continued to grow rapidly, enrolment reaching over 950 Senior School students by 2009: an increase of 600 in just five years.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma was introduced into the Sixth Form. Chinese language was also extended across all three schools.

1980s



In 1981, Tanglin Infant and Tanglin Junior Schools were established following the amalgamation of Weyhill Preparatory

School, Raeburn Park School and Tanglin Preparatory School. The schools had a combined roll of 1,200 students; the school colours were red and grey, reflected in the uniforms.

2010s

At the start of the 2010-11 academic year, "Our World" was introduced as the overarching term to describe the vast range of activities undertaken in and out of school to foster the fundamental life skill of caring for the world. Today, 2,770 students are enrolled at Tanglin, from Nursery through to Graduation. 🌍



A trek to the past

The legacy left by Miss Griff was acknowledged at a small graveside ceremony in January 2015. A group of students and staff undertook a two-day jungle trek to the former Tanglin Cameron Highlands Boarding School, and visited her final resting place. This is one of many activities planned to celebrate and commemorate Tanglin's illustrious 90-year history.



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ELAINE LIM, director at White Room Studio, shares her tried-and-tested tips for photographing children.

SAY CHEESE!

HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH KIDS

What's the secret to taking pictures of young people?

It's a careful balance between maintaining a happy, child-like composure, while being totally in control of the technical and artistic side of shooting. Photographers must establish a rapport with the family and gain their trust, which encourages them to open up to the camera. That's why we sometimes scramble along the ground beside a crawling baby, or climb a tree to follow the whim of an older child.

How do you establish trust with children?

This really depends on the age of the child. For babies, making funny noises, clapping and singing generally makes them happy and smiley. If they are old enough they may even join in.

For toddlers, making funny faces or pretending to be defeated by their little antics makes them feel pleased with themselves. Older children respond to different cues; girls tend to blush and smile in response to compliments about their dress and toys, while boys enjoy fun chasing games.

Are there any considerations to keep in mind when photographing families with special needs children?

Children with special needs require more space and sensitivity. It's really important to provide a space for them without too many strangers walking in and out of the studio. Excessive noise and too many different faces can be intimidating.

Also, allow more time for the shoot. I recall autistic children who initially sat huddled on the couch, timidly hiding their

faces and unwilling to participate. By the end of the session they were genuinely laughing to the camera, and even hugging the photographer.

Location matters. Would you recommend an indoor shoot where active children are contained, or outdoors where they can blow off steam?

There's no best answer for this question. The choice of home, park or studio will depend on each individual family. Every child has different characteristics and personalities, so we try to establish what it is the parents would like portrayed.

Tell us about a recent memorable photography experience.

After a family shoot we received an SMS from the mother of a five-year-old boy. She said her son was imitating the photographer, Dan Yeo; he was jumping out from behind a curtain and saying that he wants to be just like "Uncle Dan" when he grows up!

Sometimes, when children return for their viewing session, they bring beautiful drawings depicting scenes from the shoot, and shyly hand these to our photographers. And the parents say their children couldn't stop thinking about the fun they had in the studio with us! 📷

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Ethical Accessories

By Verne Maree



JUSTINNA PANK and EMMA THOMAS's partnership, **White & Black Trading**, has come a long way since the two British women first established their kids' outdoor fun business here in 2007, distributing Mini Micro scooters, balance bikes, skateboards and such. We asked Justinna about their latest product – "lifestyle bags" from an innovative social enterprise in Cambodia that was set up by another couple of expat women, these ones Italian.

What's been happening since we last chatted?

A lot! But what we're most excited about right now is taking on the distributorship of Smateria's beautiful, stylish bags, produced in Cambodia in an inspirationally sustainable and ethical way. It's the first Asian brand to join our mix of mainly European and Australian brands, and we feel it's a truly worthy addition.

How did you hear about Smateria?

It all started while I was engaged in a house-building project in Cambodia, during a UWCSEA school field trip with my two younger children. After the work had been done, the organisers introduced us to some NGO-run shops. Smateria was one of them, and I was deeply impressed.

When we got home, I showed the bags to Emma. Coincidentally, she happened

to be going to Cambodia the very next weekend, so she was able to see the setup for herself. Not only did the two of us fall in love with the products, but we were bowled over by the story behind the brand.

Tell us more.

Founded in 2006, Smateria is the brainchild of two expat Italian women in Phnom Penh – Jennifer Morellato, who runs the creative side, and Elisa Lion, who runs the business side of things. Touched by the plight of disadvantaged and exploited local workers, mainly women, they decided to set up a self-financed social enterprise that would uplift the community.

Since they started it in 2005, Smateria has grown into an international brand that is distributed all over the world. It also has five stores in Cambodia, including one at each of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap's international airports.

As their website (smateria.com) explains, "Smateria is not a charity organisation but a producer that, through its activities, demonstrates its care for the social context in which it operates."

What does that mean in concrete terms for its employees?

Put simply, Smateria is run in accordance with First World working conditions; it's

exactly the opposite of a sweatshop. From what we've seen at first hand, we can confirm that it has brought a whole new ethos to the garment industry in Southeast Asia.

All employees receive a month's annual leave, paid maternity leave, a year-end bonus and private health insurance. Some 80 percent of the staff are young mothers; they bring their children to work, and Smateria provides free preschool daycare.

What's more, Smateria outsources work to members of its employees' families, while financing at no interest the sewing machines required to do the job. Both the seamstresses and their families receive free training, too. No wonder people who get a job here just don't want to leave!

How are the bags produced?

They're made from materials sourced from local markets, the main one being a light, strong, close-woven fishing net used by local fishermen: it's dyed, cut and reformed in various ways. Motorbike seat leather is another important component.

The result is a collection of "lifestyle" bags that's updated every year. Apart from women's fashion bags, you'll find swim-bags, laundry bags, kids' backpacks, household accessories

and more. The unmistakably Italian design shines through, and each item is expertly constructed by skilled seamstresses who are trained at a Garment Industry Productivity Center, a local project run by USAID.

As the bags are all priced under S\$110, the hope is that you might buy a few to go with different outfits: looking good and also *feeling* good in the knowledge that you are supporting a wonderful social enterprise.

It's great for Cambodia that this sort of business is blossoming, and we're thrilled to be part of its growth and success. Though Smateria is neither a charity nor an NGO, it's at least as good as one when you consider the hugely positive spinoffs for its staff and the wider community.

Will you be going back to Cambodia to build houses with your children?

I hope so; it's a wonderful thing to do as a family. This last time was Daisy (11) and seven-year-old Gabriel's first such experience, but my eldest, Freddy (13), has done it several times. In fact, walking around the Phnom Penh school where he once volunteered, I was touched to see a photograph of him playing football with the local children. The experience does something for youngsters; they come back changed for the better.

Emma's eldest son, Jude (11), has also done a field trip to Cambodia; and she herself is a regular visitor, as she has been sponsoring a Cambodian child for some years. Our lives seem to be intertwined with that country.

What are you looking forward to?

Apart from Smateria products being available through our website, we're busy expanding into shops, too: Motherworks at Tanglin Mall, Chillax at Turf City and Children's Showcase in Cluny Court – with more to come! 



smateria.com
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SOAR



TAKE FLIGHT

Small moments at Singapore American School put Alex Fortmann in front of the big screen. Thanks to inspiring middle school film teacher David Hevey, Fortmann picked up a camera for the first time at age 13 and discovered a passion for filmmaking. Eventually, he used his skills to write the script, create the score, and shoot the footage for "Flight." The short film won film-festival awards and, along with his 4.15 GPA, served as his ticket to New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Fortmann has always been one to reach for the stars, but Singapore American School helped him take flight.



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Tell us how the concierge service can help when it comes to leisure or business travel.

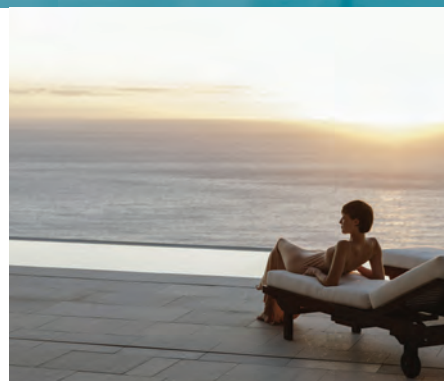
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Shine a Light

Associate Professor SALLIE YEA's research illuminates the harsh reality of the lives of some of Asia's most disenfranchised people. She sat down with Katie Roberts and spoke about a handful of her research projects, which have taken her from remote Indian villages to Singapore's foreign worker dormitories.

Through 20 years of research at universities in her home country and in Singapore, Australian Sallie Yea has shone a spotlight on the grim daily experiences of millions of vulnerable people across Asia. She has documented the plight of the marginalised, who, through poverty, poor education, family pressures and lack of job opportunities, are forced into low-paid and, often, dangerous and illegal work.

Sallie works at the National Institute of Education (NIE), within Nanyang Technology University. This is her

second stint in Singapore, having returned here in 2010 with her husband and their two primary school-aged children. She previously held a post for two-and-a-half years in the National University of Singapore's Geography Department.

Typically, academics are involved in both teaching students and research projects in their chosen fields. For Sallie, these are migration studies, tourism, political and cultural geography, and human trafficking across Asia. Two of her most recent studies have focused on Singapore.



Debt bondage

Sallie's current research at NIE centres on foreign migrants working in the construction, marine, landscaping and cleaning sectors in Singapore. While they are highly visible, 24 hours a day,

seven days a week, to everyone who lives in Singapore, their experiences remain largely unknown to most of us. Sallie has interviewed 30 Tamil and over 100 Bangladeshi men about their time in Singapore; in July, she plans to visit Bangladesh and the Southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu to follow up with a returned group, known colloquially as “failed migrants”.

“They leave Singapore because they lose their job or they get injured,” says Sallie. “But returning home can be miserable: they suffer rejection by their families and they are often indebted to moneylenders for their placement and visa fees. Many become depressed. Those who are permanently injured have to rely on compensation money as they have no chance of returning to work.”

She estimates that 90 percent of workers are in debt bondage. “They owe huge fees to agencies for their placement in Singapore, despite these fees being illegal. Some unscrupulous employers make regular and arbitrary deductions, which can drastically diminish salaries that are already below \$1,000. Others are vulnerable to tardy employers who do not pay them for months.”

Children thousands of kilometres away feel the knock-on effect. “Some may be withdrawn from school if the father or relative supporting them does not send money. The men are caught between two worlds, and the consequences weigh heavily on their shoulders.”

Deceptive recruitment

Last year, Sallie undertook an assessment for UN Women Singapore of migrant women who are exploited in Singapore’s sex and nightlife entertainment industries. This is one example of working in partnership with NGOs to produce reports from research; the findings can advance their (and the government’s) understanding of the issues facing trafficked persons in Singapore, and can be used for their own support work and advocacy.

With the assistance of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Geylang, Sallie

How to help:

Funds raised from a \$20 donation for the book *A thousand and one days: stories of hardship from South Asian Migrant Workers in Singapore* are directed to two causes. The first, a suitcase fund, supports workers who would otherwise return home penniless or in debt (email ddforydce@gmail.com for details). The second is a pilot project aimed at supporting the education costs of the children and siblings of migrant workers who have no means to remit money; it aims to ease the anxieties of failed migrant men and help restore the resilience of their families at home (email salliellao@gmail.com for details). There are plans to extend the suitcase fund to women trafficked into the sex industry.



interviewed 55 Filipino and 51 Indonesian women who migrated for tenuous and poorly understood work opportunities. “They left behind gender discrimination and economic marginalisation in their home countries, only to encounter deceit about the nature and conditions of the work available to them in Singapore,” she says.

Working in bars as hostesses, they are vulnerable to exploitation and can be forced unknowingly into other work, including sex work, because employers change their conditions of employment after they arrive. Sallie is resolute on the women’s circumstances. “This is not something to moralise about; it’s a poorly understood labour issue – a complex chain from recruiters to pimps and agents; club owners profit from exploiting migrant women’s sexual labour,” she says.

Raising awareness

While the spectrum of misery ranges from male workers in crippling debt to young women put out to work by pimps, Sallie says neither is worse than the other. “They are all equally exploited. It is further compounded if the person has family pressures and cannot live up to their expectations, or comes from a broken home and has nowhere to go.”

So how can this research help the

people who have confided their stories and placed their trust in her? Reluctant to grab attention through screaming headlines, Sallie prefers instead to work with government to bring about legal change. One way is to suggest amendments to laws and regulations governing the employment of foreign workers, to improve the workplace environment.

“Proving assertions and backing claims with legitimate data and considered research is a more effective way to achieve change,” she says.

More information

- *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*, edited by Sallie Yea. (Routledge, 2014)
- *Social Visits and Special Passes: Migrant Women Exploited in Singapore’s Sex and Nightlife Entertainment Industry* (unwomen-nc.org.sg)
- *Troubled Waters: Trafficking of Filipino Men into Long Haul Fishing Industry* (twc2.org.sg)
- A new report on labour trafficking of migrant men in Singapore will be released in August. [31](#)



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Marriage Breakdown

Two expats
recount
their divorce
stories

No one relocating to Singapore expects their marriage to end in divorce. So what happens when the unthinkable occurs? DR YVONNE McNULTY from **Expat Research** explains how expats navigate this intense situation thousands of miles from home.

Living and working abroad can take a toll on a marriage. While most expats muddle their way through the additional marital stresses, some relationships don't survive. Whether divorce is related to adultery, abuse, addiction or simply growing apart, the consequences can be harsh: homelessness, forced repatriation, alienation from children, anxiety disorders, depression and suicide are all common outcomes.

Women tend to come out of an expat divorce in worse shape than their husbands. Typically, they are the stay-at-home spouse with less access to bank accounts, full-time employment and legal advice. A recent study on expat divorce revealed that the participants' biggest regret was not knowing their legal rights. Nearly all said they simply did not think it could ever happen to them.

Here, the recent experiences of two people shine a light on what can happen.



J.L.

originally from the US; two children (attending a local school)

The situation: My wife and I had been expats over a six-year period in Hong Kong, India, and China with our two children (now aged nine and seven). In 2009, while in China, she decided she didn't want to be a wife and mother anymore; I initiated relocation to Singapore in 2010 and filed for divorce. I successfully applied for "care and control", and we have joint custody. I gave up my US citizenship in 2006 and am a Singapore citizen, as are my two children.

Was expat life to blame? Yes, though we did have a great time abroad. But moving five times in six years became too much for my wife. She felt disconnected from her social and support network. She wanted more freedom.

Jurisdiction: Singapore. As citizens, it was affordable and efficient.

Biggest regret: I could have fought harder to save the marriage; but the emotional price was too high, and I felt that it was better to move on.

Best advice:

1. Keep things amenable; I had to apply for a restraining order against my wife that took a heavy toll on everyone. We're in a much better place now and have a workable relationship.
2. Don't relocate five times in six years.

What's next: I'd originally planned to stay in Singapore, but am now making plans to return to the US. The biggest challenge will be visitation, as my ex-wife will remain in Singapore.

**A.W.**

*originally from the US;
five children (three at
international school)*

The situation: We married 15 years ago in the US and have been living abroad ever since, in Japan, Hong Kong and London, where my children were born. I was the ultimate expat wife, with designer clothes, lavish holidays, pricey schools and a flashy house, but the marriage was a sham. My husband travelled all the time for work and he was abusive to the children and me.

I filed for divorce in London in 2012, after which my husband wanted to relocate our family to Singapore. I did not want to go, but agreed to a look-see visit. This unexpectedly became a nine-month stay as a result of my serious back injury (and surgery) during the trip. After I'd recovered, I returned to the US with the children in 2013 to be closer to family support while I waited out the UK divorce.

While I was there, my husband's Singapore-based lawyers served me with a Hague Petition for international child abduction. To avoid imprisonment, I voluntarily returned to Singapore with the children in 2014 as Dependent Pass holders, living in a separate house from my husband.

I have "care and control" of five children (one on the autism spectrum), no domestic or family support, no income other than court-ordered maintenance to cover basic living costs, no legal representation, and we are living from hand to mouth. My children wear donated clothing and eat food provided by neighbours and friends.

Was expat life to blame? Yes. Being isolated from a legal system that I understood, I allowed bad behaviour to go on for too long. I was naïve and let my husband decide all the moves. I didn't speak up. I didn't have my say. I got carried away in a fantasy life, and didn't realise until it was too late that moving around so much had left me and my kids without a safety net.

Jurisdiction:

1. Singapore for custody, relocation, maintenance and personal protection orders. Legal representation is expensive; when my husband defaulted on maintenance I could no longer represent myself.
2. Britain for the divorce, which is ongoing.

Biggest regrets: I should have left him the first time he harmed a child. I thought that I owed it to the children to stay in a bad marriage.

I didn't understand that, according to Hague law, six months makes a place

"habitual residence" that then allows a Hague Petition to be filed for abduction. If I had left Singapore when I got the first restraining order three months after our arrival, he would have had no grounds to file a Hague case. Plus, I only stayed on in order to recover from my back injury; I never agreed to relocate.

I regret voluntarily returning to Singapore. I should have stayed in the US and fought the Hague case. We have had to rely entirely on the goodwill and sympathy of the expat community to get even our basic needs met.

Best advice:

1. Don't let your partner have all the control just because they are the bread-winner.
2. Stay involved in financial matters and have your own bank account.
3. Maintain a private email account.
4. Do not give any indication you intend to leave; use the element of surprise.

What's next: Petitioning the Singapore court to legally relocate to the US with the children. Because we are US citizens, we will have access to welfare support, government housing and public schools – none of which is available to us here.

Read more:

- "Till stress do us part: The causes and consequences of expatriate divorce", McNulty, Y. (2015). *Journal of Global Mobility*, 3(2), in press.
- *Harvesting Stones* by Paula Lucas (Summertime Publishing, 2013) harvestingstonesbook.com

For support:

- AWARE Sexual Assault Care Centre: 6779 0282 | aware.org.sg/rape
- Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center: 866uswomen.org
- Sexual Assault Support & Help For Americans Abroad: sashaa.org

Dr Yvonne McNulty is Associate Faculty at SIM University, and Founder and Principal Researcher at Expat Research, a consultancy specialising in global mobility thought leadership. Its latest research includes studies on expatriate divorce, LGBT expatriates, global families and "expat-preneurs". expatresearch.com 

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Mediating a Solution

There are ways to resolve the breakdown of a relationship without destroying everything. FRANCA CIAMBELLA from **Consilium Law Corporation** answered our questions about the process of mediation.



Tell us about the recent changes to the mediation and divorce processes.

In the past, the approach to resolving marital disputes in the Singapore courts was mainly adversarial. With respect to court-mandated mediation, the focus was on child-related issues such as custody, visitation rights and maintenance.

One recent change introduced by the Singapore courts is mandatory counselling for all couples with children. This aims to ensure that the best interests of the children remain the primary consideration of all parties during the divorce process.

Further, the move towards a judge-led approach to divorce proceedings will ensure that the court can direct the proceedings, and focus the parties on the relevant ancillary issues rather than using the divorce proceedings as a "tool" in the battle between the parties.

Why are these changes beneficial?

The parties will no longer be able to prolong, or distort, the legal proceedings for the sole purpose of acting in contempt against the other party. As emotions run high, the perceptions even of individuals with the best of intentions can become clouded, and they may act against the best interests of themselves and their children.

What is your role as an accredited mediator?

As both an accredited Singapore Mediation Centre and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Group (UK) mediator, I manage the process, which is an interest-based approach to dealing with marital disputes. Like the collaborative approach, if successful, mediation lead to a Settlement Agreement, which can be used as the basis for the terms of the divorce. The parties then obtain the divorce in the most expedient and efficient manner. This inevitably saves on legal costs and minimises acrimony.



Talk us through the process and the different types of mediation.

There are two types: court-mandated mediation and private mediation. Court-mandated mediation is ordered by the court as part of the divorce proceedings and usually focuses on child-related issues such as maintenance, custody and visitation rights.

Private mediation is an avenue for the parties to resolve all issues, including "soft issues" such as the children's diet and participation in extra-curricular activities. A session would usually last a single day and is attended by the parties and the mediator. A party may bring another person, with the consent of both parties, if they require emotional support through the mediation process. Parties can also bring lawyers or have time to call their lawyers to obtain advice.

Mediation is particularly useful when the dispute involves another person with whom a party needs to remain on good terms. Highly contested legal proceedings may polarise and ultimately ruin relationships. Mediation can resolve a dispute without destroying a relationship. In comparison with legal action, private mediation is quicker, more private, fairer and less expensive.

What is your approach?

The first thing we ask is whether the parties have attempted reconciliation, or whether reconciliation is or may be possible. Secondly, we always try to refer parties to counsellors, because the mediation process is smoother if adults or children have this support. Thirdly, we ascertain whether they are open to mediation. Generally, one party agrees. Then we contact the other party to see if they are interested in mediation. If they are, we suggest two alternatives: private mediation in our office, or at the Singapore Mediation Centre. Next, we prepare the parties through pre-mediation sessions; and finally, we conduct the mediation. 

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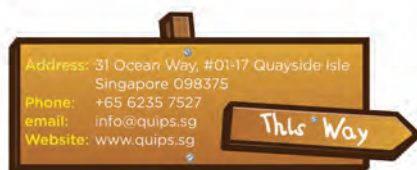


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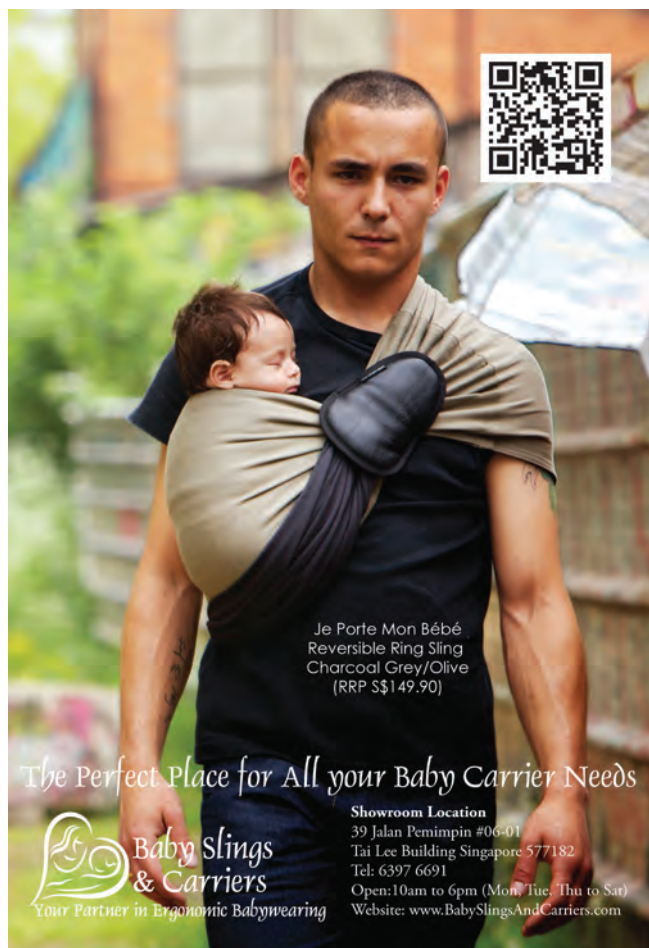
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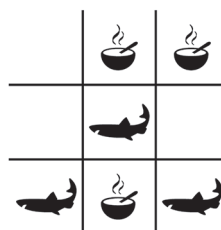
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Arts & Leisure



Photo competition entry, "Innocence"
by Vanessa and Sean Hopman



Once again, hundreds of fantastic photos flooded EL's inboxes, making our sixth annual Photo Competition the most hotly contested to date. Thank you to everyone who entered their beautiful images, whether it was a close-up of a snow monkey in Japan, a colourfully dressed Peruvian alpaca or a scene from a morning wet market in Myanmar – there's serious talent here in Singapore. Here are this year's winners:

Grand Prize Winner
Adelene Ng

Runner-up
Susanne Boehme

Category Winners
The Great Outdoors
Terryl Villablanca Eugenio

Cityscapes
Calvin Chan Wai Meng

Epicurean Adventures
Nadine Bailey

Culture and Heritage
Joseph Goh

Family Moments
Jureni Pasaribu

GRAND PRIZE

The grand prize winner receives a three-night, five-bedroom stay at Semara Luxury Villa Resort in Bali, plus two round-trip KLM flights.

RUNNER-UP PRIZE

The runner-up receives a creative photography session with Littleones Photography and a desktop photograph from the acrylic range.

CATEGORY WINNER PRIZES

- One category winner receives a barbecue buffet dinner for two at Grand Hyatt Singapore's Oasis Restaurant, including a free flow of wine, beer, margaritas and soft drinks.
- Another category winner receives Sunday brunch for two at mezza9 at Grand Hyatt Singapore, including unlimited champagne, wine, beer, bloody Marys, mojitos and soft drinks.
- Three category winners receive Sunday champagne brunch for two at Pan Pacific Singapore's Edge restaurant, including unlimited Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Brut, wine, beer and classic cocktails.

Again, thank you to everyone who entered. Be sure to start filing away your best photos for next year's competition. Thanks also to our panel of judges and to all our very generous sponsors of prizes.

MEET THE JUDGES

Chris Churcher



Chris is the founder and owner of Dempsey Hill's illustrious

REDSEA Gallery, which houses an eclectic collection of contemporary and modern paintings and sculptures from emerging and established artists throughout Asia.

Kate Griffiths



Founder and creative director of Littleones Photography, and Associate-

level Master Photographer, Kate is among the best family photographers in Singapore, with clients returning to her time and time again to capture precious family moments and memories.

Framing Angie



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Grand Prize Winner

"A FARMER AND HIS WATER BUFFALO"

Adelene Ng

"A farmer and his water buffalo, on their way to the fields, in the village of Yangjiayi, Xiapu County, in eastern China."

Judge's comment: "I love the complex background and well-balanced composition."

– Framing Angie



Runner-up

"UP IN THE AIR"

Susanne Boehme

"This picture was taken at the colourful Paro Festival in Bhutan – amazing sights and sounds. The monks delivered a captivating performance and gave us a magical moment up in the air."

Judge's comment: "A fun, easy image that has a little bit of everything in it – culture, movement and colour."

– Chris Churcher



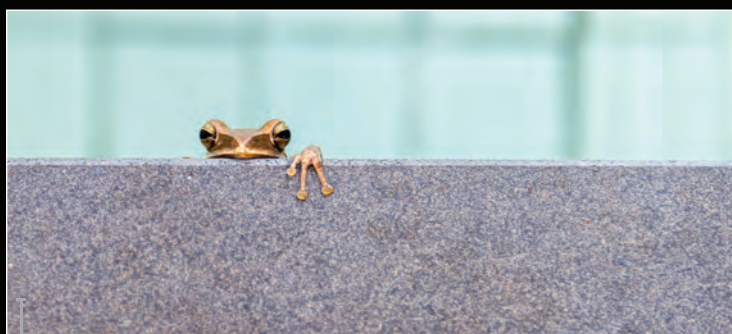
The Great Outdoors

WINNER "BATAD RICE TERRACES"

Terryl Villablanca Eugenio

"A sunrise shot of the magnificent Batad Rice Terraces in Ifugao Province, The Philippines."

Judge's comment: "For me, this illustrates beautifully the sense of how small we humans really are against nature and the great outdoors. This image picks up a sense of community versus the remoteness and isolation of the location." – *Chris Churcher*



Second Place
Susanne Boehme
"Hello there"



Third Place
Izzy Walker
"What You Lookin At?"

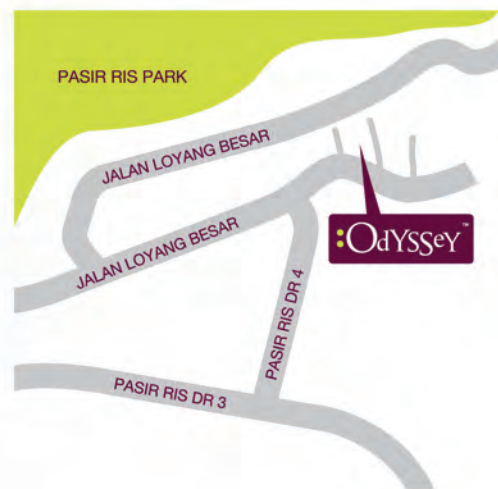


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Cityscapes

WINNER "COLOURS AT GARDENS BY THE BAY"

Calvin Chan Wai Meng

"As night closes in, Gardens by the Bay is beautifully lit up, adorned with greenery and a water fountain. It's a nice place to stroll or enjoy the natural breeze after a long working day."

Judge's comment: "Great twilight image – and I like the viewpoint. There's good exposure to soften the waterfall while still producing a sharp image."
– Kate Griffiths



Second Place
Lianne Manley
"Raffles Place"



Third Place
Nathalie Roy
"Early Morning Taichi"





Episorean Adventures

WINNER "BRINGING THE FISH TO DRY"

Nadine Bailey

"A lady at Ngapali beach sorting dried fish to be made into fish sauces and powders for our dinner. The whole process of sorting and drying and collecting was so mesmerising, I could have watched it for hours."

Judge's comment: "Lovely colour and composition." – *Chris Churcher*



Second Place

Lavanya Ullas

"The Secret Ingredient Is..."

Third Place

Milla Kantola

"Cheers for Summer"





Culture and Heritage

WINNER "YI PENG LANTERN FESTIVAL CELEBRATION"

Joseph Goh

"People watched as thousands of Lanna-style lanterns, made from rice paper, were released into the night sky. This was a time to pay respect to the higher deities. The lanterns filled up the sky with warm light that made me feel like time had stopped completely."

Judge's comment:

"A stunning photo exposed perfectly to get the image sharp and reveal the details in the areas of light and shadow."

– Kate Griffiths



Second Place

Julie Lavigne

"Fixing the Long Tail Boat"



Third Place

Juhae Chae

"Burma's Bright Future"



Family Moments

WINNER

"DADDY, YOU LOOK GREAT!"

Jureni Pasaribu

"A really sweet moment of a wife taking a picture of her husband, with a kid's direction. It was taken in Yogyakarta, Indonesia."

Judge's comment: "I really appreciate the effort put into this shot."

– Framing Angie



Second Place

Flordeliza Juera
"Grandfather and Grandson"



Third Place

Kendall Hamill
"Elevator Selfie"



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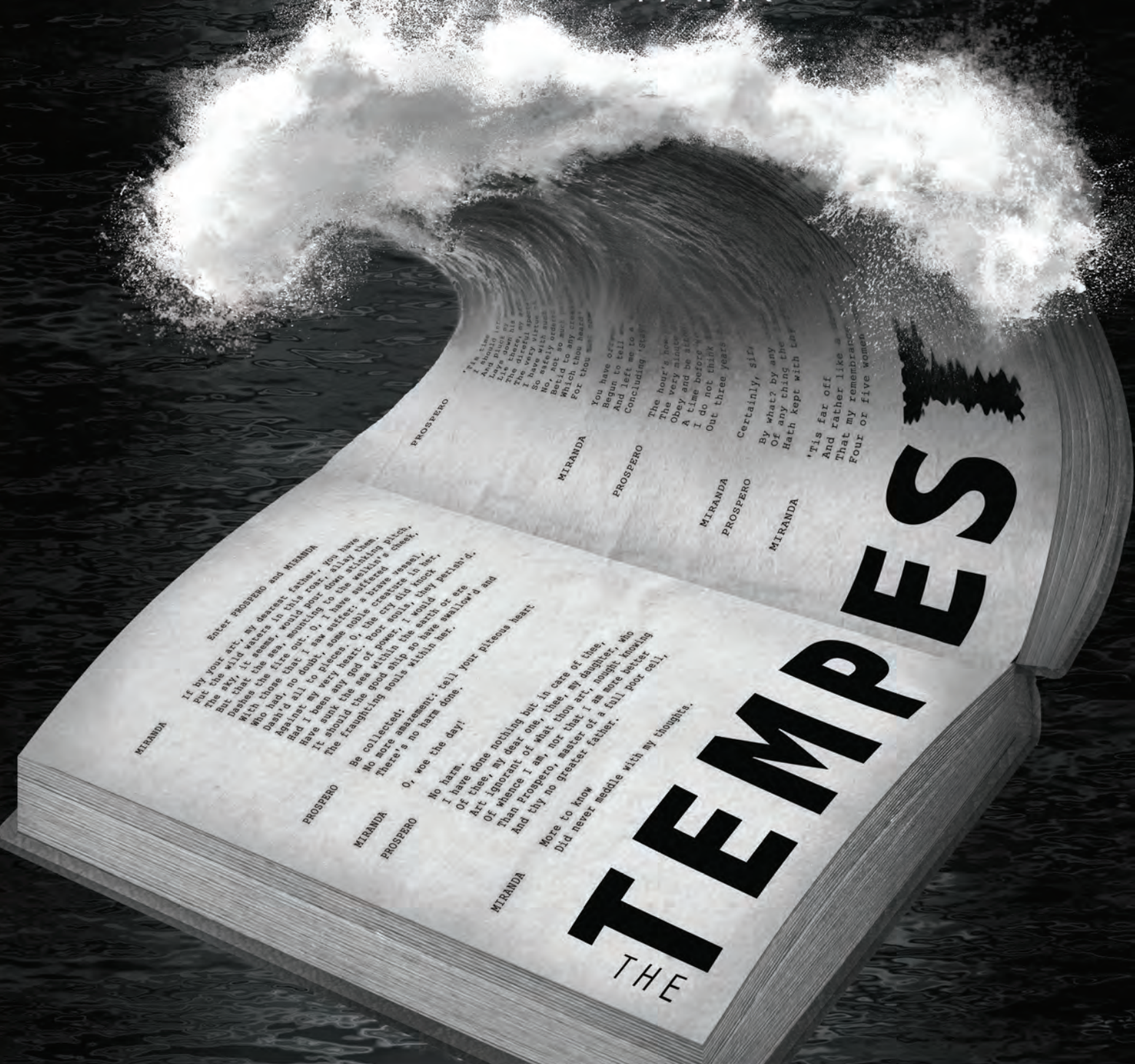
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ON THE STAGE

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

All the Right Notes

After playing to a full house at The Star Theatre in 2013, American YouTube phenomenons **The Piano Guys** will return to the same stage for a performance not to be missed. Known for their signature style of melding popular songs, the Utah-based classical-pop group became an online sensation with a series of original self-made music videos. Since early 2011, they have crafted over 50 music videos; their breakout hit is an innovative, multi-handed version of One Direction's "What Makes You Beautiful". See them 13 April at The Star Theatre. Tickets from Sistic. thepianoguys.com



Drama Under the Stars

Grab your picnic blanket and get yourself over to Fort Canning Park for Singapore Repertory Theatre's much-anticipated, annual outdoor extravaganza, **Shakespeare in the Park**. This year, you can look forward to a live performance of Shakespeare's final play, *The Tempest*, a tale of sorcery and fairytale improbabilities, where nothing is what it seems. See it from 29 April to 10 May. Tickets from Sistic. srt.com.sg



Last One Laughing

Fans of comedy star **Russell Peters** can look forward to all-new material when he heads to Singapore this month for his Almost Famous World Tour. The last time he was here was in 2012, when the global comedian set a new record for the fastest-selling and biggest comedy show in Singapore's history – so get in quickly! See it 7 and 8 April at Suntec Convention and Exhibition Centre. Tickets from Sistic. russellpeters.com

A Night of ABBA

This month, **Björn Again**, the only ABBA show officially endorsed by the group members themselves, is celebrating its 25th anniversary, and we get to experience the show right here in Singapore for two nights only. A tribute to the popular Swedish group, Björn Again has been delighting international audiences with its sold-out performances of hits like "SOS", "Honey Honey" and "Super Trouper". See it 17 and 18 April at MasterCard Theatres, Marina Bay Sands. Tickets from Sistic. bjornagain.com.au



Anzac Spirit

A great way to spend this year's Anzac Day (25 April) is by attending **Motherlantz**, a music festival celebrating all things Australian and New Zealand. Look forward to an exciting day of music from featured Australian artists, rock musician Ian Moss and blues musician Ash Grunwald, and Kiwi musicians Tiki Taane, The Jordan Luck Band and event host Anika Moa, as well as comedy and live coverage of Anzac Day Rugby, Rugby League and AFL games in true Antipodean style. Held at Wave House Sentosa, Siloso Beach, the festival will also include an array of attractions like food stalls and interactive games, alongside an Australian and New Zealand marketplace. Tickets from Dash Tickets Singapore. motherlantz.com

FOR KIDS

A Classic Delight

This month, little ones can step into the magical world of Norwegian folklore when the classic fairytale, **The Three Billy Goats Gruff**, comes to life in musical form. Youngsters will love watching the goats, Baby, Middle and Big, as they work together to find a way to escape the clutches of an evil troll in order to reach the food on the other side of the river. Presented by Singapore Repertory Theatre's The Little Company (TLC), this show's sure to make your little ones giggle. See it from 2 April to 1 May at DBS Arts Centre, 20 Merbau Road. Tickets from Sistic. srt.com.sg



NEXT MONTH

Alternative Vibes

Award-winning indie-alternative band **Alt-J** is set to take the stage next month in its first headline show in Singapore. Formed in 2008, the UK band is known for a unique sound that combines elements of electronic, folk and indie rock. The group's critically acclaimed 2012 debut album, *An Awesome Wave*, was named BBC Radio 6's Album of the Year, while its most recent album, *This Is All Yours*, debuted at number one on the UK album charts and was nominated for Best Alternative Music Album at this year's Grammy Awards. See it 17 May at The Coliseum at Hard Rock Hotel. Tickets from Sistic. altjband.com



Teenage Dream

International pop-star sensation **Katy Perry** makes a stop in Singapore next month, as part of her Prismatic World Tour, giving fans the chance to see her perform both new and old favourites. Known for catchy hits like "Teenage Dream", "California Gurls", "Firework", "Hot N Cold" and "I Kissed a Girl", Katy will rock the stage in her trademark bright, quirky costumes. See it 11 May at Singapore Indoor Stadium. Tickets from sportshubtix.sg, the Sports Hub Tix Box Office and Singapore Post outlets. katyperry.com

Backstreet's Back

Having performed in Singapore years ago, they're really back – on 2 May to be precise. Howie, Brian, Nick, Kevin and AJ of **The Backstreet Boys** will be taking to the stage at The Star Theatre, to the delight of middle-aged fans everywhere. Famous for hits including "I Want It That Way", "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)", "Larger than Life" and "As Long As You Love Me", the all-male group will perform an intimate set that intertwines classic songs with new material. Tickets from Sistic. livenationlushington.net



Just because you live in Asia doesn't mean you've got to miss out this acclaimed London show. As part of the National Theatre Live series – an initiative by London's Royal National Theatre, in which stage productions are broadcast live via satellite throughout the world – Esplanade Theatre will screen the Young Vic theatre's fastest-selling production, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Starring Gillian Anderson (*The X-Files*) as Southern belle Blanche DuBois, Ben Foster (*Lone Survivor*) as the explosive Stanley and Vanessa Kirby (BBC's *Great Expectations*) as Stella, this version of Tennessee Williams' timeless, heart-wrenching tale gets a makeover, taking place in present day New Orleans against a soundtrack of rock music featuring songs by Chris Isaak and Jimi Hendrix. See it 1 May at Esplanade Theatre. Tickets from Sistic. ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk



Toxic Truth

This month, Wild Rice presents *Public Enemy*, a modern-day adaptation of one of the world's most powerful and thought-provoking satirical plays, Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1882). We asked acclaimed director GLEN GOEI about the much-anticipated production and what we can expect from this month's hottest ticket in town.

By Amy Greenburg



Tell us about *Public Enemy*. What can audiences expect?

It's a 130-year-old classic written by Norwegian Henrik Ibsen – the second-most-produced playwright after Shakespeare. It tells the story of a biologist, Dr Thomas Chee, who discovers that the water supply in his town is riddled with bacteria, just as the town's economy is booming as a result of it becoming a world-class resort spa. He resolves to go public with the information, but this decision pits him against the entire community whose personal self-interests are at risk. Audiences can expect a riveting and challenging play with provocative questions about democracy, the will of the majority and the importance of freedom of expression.



How has the play been adapted to current-day Singapore, and why do you think the story and themes still ring true today?

This new adaptation by British playwright David Harrower makes the play contemporary and engaging by using familiar language that reflects the way we speak today. Also, David has written it in the style of a psychological political thriller, which makes it immediate and accessible to a modern audience.

The story is still relevant to us today, especially in Singapore, where our civil liberties of freedom of speech and expression are curtailed and suppressed. And in our patriarchal, Confucianist society, every individual is under pressure to conform for the good of the majority. We may live in a first-class city, but there are still many "third world" problems that need to be addressed. Do we stand up for what is right, or is it easier for us to choose to ignore the truth and follow the will of the majority?

As our general election draws close, this play is even more pertinent, not just for voters, but for those of us who live in Singapore and call it home. It challenges us to ask what our responsibilities are as people who live in and continue to enjoy what this country has to offer, and how we can make it a better place to live in, both for ourselves and for future generations.

What drew you to this particular production?

In the highly globalised world that we live in today, and in the age of the internet, we no longer seem to have any original thoughts or ideas. Everyone is caught up in the rat race, and it's far easier to be part of it and to conform than to walk against it. This production raises the question of what it means to hold firmly to one's conviction, even if it may seem unpopular, and to speak your mind, even if it means making you an enemy of the community that you hold so dear.

See *Public Enemy* from 9 to 25 April at the Victoria Theatre, 9 Empress Place. Tickets from Sistic.

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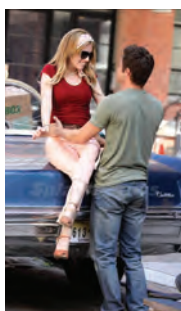
ON THE SCREEN

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

BIG SCREEN

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Based on the hit musical, this dramedy follows a struggling actress (Anna Kendrick) and her novelist husband (Jeremy Jordan), as they recall the difficulties and breakdown of their relationship over a five-year period – and it's told almost entirely through song. Opens 9 April at Cathay cineplexes.



CHILD 44

In the Stalin-era Soviet Union, a disgraced member of the military police (Tom Hardy) is tasked with investigating a strange series of brutal child murders. The thriller also stars Noomi Rapace, *The Killing*'s Joel Kinnaman, Gary Oldman and Vincent Cassel. Opens 16 April at Cathay cineplexes.



THE MOON AND THE SUN

King Louis XIV's (Pierce Brosnan) quest for immortality leads him to capture and steal a mermaid's life force – a move that's further complicated by his illegitimate daughter's discovery of the creature. This action-adventure fantasy film also stars William Hurt, Benjamin Walker, Fan Bingbing and Kaya Scodelario. Opens 9 April at Golden Village cinemas.

AGE OF ADALINE

Adaline (Blake Lively) has remained a youthful 29 for nearly eight decades, never allowing herself to get close to anyone in case they discover her secret. But, after years of leading a solitary life, she meets a man named Ellis (Michiel Huisman), who might just be worth losing her immortality for. This drama also stars Harrison Ford and Ellen Burstyn. Opens 30 April at Cathay cineplexes.



SMALL SCREEN

GAME OF THRONES, SEASON FIVE



GOT fans, get ready – the much-anticipated, ten-episode fifth season premieres this month, and it's sure to be good. Based on the popular book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin, this Emmy

Award-winning fantasy series chronicles an epic struggle for power in a vast and violent kingdom. Premieres 13 April on HBO/HBO HD (StarHub Channel 601).

Also on HBO

13 April is a big day for HBO-lovers looking for a full-night lineup.



In addition to *Game of Thrones* Season Five, Emmy-nominated comedy series *Veep* is back for a fourth season, while the Emmy-nominated *Silicon Valley* returns for its second. *Veep* follows former senator Selina Meyer (played by the hilarious Julia Louis-Dreyfus), who becomes vice president of the US, only to discover the job is nothing like she expected. *Silicon Valley* takes a look at the modern-day epicentre of the high-tech gold rush, where the people most qualified to succeed are the least capable of handling success. See it on HBO/HBO HD (StarHub Channel 601).

FOR KIDS

Lots of Laughs and Egg-cellent Adventures

On April Fool's Day, get your little one giggling at the antics of everyone's favourite snowman, Olaf, plus funny episodes of Disney shows like *Jake and the Neverland Pirates*, *Doc McStuffins*, *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*, *Sofia the First* and more. 1 April from 8am to 12pm (with an encore at 6pm) on Disney Junior (StarHub Channel 311).

Youngsters will also love being a part of Disney Junior's egg hunt on Good Friday, featuring fun-filled adventures from some of their favourite programmes including *Sofia the First*, *Handy Manny* and *Special Agent OSO*. 3 April from 9am to 1pm (with an encore at 5.30pm).

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ON THE WALL

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

ART FOR ALL

The ever-popular **Affordable Art Fair** is back for its spring edition, showcasing works from more than 85 galleries around the world, with a focus on contemporary art from Asia. Popular for featuring a diverse selection of art at various price points – from as low as \$100 to \$10,000, with 75 percent of the works priced under \$7,500 – the fair has become a favourite event on Singapore's art calendar. New to this edition is a "SG50 Feature Wall", highlighting specially commissioned works from 50 artists; all of these pieces will be priced at \$500, with 50 percent of the proceeds donated to the charity, Playeum, and the other 50 percent going to the artists. There'll also be a Children's Art Studio with interactive activities, as well as thematic tours on art styles and media to guide new collectors. See it from 17 to 19 April at F1 Pit Building, 1 Republic Boulevard. affordableartfair.com ▼



ABSTRACT APPEAL

This month, Malaysian artist Vincent Chow presents his third solo exhibition at Flaneur Gallery, an up-and-coming arts space in Little India that promotes the work of emerging artists. Known for his paintings, installation and performance art, Vincent combines technique and instinct to create light-hearted yet meaningful works. In his new collection of acrylic on canvas paintings, titled **Light Breaks**



(**Where No Sun Shines**), each work achieves a complementary balance between the primitive and the delicately abstract.

"My approach to painting is to emphasise the aesthetics by downplaying the technical painting skill. In other words, I paint as primitively as possible so that it looks as if from an untrained hand," Vincent says. "The mood of the paintings often turns out to be spontaneous and less self-conscious, with a sense of childlike playfulness." He adds, "My work explores how our visual perception of the physical world forms our inner world, and how our inner world affects the way we interpret the physical world. I see a spiritual connection between my paintings and life. Letting go, being free and light – things I strive to achieve in my art and my life." See it from 16 to 26 April at Flaneur Gallery, 129 Jalan Besar. flaneur.sg ▲



MEMORIES IN MOTION

This month, award-winning Singaporean watercolourist Ong Kim Seng presents his solo exhibition, **Nostalgia in Transformation**, at Ode To Art gallery. Having witnessed some of Singapore's most pivotal changes, including industrialisation, Kim paints the country's two most defining features – the nostalgia that forms its backbone and the transformations that drive it forward. His new series of work juxtaposes the city's historical pride with its modernised joy, featuring some of its most familiar streets and views, displaying the artist's signature translucence and *en plein* style. See it from 9 to 14 April at Ode to Art, 252 North Bridge Road, #01-36E/F Raffles City Shopping Centre. odetoart.com ▲

COMING UP

DEEP-SEATED DEDICATION

This month, **Chairity: Arts and Design Against Cancer**, a fundraising project benefiting the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF), presents an exhibition of 45 one-of-a-kind chairs, 30 of which have been designed by Singapore-based artists of different disciplines and cultures; the other 15 were designed by young artists – including students from Singapore Chinese Girls' School, Alliance Française de Singapour, Blue House International and APSN (Association for People with Special Needs), Tanglin Trust School, as well as kids from CCF – as part of a programme aimed at encouraging students to contribute to the less fortunate.

Organised by BackRest in support of the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), Chairity provides a collaborative platform for Singapore-based designers and educators to express their interpretations of cancer using classical Louis Armchairs as canvases, based on the themes of “empathy”, “sacrifice”, “love and support” and “dedication”.

So, why chairs? Though a chair is probably the most essential piece of furniture used today, it's often taken for granted and left unnoticed unless it has distinguishing characteristics. Similarly, we all know about cancer, yet we ignore its existence in the hope that we and the people close to us will not be victims of it.

Proceeds of the sale of each unique chair will benefit the children of CCF, a non-profit organisation with a mission to improve the quality of life of children with cancer and their families; funds will also be used to help the SCS in its public education and cancer screening services for the prevention and control of cancer. See it from 2 to 16 May at Maya Gallery, 62 Ubi Road 1, #01-21 Oxley BizHub 2. Check Chairity's Facebook page for updates.



FOR KIDS

Furry Friends

To commemorate the Year of the Goat and Sheep, Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) presents the **Counting Sheep, Dreaming Goats** exhibition. It takes adults and children alike on a multi-sensorial experience that features 300 beautiful sheep- and goat-themed stamps from around the world (including the latest stamps from Singapore, China, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam and Liechtenstein) and the opportunity to touch the wool of some of the most famous breeds – including the Merino sheep, the Cashmere goat and even the endangered Manx Loaghtan goat. Visitors can also learn about the different sounds of goats and sheep, and play familiar tunes like “Baa Baa Black Sheep” and “Mary Had a Little Lamb” on a toy piano, among other interactive features. See it until 27 September at SPM, 23-B Coleman Street. spm.org.sg

Inspiring Imagination

Singapore Art Museum (SAM) presents **Imaginarium: A Voyage of Big Ideas**, an annual contemporary art exhibition for children featuring both local and regional artists. In the spirit of SG50, this year's exhibition is inspired by the crescent moon on the Singapore flag, a symbol of a young nation on the rise and, with it, the capacity to dream big and think large. Kids will love the interactive and immersive artworks, as well as the variety of hands-on activities. See it from 14 March to 19 July at SAM 8Q, 8 Queen Street. singaporeartmuseum.sg



ART TO THE POWER OF 10

By Verne Maree; photo by Ken Tan

These are exciting times for Brazilian artist PATRICIA CABALEIRO and her Wessex Estate studio and art school, Cabaleiro Atelier & Art School. Ten of her students – they rather stylishly call themselves the Apprentices @ Cabaleiro – have for the first time been accepted as participants in this month's spring edition of the Affordable Art Fair (AAF), taking place from 17 to 19 April at the F1 Pit Building.

Having been involved since the very first AAF was held six years ago, Patricia has seen this popular event develop and improve greatly over the years. "Our work is contemporary in style and the standard is good," she explains, "and so I feel we have something to offer that is different from the other exhibitors."

This is the first time she has thought of exhibiting her students' work for sale in this way, though they're planning an exhibition at the Brazilian Embassy later this year, in September. In fact, Patricia doesn't think that anything quite like this has been done in Singapore before.

The Apprentices are ten of Patricia's students who have worked with her for at least three years – some for as long as five or six years. "Some of them were not easy to convince," she says, "and that's because showing your artwork can be frightening and can make you feel incredibly vulnerable."

In order to be accepted for the AAF, she explains, you have to send photographs of your artwork to the AAF committee, which then decides whether or not the standard is acceptable. Patricia curated her studio's application from the five to 10 artworks that she'd asked each student to put forward, choosing what she considered to be the best two. What's more, she asked the committee to consider the ten students' works as a total entity and to either accept or reject it as such. This "all or nothing" approach paid off when the answer came back positive.

Patricia is touched and delighted by the way the diverse group – representing

seven different nationalities and ranging in age from their 30s to their 60s – have risen to the occasion. A huge amount of work goes into a show like this, she explains, and the administration can be a nightmare, but they have wholeheartedly taken it on as a team. What's more, says Patricia with a wry smile, she herself is eventually learning to delegate!

"It's super to see them all cooperating as a brilliant team. One of them is doing a spreadsheet of the artwork; several of them are focusing on compiling a marketing database of designers and interior designers; another is doing the Facebook page, and so on. We're

communicating via our own WhatsApp group and we're using Google Drive; everyone is learning from everyone else."

There's no hand-holding in her studio, Patricia reveals; and, she adds, her art classes are not always fun. "I don't teach; I like to say that I guide. My students struggle a lot: they have to find their own answers and learn through their mistakes."

There are four artworks from each Apprentice, of which two will be shown at a time. Each measuring 76cm x 76cm, they will be displayed in a grid; pricing is uniform, too, at \$560 each. What's more, all the works were inspired by a common theme – My Singapore. As Patricia explains, Singapore is the one thing that her diverse students do have in common.

Should you like a particular Apprentice's style or subject matter, she says, they are open to accepting commissions for a particular size or colour-way.



Top row (L to R): Nishita Sipahimalan, Montse Oliver, Marleen Aldorf, Vibecke Paulsen Lovik and Megha Nema
Bottom row (L to R): Rosie Oliveira, Inken Von Der Luehe, Patricia Cabaleiro, Shruti Gupta and Gillian Duncan



Clockwise from top left:

- *Weight on Water*, by Gillian Duncan
- *Rain Tree*, by Rosie Oliviera
- *Blossoming Frangipani*, by Megha Nema
- *ONE*, by Inken Von Der Luehe
- *Perspective*, by Marleen Aldorf

Cabaleiro Atelier & Art School
Block 5 #01-02 Westbourne Road
9620 4997 | patriciacabaleiro.com
affordableartfair.com

Just a sample from the 10 Apprentices...

Gillian Duncan (British) confesses that art, for her, is complete escapism. "A two- or three-hour class flashes by in minutes, and once it's over I am so mentally exhausted that I often can't even remember what day it is!" Her inspiration comes from light, she says, and how light plays on objects.

Inken Von Der Luehe (German) paints in acrylics using mixed media techniques, recently incorporating her own photography into collage-style paintings that also include printed words. "The process of creating art helps me to cope with emotional challenges," she says, "an extremely useful tool for a mother of two teenagers!"

Megha Nema (Indian) says she takes inspiration from her fond childhood memories, her extensive travels and the multitude of colours in nature. "Patricia has allowed me to fully let myself loose and give up my inhibitions."

Montse Oliver (Spanish) has been painting ever since she joined an art class in Barcelona in 2006. "No matter where I have lived since then, paint and easel move with me. I enjoy the new influences and learning different techniques in a fun and international environment like Patricia Cabaleiro's studio." 

ON THE PAGE

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

PAINT BY NUMBERS: CHINA'S ART FACTORY FROM MAO TO NOW

Claire van den Heever
Earnshaw Books | 228 pages

Ever wished you knew more about the background to and personalities behind the fabulous Chinese artwork that glows from the walls of Singapore galleries such as Ode to Art (to mention just one)? If so, this ambitious, comprehensive, scholarly yet eminently readable debut book by South African Claire van den Heever is exactly what you need.

She had me by the preface, a crackling account of Sotheby's first auction of contemporary Asian art, in March 2006, when Ziang Xiaogang's *Bloodline Series: Comrade No. 120* sold for just shy of US\$1 million. That "got the ball rolling", to put it mildly.

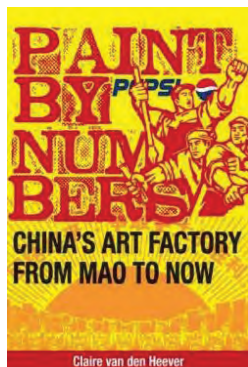
I was fascinated by her history of Mao's Cultural Revolution and the propaganda art that was such an integral part of that era; and then her account of the fledgling development of a sort of artistic freedom during the eighties. Her evocation of the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 4 June 1989 – a turning point after which nothing was the same – is outstanding.

Claire's research for this book involved spending several years in China and learning Mandarin, before interviewing critics, curators, collectors – and 15 of the country's best-known contemporary artists, pioneers all of the early eighties' avant-garde movement.

As her publisher says, in telling the 35-year-old story of Chinese contemporary art, from "mass-produced propaganda in the Mao era" to the "market darling" of today, it looks not just at China's art scene and the art itself, but also at the politics of art in China.

A great read for anyone who's interested in art or in China.

Verne Maree



THE GOLDFINCH

Donna Tartt
Little, Brown | 784 pages

I recommended this novel to my book club, largely because it had won the Pulitzer Prize in 2014 and is the third novel from this author since her debut novel *The Secret History* (1992), which I consider one of the best books I've ever read. I had not taken into consideration, though, that it was over 700 pages long and I would have to carry around a kilogram's worth of reading for two months before getting to the end.

I found the story well-written and enjoyable until about page 400. The character development of the protagonist, Theo, was interesting and was left unresolved throughout, which I thought was an unusual approach.

However, I felt the author was not prepared to let go of her book and dragged it out to well beyond its natural life. As a result, I lost interest and ended up skimming through the last hundred or so pages – partly, I admit, so that I would not have to lug it back on the plane. If you have to read the Pulitzer Prize-winners, then do read this one, but only if you have more time on your hands than I do.

Alix Burrell



THE WORLD'S BEST BRUNCHES - WHERE TO FIND THEM & HOW TO MAKE THEM

Foreword by Bill Granger
Lonely Planet | 222 pages

Popular Aussie restaurateur Bill Granger is a huge fan of brunch. As he rightly says, there is no other meal that can be stretched out from 9am to 5pm, depending on who you are, your stage in life and what your mood dictates. Sure, he adds, it's a luxury – like afternoon tea, but we need these feel-good rituals that give us the chance to reconnect with friends, families, food and ourselves.

And the fact that brunch is not on the everyday schedule that the traditional three meals punctuate, "gives it an air of spontaneous, unstructured, devil-may-care abandon that we all deserve to indulge in from time to time".

After Bill has set the tone, the rest of this well-conceived publication goes on to present an eclectic selection of potential brunch fare from around the world, from Brazil's açai bowl, Egypt's *ful medames* and Israeli *sabich* to Southern Indian *idli* with coconut relish and fresh tomato ketchup from the US.

Each is presented as a double-page spread: on the left, a description of the item, its origin, what it tastes like, and a specific recommendation for a restaurant where you can get it. For example, get your Spanish omelette at Mesón de la Tortilla in Pamplona for just 7 euros. And on the right – wonderful! – a clear and detailed recipe for making it.

A host of food and travel writers from throughout the world contributed content to this scrumptious book. Warning: don't read it on an empty stomach unless you (a) are prepared to zoot out immediately to hunt down brunch, or (b) have a well-stocked kitchen.

Verne Maree



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



To tell us what books are piled up on your bedside table, or what you've recently downloaded to your Kindle, dash off an email to verne.maree@expatliving.sg.



Nicole Lade,
Australian

**THE LUMINARIES
BY ELEANOR
CATTON,
FICTION**

Genre?

Historical mystery, set in 19th century New Zealand.

How did you get hold of it?

First I lobbied my book club to read it, then I borrowed it from the library.

How far have you got with it?

Finished, finally – it's 832 pages!

Verdict?

I loved it. It's slow and slightly confusing at the start because there are so many characters, but then it picks up pace and the author cleverly recaps the story throughout so that you can't put it down.

Recommended?

Yes, highly. Don't be put off by the page count. It's definitely deserving of the 2013 Man Booker prize it won.



Sue Olivier,
*South African
and Australian*

**THE GINGER
TREE BY
OSWALD WYND,
FICTION**

Genre?

Historical novel

How did you get hold of it?

It's been on my "to read" list for a while. Not my usual fare, but it is largely set in Japan and I have a soft spot for all things Japanese.

How far have you got with it?

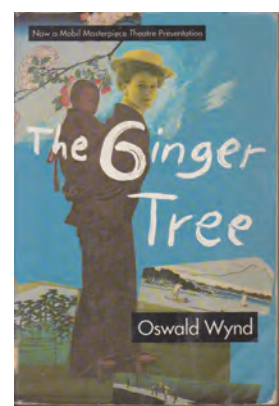
I'm almost done, and at the stage that I start reading it more slowly so that it lasts longer; not wanting it to end is for me always a sign of a good book.

What do you think of it so far?

It started slowly, and I wasn't sure whether this was going to be a historically correct tale or whether it would turn into a human story. Given time, it turned into a great human story. It paints a vivid picture of a very strong woman surviving alone, against all odds, in Asia in the early 1900s.

Recommended?

It is a great read, and I would most certainly recommend it. It's beautifully written and takes you on an unusual journey that haunts you till you can pick the book up again.



SCENE AROUND TOWN

Recent events, openings and parties



Surf Meets Turf

A crowd of fabulous people attended the "Where the Surf Meets the Turf" event held at the Marquee at Singapore Turf Club on Sunday, 1 March, hosted by Premier Racing Partnerships (PRP) and supported by IFS and other generous sponsors. This superb venue has lovely air-con inside and only a wall of glass (with doors!) between you and an expansive viewing terrace – so you're close to all the horsey action. The highlight of the day for PRP's Wade Burridge, he said, was "seeing over 450 revellers enjoying what was for many their first day at the races in Singapore, and experiencing the hospitality that PRP provides". Spurred on by the free flow of wine and beer, a live and a silent auction raised more than \$22,000 for educational programme Akaraka. Watch out on our pages and the *EL* website (expatliving.sg) for details of the next PRP party.



**WILD
RICE**
PRESENTS

THE TRUTH CAN BE TOXIC



PUBLIC ENEMY

directed by **GLEN GOEI** written by **HENRIK IBSEN** in a new version by **DAVID HARROWER**

starring **IVAN HENG** with **GHAFIR AKBAR R CHANDRAN SERENE CHEN GERALD CHEW
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Cultural Inspiration

The Rug Maker celebrated its tenth anniversary, as well as the launch of its new Straits Collection, with a party at Indocafe on Scotts Road. The new collection, which guests got to view firsthand over cocktails, is a contemporary interpretation of Peranakan, or Straits Chinese, history and culture.



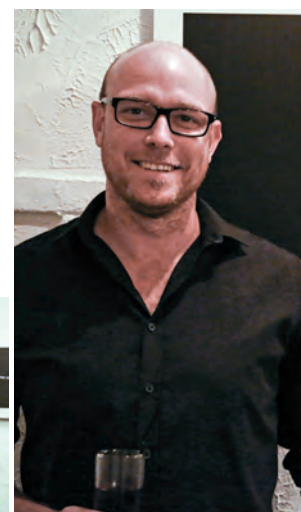
Horns Galore

LUDO Gallery celebrated its opening with an exhibition showcasing various artists from Singapore, Indonesia and Europe. The theme of horns, inspired by the lunar year of the Ram 2015 and the horned god, Cernunnos, were on exhibit.



Striking Series

In his exhibition, *From Isolation to Solitude*, artist Matthew Nelson told his story of drug addiction through a series of moving black-and-white self-portraits. Focused on a subject that is often neglected in Singapore, the exhibition aimed to promote awareness and understanding of the disease, as well as the societal stigmas faced by addicts. Visitors also had a chance to listen to speakers share their own personal experiences of addiction and their journeys to recovery.



FINE ART AND EXQUISITE LUXURIA AUCTION

AT THE SINGAPORE
YACHT SHOW

PREVIEW:

24 APRIL 2015, FRI 10AM - 8PM
25 APRIL 2015, SAT 10AM - 3PM
CONSTELLATION BALLROOM I

AUCTION:

25 APRIL 2015, SAT 4PM - 6PM
CONSTELLATION BALLROOM II

AT ONE *15 MARINA CLUB
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SENTOSA COVE, SINGAPORE

Sebastiano Navarra. Those Flowers are so Beautiful (Domenico Ghirlandajo-1468 Portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni) Acrylic on Wood 120x120 cm



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The painful smack
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Wine & Dine

Chili Padi Mary at Astor Bar, The St. Regis Singapore

WHAT'S NEW

The latest trends in food and wine

Latin-faced COCKTAILS

El Mero Mero has launched a new Latin-inspired cocktail menu, now available at the restaurant's beautiful alfresco **El Bar**. Created by mixologist Ad Isnin, the menu's divided into four collections, each inspired by a different Latin culture, ingredient or country.

Favourites from the Las Margaritas and tropical Caribeño offerings include the signature El Mero Mero (\$18), a margarita-influenced drink made with orange mescal, freshly squeezed lime and sugar; and the Latin Lover (\$16), made with white and dark rum, pineapple, passion fruit, orange and lime, finished with aromatic bitters and orange flower cocktail perfume and served in a wooden bowl.

From the Exóticos range – inspired by the streets of Havana and Panama – try the Old Fashioned Chicano (\$16), made with premium aged rum and añejo tequila, and sweetened with a touch of honey, chocolate mole bitters and smoked cherry wood; or the Habanero-Mango Martini (\$16), spiced with housemade habanero chili-infused tequila combined with cacao liqueur, cilantro and mango puree.

For those with a sweet tooth, there's the Dessert collection's Blackberry Marmalade (\$16), a vodka-based concoction with white chocolate liqueur and blackberry jam.

El Bar also has a wide range of tequilas, mezcal and Mexican beers and an extensive wine list featuring fine wines from Chile, Spain and Argentina, not to mention a delicious range of bar bites – think smoked corn-mushroom doughnuts and organic baby corn served with cotija-mayo dipping sauce (\$14), or guacamole with tortilla chips (\$16) – to complement your cocktails. Don't miss happy hour every day from 5 to 7pm (\$9.90 on select drinks and cocktails, and complimentary snack pass-arounds). 30 Victoria Street, #01-20 Chijmes. **6337 1377** | elmeromero.sg ▼



PROTEIN-PACKED SALADS

If you think healthy and hearty don't coexist, new salad service **Spinacas** is here to prove you wrong. The salad delivery company prides itself on hearty, low-carb, paleo-friendly salads packed with protein, using fresh ingredients like pickled cabbage, broccoli and baby spinach, and paired with homemade dressings. With five flavourful meat options and two vegetarian options available in two sizes, you have just two key decisions: which protein you'd prefer, and which size (regular, \$11-13; or petite, \$9-11). Delivery is free for a minimum order of \$30 – so get your office pals together and place your lunch order a day ahead. Over at EL, we love the Moroccan spiced chicken salad – complete with cashews, cheddar and hardboiled egg – and the barbecue pulled pork, slow-cooked in a cinnamon stock, then tossed with barbecue sauce. spinacas.com



Heaven at Level 55

Calling all chocoholics and fromage fanatics – you won't want to miss this. Marina Bay Sands has introduced a different new experience for guests at **The Club**, the hotel's exclusive lounge that from 8pm to 12 midnight turns into a cheese and chocolate bar for the public.

Now located at Level 55 of Hotel Tower 2, The Club offers spectacular, unobstructed views of the city skyline and Gardens by the Bay, and the chance to taste over 40 chocolate-themed creative desserts – dreamy concoctions such as Milk Chocolate Blue Cheese Cream with thyme foam verrine and Passion Fruit White Chocolate Mousse Cake – plus a dozen European cheeses with wine-pairing options. From \$48 per person, \$67 for one wine pairing, or \$75 with three wine pairings. For reservations, call 6688 8858 or visit marinabaysands.com/chocolatebar.



A TASTE OF CULTURE

Held on the lawn next to Tan Quee Lan Street opposite Bugis Junction, the **World Street Food Congress 2015** is all about experiencing cheap international bites and getting a taste (literally) of different cultures. Aimed at raising awareness about the preservation, personalisation and possibilities of street food culture, WSFC is a five-day celebration of street food, featuring over 40 stalls of comfort food from the world's best hawker artisans – from Mexican tacos to Singaporean chicken rice to Indonesian satay. You can also enjoy a range of activities, recipes and chef demonstrations. 8 to 12 April. For more details, visit wsfcongress.com.

EPICUREAN EXTRAVAGANZA



Chef Julien
Royer of Jaan

World-class chefs, both local and international, will be in Singapore to host masterclasses, workshops, luncheons, tasting dinners, a gourmet golf

event, and wine pairing and whiskey dinners as part of the 19th annual World Gourmet Summit from 14 to 25 April. Host venues will include Jaan, The Prime Society, Tamarind Hill, Dolce Vita, The White Rabbit and Bacchanalia, among others. The gastronomic festival will also feature awards for best chefs, restaurants and rising chefs of the year. For tickets and more information, visit worldgourmetsummit.com.



NEW SPECIALTIES TO SAVOUR

This month, **Jamie's Italian** at VivoCity rolls out a brand new menu featuring seasonal dishes that make our mouths water just talking about them. The meaty porcini mushroom makes an appearance in two new dishes: crispy *arancini* (\$12.50) – golden-fried balls of porcini risotto with fontina, mozzarella and arrabbiata – and porcini *fettucine* (\$14) with mascarpone, garlic and lemony gremolata. New to Jamie's seafood selection is the lobster *al forno* (\$48), an absolute Italian classic – a half-lobster marinated and roasted with a silky Parmesan sauce and crispy pancetta, and served with al dente spaghetti pomodoro. New salads include a heritage tomato salad (\$7.50) with red onion and Sicilian-style orange dressing and a crunchy kale slaw (\$8) with mint, lemon and yoghurt. Wash it all down with the locally inspired Chili Caipirinha (\$18) and lovely new wines by the glass. 1 HarbourFront Walk, #01-165-167.

6733 5500 | jamieoliver.com/italian/singapore ▲

From Italy, WITH LOVE

Craving buratta? No one prepares this wickedly good indulgence better than **Pete's Place** chef, Andre Bontempi, who perfectly crowns an eggplant caponata with a burrata pocket (\$22), air-flown from Italy – it's just one of the delectable dishes on the new à la carte menu, which showcases the authentic Northern Italian classics of Andre's home. Don't miss freshly made pasta dishes like squid ink linguine (\$29) with sustainable seafood, or beef flank (\$32) prepared three ways: charcoal grilled, *sous vide* and pan-seared. Pete's Place is possibly the Grand Hyatt's best-kept secret, with a free-flow Prosecco Sunday brunch that's one of the best deals in town (\$82 for adults; \$29 for children). 10 Scotts Road. 6732 1234 | singapore.grand.hyatt.com ►



NEW BITES

- **Monochrome Fusion Bistro** has opened in Chinatown, serving up monochrome-themed, Asian-fusion dishes such as squid ink risotto and meatballs coated with black and white sesame, and desserts like black velvet cake. The bistro's minimalist-chic look matches the food, from its black and white interior to the simple black signboard outside. 291 South Bridge Road. facebook.com/monochromesg
- In addition to serving up simple and hearty dishes like beef cheek pasta, vegetable fries and roasted chicken, new, quirky café and store **AEIOU** is adorned with charming trinkets and decorations made from recycled materials that are also available for purchase. 111 King George's Avenue. goaeiou.com
- Award-winning chef and restaurateur David Myers' latest creation, **Adrift by David Myers** at Marina Bay Sands, offers a blend of playful snacks with raw items, and artisanal toast with charcoal-grilled treats displaying a whimsical East-meets-West approach – Lobster Mochi, King Crab Melt with pimento cheese and Green Papaya Soup, to name a few – along with craft cocktails, in a sleek and modern setting.



Monochrome
Fusion Bistro

- **Wildfire Kitchen + Bar** is firing up the local food scene with its gourmet burgers and charcoal-grilled premium steaks. This no-fuss, self-serve spot also has an extensive range of craft beers. 26 Evans Road. wildfire.com.sg
- Bakery café and food gift shop by day (think lavender Earl Grey tea and laksa cookies), **The Snack Culture Company** transforms into a small plates restaurant by night. On Fridays and Saturdays, try the by-reservation-only degustation menu (\$49 per person), which takes you around the world in nine tapas dishes. 2 Kallang Avenue, #02-17 CT Hub. snackculture.com
- **Bar Bar Black Sheep**, an affordable comfort food favourite, has opened its newest outlet in Holland Village at 17D Lorong Liput, offering Northern Indian, Western and Izakaya menus, plus a selection of Japanese whiskeys, sakes and shochu.

REVOLVING DOORS

- The guys behind wood-fire grill restaurant Burnt Ends have launched **Meat Smith**, a casual, American-inspired smokehouse serving up brisket and other meat dishes prepared in-house using special smokers from the US. The space, formerly occupied by Sophie Bakery, is located at 167 Telok Ayer.
- While Holland Village's Italian mainstay Michelangelo's has closed, a new Italian eatery, **Madrinaa Italiano**, has popped up in its place, serving specialties like penne foie gras, melon Parma ham, pork belly risotto and panna cotta. 44 Jalan Merah Saga, #01-60 Chip Bee Gardens.



Madrinaa
Italiano

KEEPIN' IT KUHL

If you're tired of slopping through wet markets to buy fish from who-knows-where, here's a simple and super-convenient solution: **Kuhlbarra**

sells sustainable, harvested-to-order barramundi that can be ordered online and delivered right to your doorstep. Certified by Singapore's Good Aquaculture Practice programme, Kuhlbarra harvests the Australian barramundi right here in Singapore and delivers ice-chilled, individually cut fillets (200 grams, \$10) and family-sized portions (1 kilogram, \$25) to your home on the same day to guarantee freshness and flavour; delivery is \$15, or free for orders over \$50. The fish are antibiotic- and hormone-free, and farmed in the clean waters surrounding Singapore's southern isles – in fact, the water's tested every ten minutes by the Danish Hydrological Institute, a trusted advisor of the Government of Singapore. The fish, meanwhile, has been tested by the team here at *EL*: the fillets are fresh and delicious. Plus, barramundi is packed with heart-healthy and brain-boosting omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, making it one of the most healthful fish options around. kuhlbarra.com





ENCHANTING EASTER

Make Easter a little more magical with our delectable range of chocolates and candied snacks. It is time to fill your Easter party with sweet treats that the little ones adore!



Cadbury
Creme Egg 5s
197g



Ferrero
Mini Eggs
Hazelnut/Cocoa T10



Lindt
Lindor Milk Choc Eggs
Gift Box 175g



Cadbury
Dairy Milk Oreo
Large Egg 278g



Baci
Easter Egg
White Chocolate/Classic Dark
Chocolate 9.38oz

- **Katong Market Place** @ 112 Katong Basement 1
- **Paragon Market Place** @ Paragon Shopping Centre Basement 1
- **Tanglin Market Place** @ Tanglin Mall Basement 1
- **Raffles City Market Place** @ Raffles City Shopping Centre Basement 1
- **Hillview Market Place** @ 4 Hillview Rise HillV2 #02-07
- **Jasons** @ Orchard Towers #01-01
- **Jasons** @ ION Orchard #B4-17



Herbal Inspiration

Tucked along hip Tras Street, new modern European eatery **Violet Herbs** uses fresh, home-grown ingredients – including, of course, plenty of herbs – in its extensive menu of colourful seafood, meat and vegetarian dishes, thoughtfully prepared and beautifully presented by Chef Edward Hoe (formerly at Restaurant Ember and The American Club). The atmosphere is charming; we loved the bright violet and lavender dining room, and the earth-toned second floor that’s just waiting to be rented out for your next party.

After kicking things off with a signature “herb cocktail” – the gin-based **Lillet Basil Cocktail** (\$19.90) is lovely, with basil, cucumber and a cinnamon stick – we opted for a starter of **Lobster Cappuccino** (\$14) – a lobster soup topped with juniper foam (hence “cappuccino”) and succulent Boston lobster meat. Among the mains you’ll find **Sous Vide “48 Hours” Wagyu Beef Cheek** (\$32) with zucchini spheres, and the signature **Marinated Red Miso Cod** (\$33), deliciously prepared to perfection with a sweet-but-not-too-sweet glaze, and accompanied by pumpkin puree, almond-crusted eggplant and herbs. The **Homemade Beetroot Ravioli** (\$29) is also delectable, stuffed with mushrooms, zucchini and semi-dried tomatoes, and covered in truffle foam. For dessert, try the **Frozen Nougat** (\$14) served with raspberry sauce and super-refreshing lychee sorbet.

In addition to an à la carte menu, Violet Herbs offers a three-course set lunch (\$29.50) and a four-course set dinner (\$42), as well as degustation menus (six to eight courses at \$98 and \$128, respectively). 81 Tras Street. violetherbs.com.sg



REAL DEAL PORTUGUESE

Until a few months ago, the closest thing that Singapore had to Portuguese food was egg tarts and Nando’s (neither of which claim to be authentically Portuguese). That all changed with the opening of **Boca**, a new restaurant in lower Chinatown that impresses with its *bife à café* (\$48), an **organic Australian tenderloin flambéed in Cognac** and topped with a rich coffee cream sauce. The *chorizo* (\$36) is also on fire. It’s served flaming on a layer of brandy; when the blaze dies down, you dive in for the meat and sop up the drippings with a side of homemade bread.

It’s said that Portugal has 365 ways to prepare *bacalhau*, the salted cod that is the crowning jewel of the nation’s cuisine. We ordered it here as a **fritter mixed with potatoes, onions and parsley** (\$15); it’s also available in a **hearty porridge sautéed with bread, shrimp stock and coriander** (\$28) among other variations. Desserts, like the **vanilla custard with egg white “clouds” and spun sugar “nest”** (\$15) and the almond cake with homemade **Port sorbet** (\$16), are beautifully plated. *EL* tip: Get a front-row seat to the plating action from the bar that runs the length of the restaurant. From there you can nudge the chefs and restaurant manager for ordering suggestions – they’re all from Portugal and are more approachable than most.

The Singaporean sommelier may recommend you start the meal with a glass of *vinho verde*, Portugal’s slightly effervescent “green” wine. We did. Just be sure to end it with an **egg tart**, which the menu makes clear is the real deal. Creamier and less eggy, it’s worlds away from the versions you get in Singapore or Macau. 6 Bukit Pasoh. boca-restaurant.sg ▲

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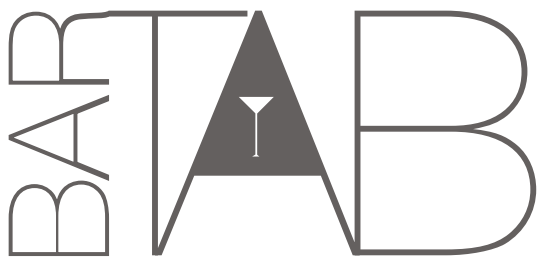


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We scour the island's bar scene to bring you the new and the noteworthy – it's a tough job but somebody's got to do it!

Joo Bar

5 Tan Quee Lan Street
8138 1628 | joo-bar.com

First impressions: Taking over a quaint shophouse near Bugis Junction, the three-storey Korean bar feels like a sleek, modern LA-style bistro, with edgy copper lamps and playful wall illustrations.

The Chosen One: The **makgeolli sampler** (\$35), a tasting paddle of Joo Bar's house-brewed milky rice wine in five flavours – we had original, yuzu, lychee, peach and strawberry. The traditional Korean drink has a pleasantly sweet and yoghurt-like taste, and the tangy yuzu flavour was an instant favourite.

The Cheapskate: A refreshing, easily downed bottle of Hite beer from Korea (where else?) for \$10.

Bite on this: Having good grub along with your drinks is a must in Korea. For a light nibble, the **tofu chips with guacamole and kimchi salsa** (\$14) is an addictive East-meets-West alternative to nachos. We also loved the greasy-good **slow-roasted Mangalitsa belly** (\$32): bite-sized slabs of pork and sides of Dijon mustard and spring onion salad intended to be layered together and eaten all at once. For something heartier, try the **seafood gochujang risotto** (\$24), a creamy delight with clams, squid, shrimp and mussels in a spicy red pepper sauce.

Last but not least: Each type of drink here – from *soju* (rice liquor) to beer – is meant to complement different foods. Look out for helpful symbols on the stylish menu to try suggested pairings, or experiment with random combos to surprise your taste buds.

Cherylene Chan



Bumbo Rum Club

83 Club Street
6690 7563 | facebook.com/bumborumclub.official

First impressions: A light and airy bar, awash with faded primary colours that wouldn't look out of place on a white Caribbean beach; 76 delicious-looking rums from over 20 countries line the walls, while Cuban music gives this bar a party vibe.

The Chosen One: The **Cable Car** (\$22), a simple blend of spiced rum, orange curaçao and lemon. Served in a bottle with a striped straw, this drink's got a fun edge that's perfectly in line with the décor. All of the cocktails are lethal, tasting like delectable fruit juices but packing a punch courtesy of the rum.

The Cheapskate: The cocktails are a little on the pricey side, but rum-lovers won't find a better selection elsewhere. Lucky ladies can drink mojitos for free after 9pm on Wednesdays.

Bite on this: Influenced by South America, the Caribbean and the American South, the appetising menu offers a variety of **tapas, ceviches, quesadillas** and more. The mouth-watering **nachos** (\$14) were our favourite, smothered in shredded pork, melted cheese and spicy guacamole – a great accompaniment to rum.

Last but not least: Club Street's hottest new bar also features live salsa dancing from time to time. If you need to escape the urban jungle, this bar will transport you straight to the Caribbean.

Natalie Whittell



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Trendy Spots to Try: Chinatown

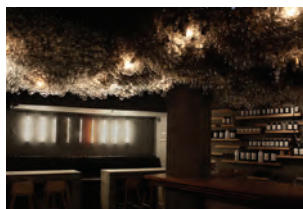
If there's one thing we're blessed with in Singapore, it's the huge selection of cool, creative bars in almost every neighbourhood – and Chinatown, in particular, is where you'll find some of the best and buzziest spots. Here are some of our favourite watering holes in the area.



By Cherylene Chan

Operation Dagger 7 Ann Siang Hill | 9296 4704

Searching for this basement bar, which is hidden in a rather nondescript building, requires a sharp eye. A glass door marked by an enigmatic symbol is your only clue to its location. Descend the dark staircase, and you'll find a bitty, minimal space illuminated by thousands of clustered light bulbs, and a spry trio whipping up intriguing cocktails and Asian-inspired bar bites.



Sugarhall 102 Amoy Street | 6222 9102

This buzzy bar is named after its wide selection of sugarcane-based rum – over 60 different types. It has 18 specialty cocktails, like the Mai Tai à la Sugarhall, a syrupy yet lethal blend of Rhum-Rhum Blanc Agricole, Myers Dark Rum, spiced apricot brandy, lime, almond and orgeat syrup. Going down a treat with the drinks are tender charcoal-grilled meats and a relaxing ska and reggae playlist.

Oxwell & Co. 5 Ann Siang Road 6438 3984

Oozing kooky British flair, this four-storey establishment serves home brews, artisanal wines and classics like gin and tonic and Cuba Libre. The grub here is a modern take on British fare, and includes Welsh salt-marsh lamb rump with Yorkshire pudding and pureed roast garlic. Impressively, many of the dishes and drinks are flavoured with ingredients freshly picked from their rooftop garden.



Jigger & Pony 101 Amoy Street | 6223 9101

Drawing both well-dressed corporates and creative sorts, Jigger & Pony's all about classic cocktails shaken up with the meticulous Japanese approach to bartending. The menu is divided into Old Fashioned, Forgotten Classics and Modern Twists, urging patrons to try familiar tipples in unusual forms. For serious drinkers, there are whiskey and gin flights that let you taste three at a time. The nosh here is simple yet elegant, with star dishes including mushroom risotto balls and pork belly.



Nutmeg & Clove 17 Ann Siang Road | 6423 9885

Housed on the ground floor of a Cantonese clan association, this bespoke bar pays tribute to its surroundings with décor reminiscent of an olden-day Chinese medicine hall and cocktails inspired by Singapore's colonial era. Traditional herbs and other ingredients bring an unexpected depth to each drink. To complement the cocktails, order locally inspired nibbles like prawn paste buffalo wings and nutmeg and clove-flavoured pancakes with bak kwa, maple syrup and spiced cream cheese.

Manor 8 Ann Siang Hill | 9646 6160

Even Ann Siang regulars unknowingly pass this hidden spot. Tucked away above the ever-bustling Gem Bar (another hip favourite), Manor offers intimacy and mystery, a rarity for a trending area. There are no signs, so keep your eyes peeled for the elusive staircase in Zui Hong Lou dim sum bar. Furnished with polished oak and sprawling Chesterfields, this gentlemanly bar does ace classic cocktails, as well as bespoke creations like The Breakfast – vodka-based with English marmalade, grapefruit and egg white (served with toast and a dinky cup of cornflakes).



Bar Naked 95 Club Street | 6423 4695

Rather than keep a fixed menu, this industrial-chic watering hole will play host to new, unconventional concepts each quarter. At the moment, it's occupied by liquor giant William Grant & Sons, who've created a menu that showcases their stable of spirits, including Monkey Shoulder scotch and Hendrick's gin.

For more hip bars by neighbourhood, visit expatliving.sg. 



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WINE&DINE

BUBBLY BRUNCHES

If there's one thing Singapore does well, it's a weekend brunch – and often with free-flow drinks, at that. Whether you're looking for unlimited craft cocktails or boundless bubbly, all-you-can-eat international fare or à la carte Italian specialties, there are plenty of brunch options to satisfy your every craving – and perhaps mitigate your hangover. So, grab your family and friends, and make a reservation for one of these fabulous free-flow brunches.



BEST for BELLINI LOVERS

Osteria Mozza

#B1 42/46 The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands
6688 8522 | osteriamozza.com/singapore

WHEN: Sundays from 12 noon to 2.30pm

WHAT'S POPPING: White peach and Prosecco Bellini, or straight NV Flor Prosecco DOC: \$18 or \$50 for free-flow; plus three brunch-friendly aperitivi (\$18): Bloody Mary, Ramos gin fizz or Aperol Spritz.

"This is not going to be a low-carb day," becomes clear as we spot the delicious assortment of Ariana's **handmade pastries** that's included in the à la carte Bellini Brunch. Mozza – both the Osteria and the Pizzeria next door – are a spin-off from the famous original in Los Angeles; chef David, manager Owen and pastry chef Ariana came direct from the mother ship.

A sophisticated ambience is created by dark wood that sets off white napery, an imposing bar and a superbly attentive staff. From the à la carte choice of five savoury dishes (\$30 to \$48), I order **smoked sea trout cakes Benedict** (\$42) with poached eggs, rucola and sauce Hollandaise, full of flavour, delectably rich and satisfying. Roy's baked eggs in **tripe alla parmigiana** (\$35) is Chef David's favourite, a rustic, hearty concoction that's indubitably the best tripe dish we've encountered anywhere. (Sorry, Gran.) No one does crispy **bacon** like the Americans; our side order of the stuff (\$8) simply evaporates.

And after sampling David's incredible **cappellacci** (shaped like a bishop's hat, apparently), stuffed with creamy celery root and mascarpone and tossed in a pungent bluefoot mushroom sauce (\$32), we know we'll be back at Mozza for dinner sometime really soon.

Verne Maree

Brasserie La Saveur

29 Tanglin Road, The St. Regis Singapore
6506 6860 | brasserielesaveurs.co

WHEN: Sundays from 12 to 3pm, with complimentary aperitifs served from 11am to noon at the Astor Bar.

WHAT'S POPPING: A free flow of the delightful French Ruinart Champagne, together with wine, beer and soft drinks.

Total class, and no guzzle. Don't get me wrong, there's no shortage of bubbly, but it's the oh-so-elegant atmosphere in the opulent Brasserie La Saveur that sets the tone of this brunch at refined rather than raucous. Attentive and discreet service, with regular champagne top-ups and four "pass arounds" (freshly prepared bite-sized portions of the restaurant's signature dishes), are just the beginning. Select from à la carte eggs cooked to order, or main courses of wagyu beef, duck, fish, poultry or vegetarian specialties, in nicely proportioned sizes.

There's really no need to leave the comfortable armchairs, but we did: to graze on **Sri Lankan Crab and caviar blini**, **Boston lobster**, **foie gras**, melt-in-your-mouth **Spanish ibérico ham** and, later, the not-to-be-missed, indulgent **dessert and cheese trolley**. Did I mention the live music? Neither too loud nor too soft, it adds nicely to the ambience. Next time, I'll know to book one of the private booths, which seat four. Kids are welcome, but I was happy to leave them at home and selfishly savour this brunch just for two. With the free flow described above, it's \$195; without alcohol it's \$145; and it costs \$75 per child (four to 12 years).

Katie Roberts



BEST for FIRST-CLASS CHAMPAGNE

Edge Restaurant

7 Raffles Boulevard,
Pan Pacific Hotel
6336 8111 | panpacific.com

WHEN: Sundays from 12 noon to 4pm.

WHAT'S POPPING: Free-flow Veuve Clicquot Champagne, as well as a selection of wines and cocktails.

After a hot two hours of running around on a football pitch, James and I were definitely in need of a leisurely four-hour brunch (\$178, including free-flow). With so many food stations to choose from at Edge, it's advisable to take a walk around first. We earmarked the cheese station (with over 30 to choose from), **wagyu beef**, **duck ravioli** made from scratch, and the selection of Japanese cuisine.

As I was already dehydrated, I took it easy on the champagne at the beginning, and started with some **fine de claire oysters**, **Boston lobster** and **spicy Thai salad**. James opted for the **sushi**, both of us feeling a little smug that we were beginning with some healthy fare. That soon deteriorated, however, when I found the **raclette** station.

On your table are wooden sticks with the table number on them – don't forget to take one with you when you go on the hunt for some more food, as the chefs use these to take your order and to make sure your cooked food arrives at the right table. We used the sticks when we ordered our **foie gras**, which arrived at our table within five minutes, and lasted about five seconds.

The restaurant itself, located on the third floor, has plenty of natural light, unlike some brunch venues that I find too dark and dingy. It has comfy booth-seating, and views of the impressive hotel atrium.

To polish off the brunch, we had a glass of merlot, along with a huge plate of cheese. We didn't get to try all 30 variants, but we definitely gave it a good go.

Amy Brook-Partridge

BEST for CHEESE ADDICTS



Catalunya

82 Collyer Quay
6534 0886 | catalunya.sg

WHEN: Sundays from 12.30pm to 4pm

WHAT'S POPPING: Free-flow wines and cocktails for an additional \$48 per head.

With sunshine pouring into floor-to-ceiling windows and a DJ pumping out jaunty reggae and hip hop tunes, Catalunya's weekend brunch (\$98 without alcohol) has an easygoing sense of fun.

The sumptuous buffet spread at the bar features a Euro-centric range of cold cuts, cheese, ceviche, stews, breads and salads. While we enjoyed grazing our way through the self-serve selection, saving some stomach space for the **made-to-order tapas** proved worthwhile. The **estrellados con chorizo** – a jumble of scrambled eggs, freshly roasted potatoes and chorizo slices – was comforting and gobbled up in a jiffy. Just as satisfying was the crisp, finger-sized **bikini sandwich**, neatly filled with thin slices of ibérico ham and cheese and drizzled with fragrant truffle oil.

The most memorable bit of the afternoon, however, was when the energetic staff danced through the corridor carrying in star courses like **seafood paella** and traditional **Segovian-style suckling pig**. Just like in Spain, the servers chopped the suckling pig with the edge of a plate, smashing it on the floor with gusto afterwards. The theatrics had the crowd in high spirits – especially the little ones, who gleefully joined the dance-in for desserts. Pair the frivolity with a steady supply of cocktails, and you've got a recipe for a good time.

Cherylene Chan



BEST IMPROMPTU DANCE PARTY

**ADULTS-
ONLY BRUNCH
SPOT**



BEST for CRAFT COCKTAIL ENTHUSIASTS

Manhattan Bar

1 Cuscaden Road, Regent Hotel, Level 2
6725 3377 | facebook.com/manhattansg

WHEN: Sundays from 11.30am to 3.30pm

WHAT'S POPPING: A selection of vodka, gin, rum and champagne cocktails, bloody Marys, "The Flowing Bowl" (gin punch with ginger beer and berries), wines and beer for \$150; top up for Billecart-Salmon Brut Reserve Champagne at \$195.

This brunch stands out from the crowd with its cool vintage vibes – the Art Deco bar is an exquisite sight in itself, fun tunes and free-flow selection of, not just champagne, but also all kinds of specialty craft cocktails served in Gatsby-esque glassware. (Try the Old Cuban or gin-based La Bonne Vie.) Don't miss the fabulous **build-your-own bloody Mary station**, in its own dedicated room and filled with all sorts of hot sauces, spices, veggies and toppers.

The brunch is also unique in that it offers both buffet and made-to-order à la carte items. We started with little **caramelised banana and vanilla rum butter pancakes** and fried, soft-boiled eggs before making our way to the **bagel station** and seafood spreads featuring **freshly shucked American oysters**, shrimp cocktail, ceviches, and super-fresh crab legs and lobsters. Perhaps our favourite part was the beautiful selection of artisanal cheeses to which a whole room is devoted – a range of American cheeses, jams and spreads, plus baked goods like breadsticks and pretzel bread; the **shaved aged cheddar paired with buttery jalapeno biscuits** was a highlight for me. And, if you're still hungry, you can order seared scallops, beef tenderloin, foie gras or quinoa salad à la carte.

Save room for the dessert table – a smorgasbord of **caramel popcorn, crème brûlée, Oreo cheesecake, red velvet and apple crumble cakes, bacon and chocolate pops and chocolate chip cookies**, among other tasty treats.

Amy Greenburg

Forlino

1 Fullerton Road, #02-06 One Fullerton
6690 7564 | forlino.com

WHEN: Saturdays and Sundays from 12 noon to 2.30pm

WHAT'S POPPING: Delicious, unlimited Prosecco, ice-cold and not too sweet. My glass never dipped below half, thanks to the wonderfully attentive waiters.

This brunch (\$84, including the free flow of bubbly) features a set menu that changes weekly. It's an all-you-can-eat of delicious Italian food, brought straight to your table – none of that going-up-to-a-buffet malarkey.

We were treated to appetisers of cold cuts, cheeses, soups, breads and more cheeses, all of which were excellent, before being presented with three small dishes of fresh pasta – **penne with four-cheese sauce, spaghetti with crabmeat tomato sauce, and garganelli with beef ragout and baby spinach**; the sauces were all rich without being overbearing. To round



BEST *for* UNLIMITED A LA CARTE SERVICE

off the mains, we enjoyed **pan-fried sea bream, peperonata with lemon butter sauce**, and melt-in-your-mouth braised **beef short rib with classic polenta**. Once we were done with main courses, we were offered the choice of re-ordering any of the dishes again, so we did: another round of pastas. We finished up with **chocolate mousse, pistachio gelato, strawberry sorbet and coconut panna cotta**.

This felt like one of the more decadent brunches in Singapore, with a gorgeous fine-dining setting, stunning views of Marina Bay and delectable food, but with a surprisingly reasonable price tag. It's perfect for taking visitors to – but perhaps not with the little ones.

Natalie Whittell



BEST MEDITERRANEAN SPREAD

The Knolls at Capella Singapore

1 The Knolls, Sentosa Island
6377 8888 | capellahotels.com

WHEN: Sundays from 12.30pm to 3pm

WHAT'S POPPING: Free-flow Taittinger Champagne and wines (for an inclusive \$178); or wine only (\$148). Brunch alone is \$128, and for kids it's \$48 (four to six years old) or \$78 (seven to 12 years old). For beer-lovers, there's a cooler full of popular bottles from Asahi to Heineken.

With not a skyscraper in sight, this resort-style brunch makes you forget Monday is looming. There's nothing quite like being serenaded by a mariachi-style band while taking in the mesmerising view of the South China Sea and the hotel's three cascading pools. Dine alfresco; the sea breeze is a refreshing change from air-conditioning, and the roaming peacocks are fun feathered friends for the kids.

The culinary adventure starts indoors with a spread of various charcuterie, pastries and fresh seafood. We particularly loved the **warm brandade with sautéed prawn jus** and **lobster potato salad**. Pace yourself wisely and follow your nose, as the real stars of this Mediterranean affair are found outdoors. That includes a live barbecue and kebab station of quality **meat and sausages** alongside **crispy Spanish-style suckling pig**, mouth-watering **paella** and a station of ever-changing specials. For us, it was **caponata pork jowl** and **sautéed threadfin with mushroom risotto** – both worthy of seconds!

Sweet tooth or not, the desserts deserve a visit if only to appreciate the craftsmanship; each item is presented with such finesse. We loved the **raspberry mille feuille** and **chunky churros**.

For the final leg of cheese and crackers, you need not lift a finger (and you probably won't be able to at this point!). The cheese cart rolls right up to your table with a connoisseur at hand to talk you through the selection.

Leanda Rathmell



BEST ALL-ROUND

mezza9

10 Scotts Road, Grand Hyatt Singapore
6732 1234 | singapore.grand.hyatt.com

WHEN: Sundays from 11.30am to 3.30pm

WHAT'S POPPING: Free-flow Perrier Jouët Grand Brut Champagne, plus premium red and white wines, beers, mojitos and bloody Marys, \$138; upgrade to Perrier Jouët Belle Epoque for \$288. The non-alcoholic option (inclusive of soft drinks, coffee and tea) is \$118, and children aged seven to 12 can enjoy the brunch for \$69.

After the exciting news that mezza9, the Grand Hyatt's popular restaurant, had been voted Best Champagne Brunch by *EL*'s own readers, I was thrilled to trot along and sample as many delights as I could physically manage.

You'll want to eat no more than a cracker in the build-up to this brunch experience, as a dazzling nine dining experiences await your fork or chopstick. These are separated in distinct cuisines and spread out across six open live-kitchens, cleverly placed to enable diners to take in the theatrical setting. Combine this with mezza9's sleek, low-lit space and up to 400 people, and you've got yourself one hell of an atmosphere.

With a huge array of dishes on offer, mezza9 covers local, Chinese, European and Japanese cuisines across stations that include the grill, seafood, sushi, Thai, the steam basket, yakitori and, of course, the patisserie. After heartily enjoying a traditional **British roast** – slow-roasted prime beef with Yorkshire pudding and all the trimmings – I was surprised to find myself spending a lot of time at the steam basket, where authentic Chinese grub awaits. I'm a sucker for dim sum at the best of times, but it was the melt-in-your-mouth **cha siu pork belly** that had me making a rare repeat trip (highly frowned-upon by my other half during all-you-can-eat occasions).

With French, Australian and Canadian oysters at the seafood section, alongside **Tasmanian black mussels** and **Spencer Gulf wild king prawns**, my fiancé was ecstatic as he created the debris of a global aquarium on his plate. While you cool off before the dessert run, it's worth catching the eye of the roaming magician. I know this sounds a little corny, but we were genuinely impressed with his tricks – particularly as he allowed us to thoroughly investigate his magic equipment afterwards.

Finally, you must save space for the sweet section – not only is there a huge **chocolate fountain**, a **waffle station** and billions of bite-sized cakes, pastries and puddings, but there's a chef on hand to whip up a **liquid nitrogen lemon meringue**. Check out *EL*'s Instagram page to see the snazzy video – those little balls of zesty joy are so worth the brain freeze.

Rachael Wheeler



BEST KICK-BACK-WITH-THE-HIPSTERS SPOT

Open Door Policy

19 Yong Siak Street
6221 9307 | odpsingapore.com

WHEN: Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 3pm; the Countdown Champagne Brunch is also available on Sundays from 6 to 11pm.

WHAT'S POPPING: Champagne Palmer Brut. Opt for the Countdown Champagne Brunch, and the first glass is \$20, second is \$15, and so on until \$0, meaning the most you will spend on champagne is \$50, no matter how much you then drink.

Found in the middle of hipsterville Tiong Bahru, Open Door Policy (ODP) recently extended its brunch menu. From the new dishes on offer, we ordered the very substantial **roast wagyu rump, ratte potatoes and poached eggs** (\$28), which comes on a brioche bun with a chilli béarnaise sauce. James opted for one of ODP's regular items, the **ham and cheese croque madame** (\$26), served with fries, a fried egg and gherkin emulsion. In true hipster style, both delicious dishes were presented on wooden butcher-style blocks. For dessert, we had to try the new **sweet buttermilk pancakes** (\$22) with a sour pastry crème, poached strawberries and freeze-dried raspberries.

We opted for the "countdown champagne" option, but not before trying one or two of the cocktails. I had a **whisky sour** (\$18) with a spicy chocolate truffle on top, while James tried the gin-based **Red Snapper Bloody Mary** (\$18).

This was the kind of brunch we could come back to, perhaps with a small group of friends. It has a cosy, rustic charm, a fantastic champagne offer and hearty food.

Amy Brook-Partridge

La Barca Ristorante and Wine Bar

90 Goodman Road, Goodman Arts Centre
6346 5813 | labarca-sg.com

WHEN: Free-flow Prosecco (\$45) is available with the brunch menu from 11am to 2.30pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

WHAT'S POPPING: Guerrieri Rizzardi Prosecco – a light and fruity sparkling wine that complements the menu nicely.

Whether you choose to sit alfresco on the deck or indoors in the cantina-style restaurant, Chef Michele Sorrentino's eatery encourages relaxed family dining – think big Italian family dinners! The menu promises a taste of Tuscany and delivers it with fresh ingredients and homemade sauces.

We started with the **warm seafood salad with lemon cream** (\$28) and the **spaghetti carbonara** (\$24), both of which were light and tasty, followed by a crispy and moreish **fresh mushroom pizza** (\$24), and **pork sausages, eggs and chips** (\$22), which were meaty and filling. Finally, we were treated to the traditional T-bone **Fiorentina steak** (\$15 per 100 grams) served with roasted potatoes and cannellini beans with sage and chilli – a firm favourite with regulars (and us)! While I was really too stuffed to do the **tiramisu** and **apple tart** (\$18 each) justice, my husband thought they were excellent.

Kids are made very welcome here, with a free selection of pastas and pizzas, fruit juices and plastic place settings and cups – plus indoor and outdoor play options.

The verdict? La Barca is hidden away in the centre of Goodman Arts Centre, but it's worth finding for the food and family-friendly welcome! 🍷

Katie Peace



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DIY Brunch Ideas

For those weekends when you just can't be bothered to go out for a big brunch affair, try these simple yet delicious bites and beverages at home. Whether you have guests to impress or plan on brunching in bed, these easy-to-follow recipes will turn any Saturday or Sunday into something extra-special.

Mediterranean Stuffed Mushrooms

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

- 18 small white mushrooms, cleaned
- 150 grams light cream cheese (room temperature)
- 2 tablespoons ready-made pesto
- ½ cup semi-sundried tomatoes, finely chopped
- ½ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Olive oil
- Parsley to garnish

Method

- Preheat oven to 200°C.
- Gently pull stems out of mushrooms. If the top of the stem breaks off, dig it out with a teaspoon. Discard about a third of the stems; finely chop the remainder.
- Thoroughly combine chopped stems with cream cheese, pesto, tomatoes, pine nuts, salt and pepper.
- Place grated Parmesan and breadcrumbs in a small bowl.
- Spoon cheese mixture into mushroom caps and dip into breadcrumbs to coat the top of each mushroom.
- Drizzle a little olive oil on each mushroom.
- Bake for about 10 to 15 minutes, or until the mushrooms are fairly tender and the bread crumbs are golden.
- Garnish with parsley leaf, and serve hot.

This recipe is courtesy of Expat Kitchen. For more details, visit expat-kitchen.com.



Caitlin's Bloody Mary

American expat CAITLIN MCNEAL makes a mean Bloody Mary. Here's her recipe, plus some fun ways to garnish a bloody good beverage.

Ingredients

- 3 large celery stalks from the heart, including leaves
- 1 litre tomato juice
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish (not creamed!); you can usually find this at Cold Storage supermarkets
- ¼ yellow onion, chopped
- 1 lemon, juiced
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon celery salt
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 12 dashes hot sauce, or to taste (I recommend Tabasco)
- 1½ cups of vodka

Optional Garnish

Use one, none or any combination you fancy.

- Celery sticks
- Lemons
- Olives
- Pickles
- Cucumber
- Large, poached shrimp
- Salted rim (run a lemon around the top of the glass, fill a plate with a mix of celery and kosher salt and slowly turn the top of the glass on the plate)

Method

1. Pour half the tomato juice into a high-powered blender, add celery and onion, and blend until smooth.
2. Add the rest of the tomato juice and remaining ingredients (except the vodka) and blend again.
3. Pour the contents of the blender into a large pitcher; add the vodka, mix and chill.
4. Serve in tall glasses over ice with garnishes of your choice, and enjoy!



I love brunch with a good Bloody Mary, but have had a hard time finding good ones here in Singapore. Since I started making these a few years ago, my friends always request them when they're over for a weekend brunch. The recipe was inspired by Barefoot Contessa star, Ina Garten.



The Hugo

Austrian expat NADINE GASSER shares her favourite recipe for The Hugo, a delightfully refreshing drink that's become quite popular, particularly in Austria and Germany – and a tasty accompaniment to your next brunch.

Ingredients

- 100ml prosecco or champagne
- 150ml sparkling water
- 1 to 2 teaspoons of elderflower syrup (available at IKEA)
- Mint leaves
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 lime, sliced
- Ice cube

Method

1. Crush or muddle 4 mint leaves in a champagne or large wine glass.
2. Add elderflower syrup to taste – just 1 teaspoon if you don't want it too sweet.
3. Pour in the lime juice, the prosecco or champagne and the sparkling water, and stir well with a cocktail spoon.
4. Add more mint leaves, lime slices and ice as desired.
5. Serve with a straw. *Prosit!* 🍷

I love this cocktail because it's light and refreshing, and something different than your average Aperol spritz or mojito. Elderflower is big in Austria, so for me, it's a little taste of home.

Thai with a Twist

While there's no shortage of Thai cuisine in Singapore, Soi 60's delectable modern Thai cuisine – plus its well-crafted cocktails and hip, riverside atmosphere – sets it apart. Since opening in August 2014, it has become a go-to spot for fresh and stylish Thai dishes: coconut chicken salad, caramelised pork belly, irresistible corn cakes, fishcake sliders and to-die-for basil chicken. In the kitchen is 28-year-old chef NAM PONGPANICH, a Bangkok native who perfected her skills at the Culinary Institute of America and worked under the tutelage of Michelin-starred Daniel Boulud in New York.

By Amy Greenburg



Photo by Ken Tan



Did you always know you wanted to be a chef? How did you get started?

I love cooking and eating, but at first I didn't think about becoming a chef; I went to university in Bangkok and majored in information and library studies. (I also love books!) I just did whatever I was interested in, not necessarily something I would have a career in.

Then, after thinking long and hard about it, I decided to go to culinary school. From there, I headed to New York, where I worked for a year full-time at DB Bistro under chef Daniel Boulud, and then for four months or so at Extern del Posto.

When and why did you decide to move to Singapore?

After New York, I decided to head to Singapore, primarily because it's close to Thailand. I worked at DB Bistro Moderne in Marina Bay Sands before becoming a chef at Soi 60.

What do you think sets Soi 60 apart?

We're contemporary Thai, not traditional. We offer Thai flavours with a twist. When it comes to ingredients, we can use just about anything and make it Thai – so long as it's fun and tasty. That goes for cooking techniques as well. We've got everything from *confit* and poached dishes to banana cheesecake and chicken larb.

What's Soi 60's most popular dish?

I'd say the crispy duck pancake with lychee, Thai herbs and black vinegar reduction.

What do you think of Singapore's dining scene?

There's so much diversity; you can get anything here. There are a lot of nice restaurants, from celebrity restaurants to cool cafés – my favourites include Burnt Ends for the open atmosphere, and, for Italian food, Mozza. I also enjoy discovering the best hawker places.

60 Robertson Quay, #01-04 The Quayside
6635 6675 | soi60.com.sg

We asked Chef Pongpanich to share the recipe for one of Soi 60's hottest menu items, the Pork Belly Soi Sliders, in case you'd like to give it a go at home for your next dinner party. But, be warned – while it's sure to be good, it might not be the same without one of Soi's Siam Martinis or Passion Fruit Smash cocktails in hand.

Pork Belly Soi Sliders



Photo by Ken Tan

This recipe makes 24 servings

Ingredients

- 1½ carrots, julienned
- ½ daikon, julienned
- 2 cups white vinegar
- 250g caster sugar
- Sea salt flakes
- 5 red shallots, coarsely chopped
- 5 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 25g (5cm piece) of ginger, coarsely chopped
- Vegetable oil
- 200ml Shaoxing wine
- 200ml light soy sauce
- ¼ cup dark soy sauce
- 60g rock sugar, crushed
- ½ bunch spring onions, coarsely chopped
- 750g piece of boneless pork belly, skin on
- 5 pieces star anise
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 piece cassia bark
- 3 pieces Chinese brown cardamom
- 1 licorice root
- 2 Lebanese cucumbers, thinly sliced on a mandolin
- 1 cup (loosely packed) coriander
- 24 soft mini-rolls, halved
- 180g mayonnaise
- 30g sriracha sauce (available for purchase at Soi 60)

Instructions

For pickled carrot and daikon:

1. Combine vinegar, sugar, 2 teaspoons of sea salt flakes and 250ml of water in a jug, and whisk together to create pickling liquid.
2. Place carrot and daikon in a sealable plastic container, and cover with pickling liquid. Cover and refrigerate to pickle for 5 days.

For master stock:

1. Process shallots, garlic and ginger in a food processor to create a coarse paste.
2. Heat oil in a large stockpot over medium heat, and add shallot mixture. Stir occasionally while frying until golden (3 to 5 minutes).
3. Add Shaoxing wine and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat by half (for 2 to 4 minutes), and then add soy sauce, crushed rock sugar, a large pinch of salt and 4.5 litres of water.
4. Tie spices (star anise, cloves, cassia bark, cardamom and licorice root) in a piece of muslin to form a parcel, and add to stock with spring onion. Reduce heat to low and simmer to infuse for 30 minutes.
5. Submerge pork belly in master stock and simmer until very tender (3 to 4 hours).
6. Carefully remove pork and transfer to a tray lined with baking paper. Place another piece of baking paper and tray on top, evenly weighted with food cans; refrigerate overnight.
7. Strain master stock and reserve for another use, if desired.

Deep-frying pork:

1. Preheat oil in a deep saucepan or deep-fryer to 175° Celsius.
2. Slice pork belly into 1.5cm-thick pieces and cut length to fit rolls (about 4cm).
3. Deep-fry in small batches until golden and crisp (3 to 4 minutes). Be very careful as hot oil will spit; a spatter guard is recommended. Drain on absorbent paper.

For sriracha mayonnaise:

Whisk mayonnaise and sriracha in a bowl to combine, then refrigerate until required.

For cucumber topping:

Rub 2 tablespoons of sea salt flakes into cucumber in a colander and set aside to drain excess liquid (30 minutes). Rinse well under cold running water, dry on absorbent paper and then set aside.

Finishing touches:

Spread rolls with pork belly, cucumber, pickled carrot and daikon, and coriander, and finish with sriracha mayonnaise. Sandwich with tops, and serve. 🍴

THE GREAT RECIPE SWAP

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



BERRY BLISS SUMMER OATS



**Chloe De Nazelle,
Scottish**

"Being a nutritionist, I'm so often asked for breakfast ideas for busy families. Refrigerator oats are quick and easy to make – and with so many different flavour options such as mango, cocoa banana, apple cinnamon and even peanut butter, you can have one for every day of the week!"

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup rolled oats
- ¾ cup milk or unsweetened almond milk
- ¼ cup low fat yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon chia seeds
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon raspberry jam ("I use unsweetened organic jam" – Chloe)
- ¼ cup halved fresh raspberries, or enough to fill the jar

Instructions:

1. Into a jar put oats, milk, yoghurt, chia seeds, vanilla extract and jam. Screw on lid and give it a good shake until combined.
2. Add the fresh raspberries and stir. Cover and refrigerate overnight or up to three days. Eat chilled.

DESSERT

EASY CHOCOLATE ORANGE MOUSSE



Sarah Anderson, British

"For all those missing Terry's Chocolate Orange, this mousse is a fantastic quick-fix substitute."

Serves 6

Ingredients:

- 200g plain chocolate
- 200ml whipping cream, whipped
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 100g full fat creme fraiche

Instructions:

1. Melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of water until runny. Leave to cool.
2. Lightly whip the cream in a bowl. Add the orange juice and zest.
3. Add the creme fraiche to the chocolate and stir until smooth.
4. Fold the whipped cream into the mixture and spoon into six ramekins.
5. Chill for at least an hour before serving.



PLUS



If we publish your recipe in our magazine, you'll be adding a great cookbook to your bookshelf. This month it's *Superfoods*, a comprehensive nutritional guide with recipes for everyday foods (like broccoli, beetroot and even chocolate!) that could help you live longer and feel younger. Publisher: Parragon

Be Part of THE GREAT RECIPE SWAP!

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



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- Via Dempsey, follow signs to Loewen Cluster. OR
- From Tanglin Road, turn onto Ridley Park. Continue past the black-and-white homes on your left. Enter Tanglin Village and Loewen Road. The first building on your right is Loewen Gardens, Block 75-81 Loewen Road. Just beyond the building is a carpark with a sign for White Lodge.

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Guilin, China (photo: Country Holidays)

Travel

WHAT'S NEW

Hot destinations & great places to stay



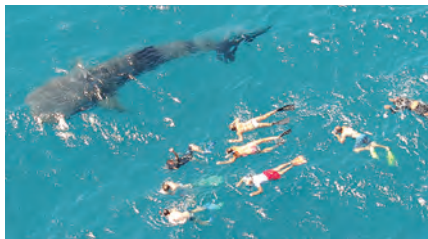
ELITE STYLE

White, stylish and ever-so-slick: those are the characteristics that define this four-bedroom, private-pooled colonial villa, located along the best street of Bali's hippest area, Seminyak. Hot off the press and new to the portfolio of luxury villa rental group **Elite Havens**, this property – think sassy Hamptons style meets tropical Balinese chic – will be booked out before you blink, so grab it for the high season and walk to absolutely everything that's happening in town. *Photo: Christopher Leggitt.*

elitehavens.com ▲

SWIMMING WITH (WHALE) SHARKS

Western Australia's whale shark season is underway, with sightings of the world's largest fish near Exmouth in the State's Coral Coast region. More than 19,300 people visited World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef last year to view these gentle giants of the sea, who migrate to WA's coastline between March and August each year to feed on plankton and krill. Whale shark swim tours are available from Coral Bay and Exmouth from now until August, allowing



visitors the opportunity to have a face-to-fin encounter with the animals, which can grow up to 18 metres in length. The annual Ningaloo Whale Shark Festival will celebrate the season with all kinds of family fun from 21 to 24 May. Exmouth is a two-hour flight from Perth. *Photo: James Morgan.*

westernaustralia.com | ningaloo whalesharkfestival.com



A NEW AMAN

Good news for lovers of luxury getaways: the Aman Group recently opened its third property in China (after Beijing and Hangzhou),

Amandayan, set on a hillside above the UNESCO-protected Old Town of Lijiang. The resort consists of traditional courtyard buildings and 35 spacious suites with views of Lijiang, the surrounding countryside and distant snow-capped mountains. A preserved palace dating to 1725 is located on the property, and features ornate carvings and colourful paintings; it was once the location for scholars entering the Chinese civil service to do their examinations. Amandayan is a great base for taking in the region's natural attractions, including Tiger Leaping Gorge. **amanresorts.com**



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Underwater Wonders

The boutique island-resort of **Angsana Ihuru** in the Maldives is hosting its third exciting 24-hour diving event, on 25 April. Known as the “10 to 10 *Rannamaari* wreck”, the event sees scuba divers and snorkellers invited to explore the resort’s unique shipwreck in the course of a day. The *Rannamaari* sank mysteriously in 1999, and at 26 metres is now a magnificent habitat for sea creatures and coral. Those who can’t make it to the Maldives can follow the event on Facebook and Twitter, or view a live webcast (ustream.tv/channel/ten2ten-rannamaari-wreck). Accommodation in a Beachfront Villa at Angsana Ihuru starts from US\$700 per night, with breakfast. Certified divers can book to dive on 25 April, from \$76 per dive. Call **+960 664 3502** or email reservations-ihuru@angsana.com to reserve a slot. ▼



SERENE SRI LANKA

Maya Villa, a restored Manor House in the unspoilt Tangalle countryside of southeast Sri Lanka, has teamed up with international yoga teacher and Ashtanga expert, Dorion Davis, for two exclusive 10-day, 12-night **yoga retreats** in May (1-13 May and 15-27 May). The cost of each retreat is US\$2,125 per person, including luxury accommodation, three vegetarian meals a day, 10 days of yoga tuition (morning and afternoon sessions), full use of Maya Villa’s pool, garden, Wi-Fi and other facilities, and return transfers. Six-night stays are also available, beginning 1, 7, 15 and 21 May, and priced at US\$1,065. mayatangallesrilanka.com ◀

FOOTLOOSE FEMALES

TripAdvisor recently launched its **Women’s Travel Survey** of more than 9,000 female respondents globally, and the responses – including those from women in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia – make for interesting reading. Solo travel among female travellers is on the rise, with 48 percent of Southeast Asian women saying they’ve travelled alone, compared to 36 percent in 2014. Moreover, 79 percent of women who travel alone are planning to do so again this year – considerably higher than the global average. Bangkok, Siem Reap and Singapore are the top Asian destinations among global solo female travellers.

BEACHSIDE BOXING

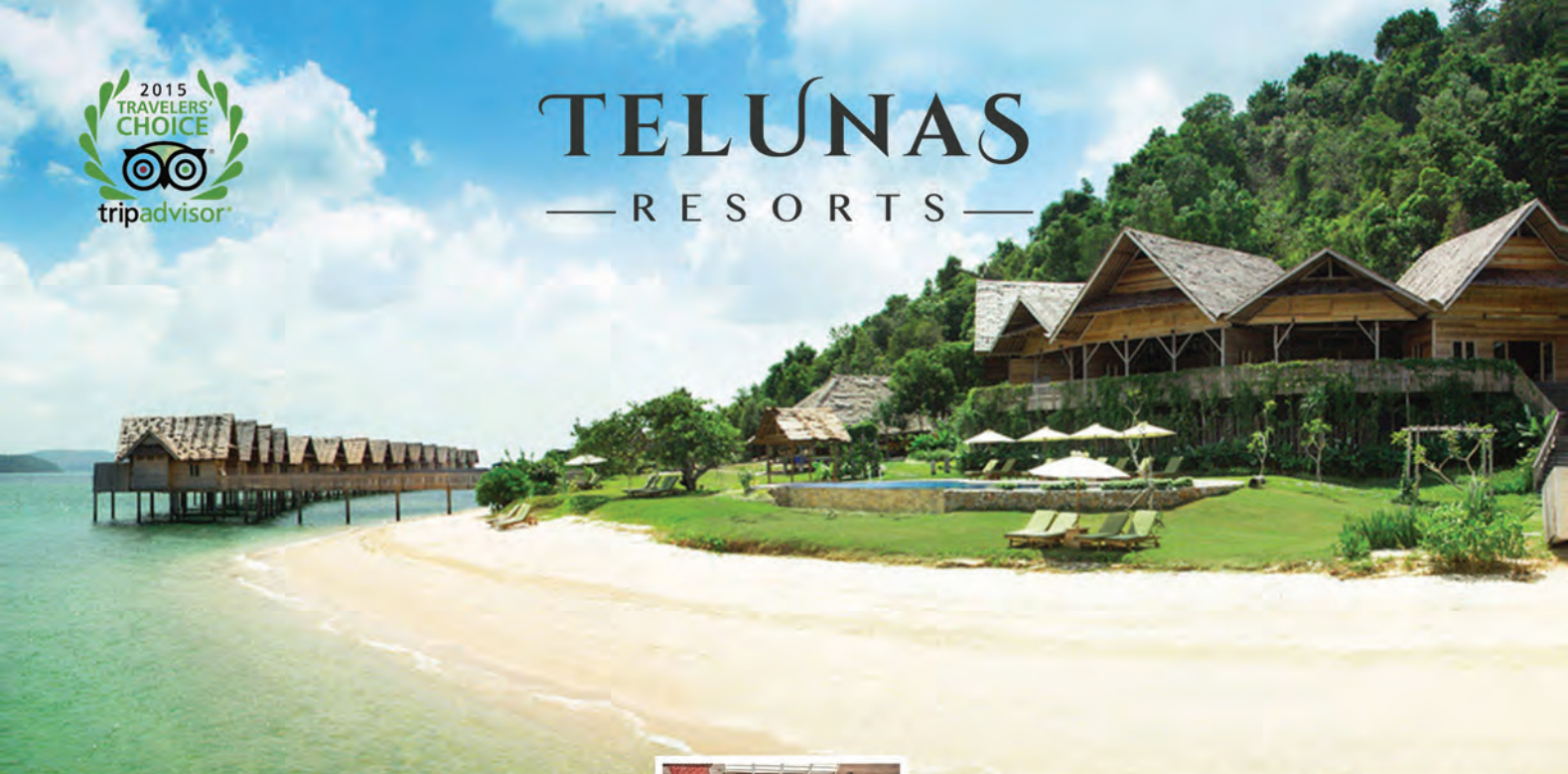
To introduce guests to Thailand’s revered national sport, Anantara Phuket Layan Resort & Spa has installed a new state-of-the-art **Muay Thai boxing ring**, called “Layan Stadium”. Expert instructors are available for a choice of private classes and programmes to suit all ages and abilities, from a one-hour beginner’s class to a five-day intensive programme with ringside seats at a local stadium match. All participants receive a certificate and a pair of Thai boxing shorts as a memento. Family packages are available so that children aged four to 12 years can try a fun new way to be fit. anantara.com ▼





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- Stay in a village house next to the Great Wall
- Go on a food trail and learn about the Muslim Quarter of Xi'an

A Breath of Fresh Air

Exploring some of China's unexpected gems

As Shanghai and Beijing march headlong through the 21st century, much of China moves at a different rhythm, maintaining a traditional way of life. Rice is still planted in paddies by hand and tilled by plough, ethnic minorities dress in colourful traditional costumes, and ancient houses remain hidden in quiet valleys.

These things aren't always easy to see, however. For many travellers, China means crowded tourist sites, congested traffic, air pollution, and local charm lost to infrastructure.

Tour operator **Country Holidays** provides a point of difference by designing quintessential experiences based on the first-hand information of its China-based team members. The emphasis is on local sights, stunning accommodation, authentic eats and other secrets, whether it's in the fascinating cities – where specialist walking tours give alternative perspectives – or rural areas that are both charming and remote.

Here are five classic China experiences and some of the unexpected additions you'll find on a Country Holidays itinerary.



YUNNAN
BEYOND THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE OLD TOWN OF LIJIANG

- Hike or horse-trek along an ancient tea trail
- Search for the true Shangri-La
- Enjoy a "tea spa" experience in the tea-growing Jingmai Mountains
- Stay in the Amandayan, the newest Aman Resort, set in traditional dwellings and courtyards





GUILIN & YANGSHUO ALTERNATIVES TO A TOURIST BOAT TRIP ON THE LI RIVER

- Cruise the Li River on a private bamboo raft in quieter sections of the waterway, close to local life
- Hike in the Long Sheng Rice Terraces and through ethnic minority villages



SILK ROAD OUTSIDE OF THE WELL-BEATEN TRAILS OF XINJIANG PROVINCE

- See a lesser-known but spectacular section of the Silk Road in Gansu Province
- Luxuriate in wilderness tents and cabins in the monastic town of Labrang
- Enjoy hikes and horse treks
- Visit restricted-access caves in the Mogao Grottoes



TIBET BEYOND POTALA PALACE OF LHASA

- Travel in winter to avoid crowds and enjoy blue skies and snowcapped mountain views, see Tibetan pilgrims in Lhasa, and explore Potala Palace without summer's time limitations
- Experience smaller Tibetan townships



For more information on China travel, including the destinations mentioned here, call 6334 6120 to speak with one of Country Holidays' Travel Specialists, or visit countryholidays.com.sg.



FOUR FANTASTIC FINDS:

ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

LARA SAGE tracks down a handful of lodges and resorts that offer a unique escape in amazing South African settings: a dairy farm converted to a spa in the countryside; a cluster of log cabins built on stilts in a natural forest overlooking an expansive white beach; a surprisingly affordable large city guesthouse with sunsets to die for; and an iconic grand dame of a beachfront hotel.



#1 Fordoun Hotel & Spa

Flying into Durban, you can see why this part of South Africa is known for its rolling hills and its proximity to the warm Indian Ocean. This area was home to the infamous King Shaka, after whom the airport is named. Round thatched *rondavels* (huts) dot the terrain – a part of the Zulu way of life.

A trip to Fordoun Hotel & Spa offers a glimpse of the country's ever-changing landscape as you drive approximately two hours inland, towards the Drakensberg mountain range (named for the dragon's back it resembles).

Fordoun is a remarkable establishment. A renovated dairy, this family-run spa takes wellbeing to a whole new level

on a farm reminiscent of the English countryside. The spa here has been given an innovative twist with the introduction of a traditional *sangoma* (healer); these people are alchemists of medicines from indigenous plants, with rituals that include the throwing of bones.

The healer at Fordoun is the remarkable Dr Elliot Ndlovu, whose indigenous garden includes plants that act as either stimulants or relaxants, and which are used by the spa. Dr Ndlovu believes in the preservation of Africa's indigenous flora, in the strength of community, and in Ubuntu, the philosophy that the universal bonds of humanity are what bind

us. His tales of ancestral apparitions may be challenging for some, but his unwavering belief in African traditional healing has endeared him to many former cynics, and led to consultations with Oscar nominees, a meeting with the British Queen and a visit from a former state president.

Aside from seeing Dr Ndlovu, guests can experience the energy of healing through highly trained therapists within the tranquillity of Fordoun Spa. While my treatment had no spiritual aspect, I did enjoy the indulgence of a body scrub and massage using mud from a white mountain in the Drakensberg – a place of spiritual importance to

the Zulus. My therapist also used compresses (herbs and oils in muslin), which I then took home to use in the bath.

Outside of the treatment rooms, sprawling Fordoun is a working farm with grassy pastures. The original milking pen has been converted into an indoor pool, and old farmhouses have been converted into guest suites with luxurious bathrooms, cosy fireside seating and summery verandahs. What's more, the

spa has a restaurant with the kind of high standards that make it a dining destination and not just an expected part of your stay. The food was exemplary, and included a flavoursome curry in a traditional African *potjie* (a lidded, cast-iron cooking pot with three legs that can be placed in an open fire). From Fordoun, guests can go on a cultural tour to enrich their African experience.

fordoun.com





#2 Monkey Valley Resort

Set in a 400 year-old Milkwood Forest, Monkey Valley Resort is located on the slopes of Chapmans Peak Drive. Overlooking the 8 kilometre Noordhoek Beach, few sights can beat a panoramic view of horses cantering beside the icy spray off the waves.

Private homes are scattered on the mountainside, in a village known for its relaxed community. The charming area includes a few vineyards facing the afternoon sun, as well as paddocks and stables along meandering little roads, a

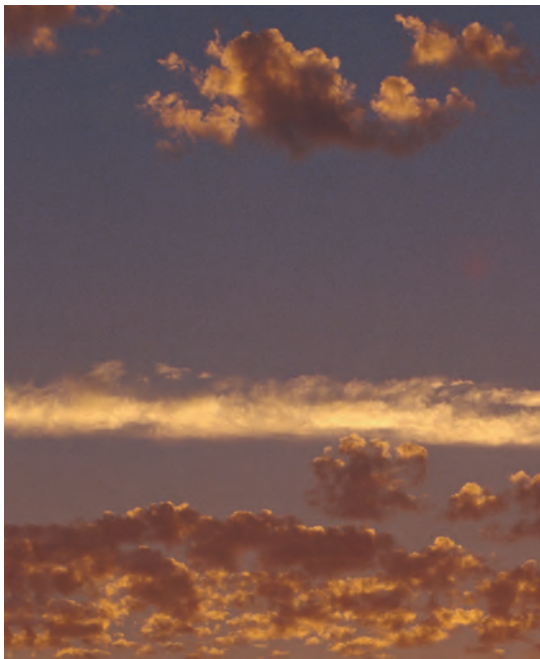
quaint village pub and some wonderful restaurants.

Monkey Valley Resort has been built into the forest of mature milkwood trees, in a way that preserves the stability of the environment. The accommodation is made up of a configuration of log cabins, thatched cottages and self-catering family units, set well apart from one another. The units are humble, but the views are breathtaking – including the one from the shower and bath in the glassed-in bathroom of our Crowned Eagle suite, which made lingering in the tub so very tempting.

We were served a wholesome and hearty

breakfast, as well as ice-cold beers (not at the same time!), on the restaurant deck built into the trees and overlooking the 8km stretch of beach. A tree grows right through the pub, and at times flamingos, other waterbirds and whales can be seen in the sea and lagoon below. With real dunes of sand fine enough to run through the fingers, children can play for hours in this natural environment, with a gusty Cape wind blowing their hair across their cheerful faces.

monkeyvalleyresort.com



#3 Ocean View House

Cape Town buzzes in the summer, and it's nearly impossible to find anywhere to stay that doesn't break the bank. That said, with the favourable exchange rate, the Singapore dollar goes reasonably far in South Africa.

What a surprise to find that this website had fairly portrayed the expansive property on which Ocean View House sits.

Knowing the area's high property value and the way houses are squashed onto small pieces of land on this desirable cliff face, I was gobsmacked to find Ocean View House sprawling generously over lovely gardens, with all rooms offering sought-after views. The Twelve Apostles mountains tower majestically behind the property, and a large tree with hammocks takes pride of place in the garden. Two gardeners tend to the indigenous flora, and the water-lilies and other fresh-water plants are beautiful.

With 17 rooms, there's a wide selection of accommodation, and it's refreshing to find such a location at a favourable price. This is one of the last properties on the edge of the urban area of Camps Bay and Bakoven. (Camps Bay and the Atlantic seaboard in general are renowned for bars, restaurants, clubs, beaches and sunsets to die for.) A sea-cliff drive through the nature reserve leads along the ocean shore to the famous Chapman's Peak Drive, voted one of the most scenic routes in the world.

Just 10 minutes from Table Mountain, and 15 minutes from the city centre and vibrant waterfront, this large guesthouse is a terrific location for anyone visiting Cape Town.

oceanview-house.com



#4 The Oyster Box

I recently took my South African-born grandmother to this beachfront hotel north of Durban to celebrate her 85th birthday – what a perfect place! She regaled me with tales of the iconic lighthouse, while the opulence of The Oyster Box itself took her back to her youth of high teas and dinner dances.

Today, a pianist still plays in the Palm Court while china cups are clinked, and fruit skewers are served to guests lounging on red-and-white deck chairs beside the pools. The quirky brass Dolphin Bell still ignites excitement as guests ring it when they spot dolphins frolicking in the Indian Ocean breakers.

This is a charming hotel that is mature and grand, yet fresh and engaging. I have visited here on other occasions with my young family, and they've been equally impressed, delighting in the free-flowing milkshakes, poolside games, and easy access to the beach below to play on the sand and explore the abundant sea life in the rocky coastal pools.

The original cottage, "The Oyster Lodge", was built on these grounds in 1863. Made of Burmese teak, corrugated iron and reinforced concrete, it was originally used as a navigational beacon and later as a tea garden and then a restaurant, before opening as The Oyster Box Hotel in 1954, on the site next to the lighthouse.

In 2006, Stanley and Bea Tollman of Red Carnation Hotels purchased the rundown property. It was their vision to restore and develop the hotel to its original glory; they wanted to keep the



authentic period touches while bringing it into the 21st century.

The hotel we see today is a fitting tribute to their vision. While a number of the original features remain intact in the new structure, the hotel has, for the most part, been rebuilt: from the grand revolving door at the entrance, to the reception and foyer with its terrazzo tiles, familiar wrought-iron balustrade and original, inlaid hand-painted tiles and friezes. The recognisable black-and-white checkerboard floor has been re-instated throughout.

The lighthouse on Umhlanga beach was completed in 1954. It stands guard

over some of the most treacherous waters of Southern Africa, warning ships of hidden dangers, but also welcoming ships sailing into the safety of the Durban harbour. The circular tower, painted white with a red band at the top, rises 21 metres above the beach. Umhlanga Lighthouse has never had a keeper; The Oyster Box Hotel, originally the first beach cottage in the area, has always acted as its official warden and custodian. In fact, in the days before the lighthouse was built, the red painted roof of the hotel served as a beacon for ships.

oysterboxhotel.com 

A scenic view of a beach at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the boat. In the foreground, the sandy beach is marked with numerous footprints. A traditional Balinese boat, known as a Jukung, is moored in the shallow water, its reflection clearly visible in the calm surface.

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VILLA BATUJIMBAR
SANUR, BALI

Bunking Down in Bunaken

A relatively unvisited Indonesian island proves a perfect getaway destination for CAROLYN BEASLEY and family.

If you're anything like me, you'll be on the lookout for some genuinely amazing and pristine snorkelling within a short flight from Singapore. Kid-friendly, easy and adventurous at the same time. Guess what? I've found it.

Bunaken Island is off the northeastern tip of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. With the help of TripAdvisor, I chose a resort that looked suitable for our family of five, with kids aged ten, seven and four. After that choice, everything was easy.

The flight from Singapore took us direct to Manado where our resort driver met us. While it's a small city of only 500,000 people, Manado is the real deal. Traditional horse-drawn carts are still used for transporting people and attempt to hold their own against thousands of motorcycles and rusty, exhaust-belching trucks. In a sure sign of a city without adequate disposal options, we were faced with the depressing sight of garbage cascading into the oil-slicked port. Snaking its way through boats large and small, it ominously floated out to sea to begin its evil turtle-choking work. At that point, I wondered about my choice.

Arriving at Bunaken

Happily, as soon as we pulled away from the port, the garbage diminished and the archipelago of the Bunaken Marine Park presented a fascinating picture. The island of Manado Tua towers above the ocean, complete with its own wisp of cloud masquerading as an exhalation of volcano smoke, an echo of its fiery past.

Bunaken Island, the little sister of Manado Tua, is crescent-shaped and relatively flat. It consists of vertical



greenery, with a smattering of small villages and dive lodges clinging to its edges. Our resort, Bunaken Cha Cha Nature Resort, came into view with its white façade and roofline built in the local Minahasan style. As our boat slowed and we puttered closer, the vibrant, living reef became visible through the crystal clear waters.

First, we tiptoed over the reef flat in our resort-issued booties to our accommodation. Set in a lush garden, our two rooms were linked by a private

verandah, complete with loungers and an amazing ocean view. The rooms were charmingly rustic, with everything we needed including air-conditioning and an open-air shower.

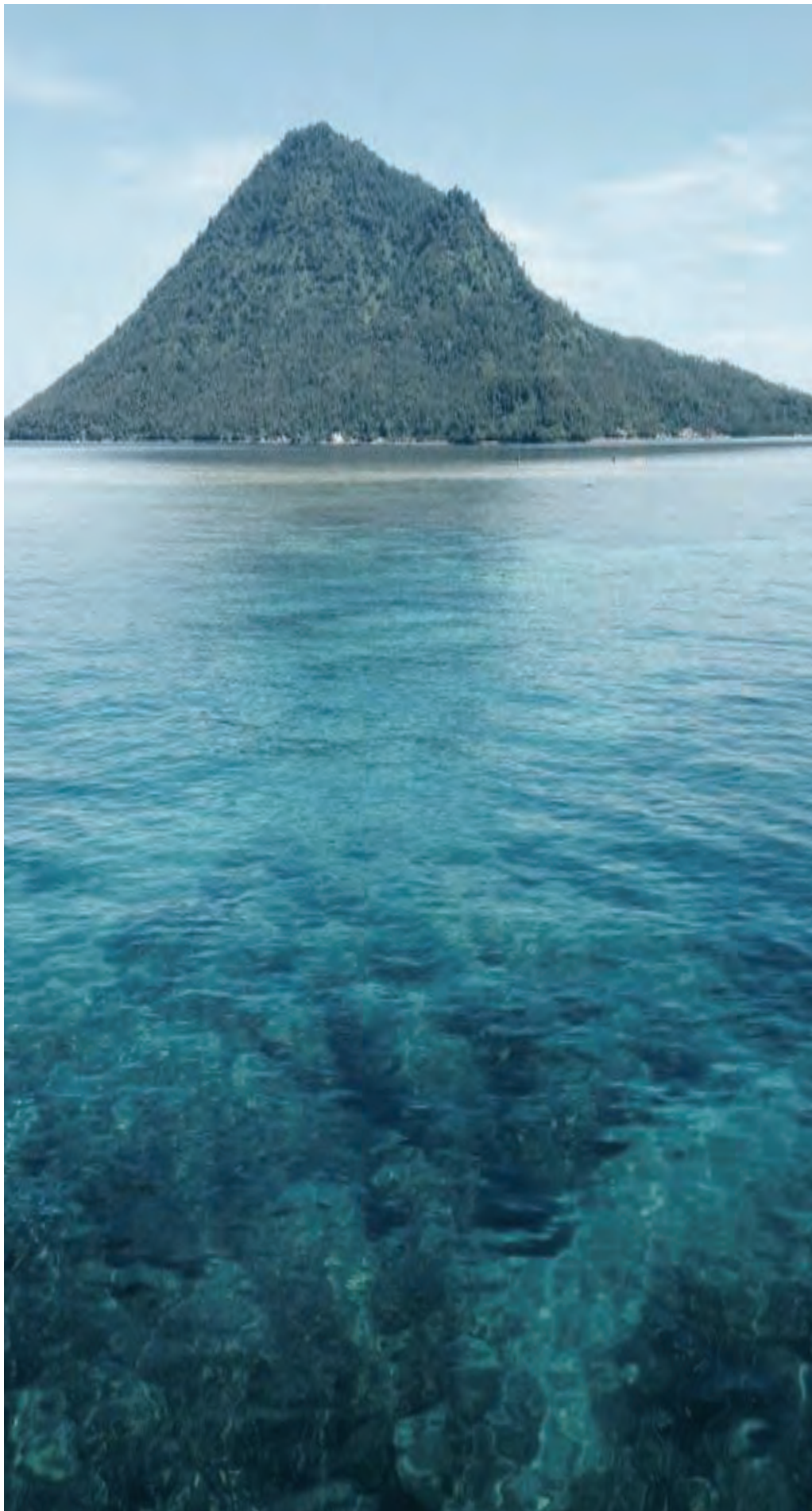
Full board is included in the price at Bunaken Cha Cha, and Raf, the Irish-Italian owner, had most meals with us at the large communal table. He was happy to chat and answer all our questions too. The food was fresh and delicious – a mix of local Sulawesi dishes and the occasional Western item.

The snorkelling

It was the starfish that lured me in; the sand flat was positively seething with the tiny creatures. It was a very positive sign that the snorkelling in front of the resort might be excellent. So before the suspense killed me, I waded in. Nervous of squashing the abundant coral, I quickly slid into knee-deep water to swim the rest of the way to the reef drop-off. The shallows offered up a collection of fish that any large aquarium would be delighted to host, and I congratulated myself on choosing so well. The house reef at Bunaken Cha Cha was officially *amazing*.

Dusk was approaching, and many of the reef creatures were out and about, feeding. In the first five minutes alone, I came across more outlandishly coloured tropical fish than I could have imagined. Then I spied a larger shape materialising from the gloom, and recognised the lackadaisical, flowing tail movement of a shark. The sleek, harmless and perfectly sculptured black-tip reef shark inspected me before darting behind an enormous coral and out of sight. I was so excited to see a shark here, as I'm aware that the shark-fin trade is making them harder to find. Although some illegal fishing still takes place, it seems that Bunaken Marine Park is largely succeeding in protecting its inhabitants.

We had the resort's large snorkelling boat all to ourselves. Our guides showed us the best places and even entertained our kids on board the boat when they got tired. Our favourite snorkelling site was "Turtle City". The moment we flopped into the water, our guide was pointing out turtles, which were often located just over the reef drop-off. As we coasted along the surface, the beautiful star-shaped motifs on the backs of the ancient creatures were illuminated in the bright sunshine, with a background of dusky, unending blue as a backdrop. Our kids were able to easily swim with the turtles as they peacefully finned along, feeling no danger from us.







The diving

Bunaken Island is surrounded by deep, deep water. The water drops from the reef at one to two metres down a vertical wall as deep as 1,600 metres. The water was so clear that we could see at least 35 metres into the inky depths, and the myriad sponges and colourful soft corals attached to every inch of the vertical wall proved irresistible.

It had been 12 years since our last dive; in that time, we had bought a house, had three kids, moved from Asia to Australia, sold a house and moved back to Asia!

As I stuck the regulator in my mouth and inelegantly rolled backwards off the boat, I tried to recall what I was supposed to do. I was already descending towards the reef when I remembered: breathe!

With my breathing under control and any sign of panic gone, I followed the dive master down the wall. My expert guide, born and bred in Bunaken, pointed out every kind of salty beast from huge Napoleon wrasse to tiny orangutan crabs. One turtle was actually asleep in a small indent in the reef wall and continued to

snooze there while I inspected her at close range. The dive master, who had barely said a word on the surface, was clearly in his element as he showed me the vast hidden treasures of his island's ocean.

While I dived, a snorkelling guide was engaging the rest of the family, and even our four-year-old daughter was delighting in spotting Nemos and swimming out over the drop off into the turtle's realm. During breaks, everyone revelled in the joy of flinging themselves off the bow of the boat.



Local sights

Bunaken has a couple of local villages, and we strolled through the centre of the island to check these out. The path through the interior revealed a fascinating mix of coconut palms, scratching chickens, banana trees, bougainvillea gardens, kids playing soccer and naughty black piglets. Motorcycles and motorcycle utilities (*bahjais*) were the only vehicles. We discovered that, for a small fee, the cargo can be unloaded from the *bahjai* and five tired tourists loaded on instead for a trip back to Cha Cha Resort.

We departed via a glassy ocean on a day so perfect it felt almost contrived. Right on cue, our boat was joined by a pod of dolphins. They rode the bow wave and rolled over to look at us, perhaps pondering the question of who had provided this free surfing opportunity. As we edged away from the islands, the dolphins peeled off, seemingly unwilling to give up paradise and go the way of the mainland. Given the choice, I'd do the same.



Land adventures

We had two nights left in Sulawesi, so we decided to head to Tangkoko National Park. Here we took a guided walk at dusk into the forest to see one of the world's smallest monkeys, the tarsier. We were rewarded with half an hour's close-up viewing of the furry, gremlin-like animals before the wild called them and they leapt off into the forest to do what tarsiers do.

Black-crested macaques are found only in Sulawesi, and our dawn trek to see them was equally satisfying. A troupe of about 30 monkeys went about their business, feeding, grooming and bickering, ignoring our family in their midst.

Our final stop was the Minahasan highlands town of Tomohon. Apart from its volcanic beauty, Tomohon is famous for its market, selling bush foods such as cooked fruit bats, whole bush rat kebab, and, disturbingly, dogs. I struggled with my cultural prejudices as I politely observed the fare and tried to suppress my nausea.

This holiday had certainly satisfied its brief. We had found breathtaking snorkelling, it had been easy to get to, and we had managed some family adventure, too. Exhausted on the flight home, I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. Images scrolled through my mind one after the other: frolicking black monkeys; local kids in their frangipani tree; our son duck-diving down to a spectacular reef. When I dozed, I dreamed contentedly of an unspoilt paradise on my doorstep and my family that loved it.

Some tips

- Don't visit Sulawesi if you need luxury. The accommodation in Bunaken Island is comfortable and on a small scale; other areas are less developed.
- If you're going to Tangkoko, bring mosquito repellent and long sleeves and pants.
- The resort has limited kids' snorkelling equipment. Bring your own good quality equipment; it will make it easier for your beginners! A pool noodle to hold onto for support while they snorkel can help.
- Some old sandals will help kids wade out to the boat, as potentially dangerous shellfish can be found in the reef flat. Booties are supplied in adult sizes.
- Bunaken Cha Cha has interconnecting rooms available, although these require climbing some steep stairs. Choose the rooms closest to the beach.
- SilkAir flies direct to Manado. We visited off-peak in June and paid around US\$2,200 for five nights at Bunaken Cha Cha. This included all meals for our family of five, airport and boat transfers and our two rooms. The snorkelling and diving boats are at additional cost, but reasonably priced. Snorkelling from the beach with your own equipment is free and truly world-class. Visit bunakenchacha.com for more information. 

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Simple Pleasures

REBECCA BISSET makes the most of a short villa stay on the quieter side of Bali.

I have been sitting watching the waves break for over an hour. It's so peaceful. There's a constant breeze, and every now and then a pigeon comes down to the pool for a drink – they obviously haven't discovered Bintang beer yet!

This is the east of Bali, just north of Sanur; the beaches are made of black volcanic sand and the only boats that come past every couple of hours are local fishing boats. There's been one fisherman throwing his net out and a sole surfer on the beach the entire day. It's wonderful!

Staying in a villa is, to me, all about having space and privacy, and it's important that you communicate your required levels of privacy and attentiveness with the staff at the beginning of the stay.

The staff here at Villa Pushpapuri are all stationed at the back of the property but they are available with the push of a button, so it's perfect. There's a little pantry where you can make yourself a cup of tea or grab a Bintang out of the fridge. Self-sufficiency and solitude is what I'm after, until the rest of the crew arrive. The internet is great so I have caught up on work and now I'm waiting for a *mee goreng* for lunch – and the massage lady later on.

Villa Pushpapuri is not that far from the airport with the new toll road, which for a dollar more is well worth taking. It took us only 30 minutes in the evening and there was no traffic. Very un-Bali-like!

The villa is quite “old school” – lots of wood and Balinese-style furnishings, though it does have the luxury of having no neighbours, plenty of space and being right on the beach, with an estuary off to the left. There's also a “man cave” downstairs with bar, dartboard and snooker table, so you can keep yourselves very occupied. It's a good place to go with four couples for a weekend bash, and the cost averages out to around \$100 a night per person if there are eight of you – or lower, depending on the time of year.

My “room” has a patio overlooking the sea, and that's where I plonk myself to do some work. The long lap-pool is in front of me, and it's the perfect temperature (27 degrees), so I've been in several times. There's also a deck area in front of the outdoor bar; it's almost on the beach, and I managed to get a little burnt there earlier this morning. I always forget to pack the second most important thing after a passport: sunscreen!

There are plenty of places to eat and drink in Sanur if you don't want to go to the bright lights of Seminyak, so we will try some of them. And we'll go to Seminyak tomorrow instead – for a clothes-shopping spree!

There are four separate bedrooms similar to mine, but mine is the master bedroom; it sits beneath a study and a den that can also be used for children's



bedrooms. The main man at Villa Pushpapuri is Made; this is a very common name, given to almost all second-born children in Bali, while most firstborn children are named Wayan – so it's very easy to remember names! Adi is my “butler”; he makes me breakfast and he's lovely. There is something special about the Balinese people, and it's obviously one of the reasons why so many people make it their home or second home. Property values have shot through the roof in the last two years.

I end up going to dinner at a friend's house; she has lived in Bali for many years. Gill Wilson is an interior designer and has her own business on the island; she has also built two houses in Sanur and lives in the smaller of the two. It's

been an experience, but one she's not sure she would repeat. Still, the result is well worth it and the houses are beautifully made and decorated. Sanur is a good residential area for expats – still fairly green and with a village feel to it, yet with all you need as far as eating and drinking goes.

We make a full day of our clothes-shopping trip to Seminyak as it's quite a drive. Most of the time is spent covering a very small area at the top end, near Grocer & Grind, though we still manage to make a significant dent on the credit card! There's another new coffee place, Revolver, that's trending on all the search engines; we try there first but it's heaving, so we stick with the tried and tested.



Home-cooked dinner at the villa that night is delicious and we're so knackered from shopping that we sleep early. Then before the airport the next day we enjoy lunch in a lovely little place in Sanur village, The Porch Café. The afternoon is spent finding funky home accessories in a number of furnishing shops, including Pigment Rouge and BaliZen.

The massage ladies were called upon twice during our stay; it's so well priced and a great experience listening to the sound of the sea while having a treatment – you do have to spoil yourself! One tip: we felt that the massages were better than the facials.

Two nights in Bali isn't really enough, but you still feel like you've had a break,



and with great KLM prices it's really a no-brainer. The flight times work well for a quick getaway, too, and at least the new airport is air-conditioned. I heard a rumour they're going to get rid of the pay-on-arrival visa, which would be marvellous! 🇮🇩

Villa Pushpapuri is one of 10 or so villas in the area, and there are plenty more in Bali that can be booked through luxury rental company, Elite Havens. For more information and rates, visit elitehavens.com.



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Dr Lim Kar Seng

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FAMS (Dermatology)

A consultant dermatologist with The Dermatology Practice, Dr Lim Kar Seng has more than 14 years of medical experience both locally and internationally including centres such as St Vincent's Hospital and The Skin and Cancer Foundation Australia. His subspecialties are in skin cancers, phototherapy and psoriasis.



Dr Lynn Teo

MBBS (London), MRCP (UK),
FAMS (Dermatology)

Dr Lynn Teo is a consultant dermatologist at The Dermatology Practice with more than 14 years of medical experience, having trained and worked in London and Singapore. Her clinical interests are in hair loss and scalp disorders, and in immune system conditions affecting the skin. She has trained in hair transplant procedures and dermatosurgery at Mount Sinai Medical Centre, New York.

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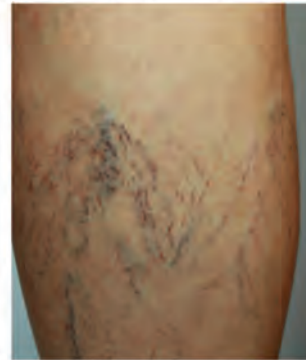
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Probiotics to the Rescue

Children with food allergies present an immense challenge for parents, as youngsters tend to stick just about anything in their mouths. (Don't even get us started on the possible dangers of kids swapping lunches at school!) However, a recent study found that probiotic treatments might help cure peanut allergies in children. Researchers at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia, conducted an 18-month study in which 60 children with peanut allergies were given either placebos or doses of *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* (a probiotic bacterium sometimes used in yoghurt and dairy products), along with peanut protein. The results were significant: out of the 28 children who were given the probiotic, 23 were able to safely eat peanuts just two to five weeks after finishing the treatment. In other words, the study suggested that seven out of nine children with peanut allergies would benefit from probiotic and peanut therapy. While it remains to be seen whether or not they'll remain peanut-tolerant in the years to come, it's already been shown that the benefits of probiotics extend beyond keeping our digestive systems healthy.



Postnatal Pilates

Focus Pilates has launched its first **Postnatal Pilates package**, designed to ease new mums back into exercise. Considered to be one of the best ways to recover after giving birth, Pilates activates and strengthens the core and pelvic muscles, builds and tones muscles to improve posture, develops the back strength required to carry a baby, and restores muscles and joints to their pre-pregnancy condition. Exclusive to the Postnatal Pilates package is a 30-minute real-time ultrasound session with a qualified physiotherapist, which provides non-invasive feedback on how the core muscles are working, ultimately improving performance and results. Available for a limited time, the special package – priced at \$485 – also includes two one-hour private Pilates sessions and five one-hour group classes, all taught by Focus's internationally qualified Polestar Pilates instructors, plus 10 percent off a maternity photography package at BambooShoots Photo. Packages can be purchased at Focus Pilates studios until June 30. focuspilates.com.sg



Next month GIVE IT A TRI

Seasoned triathletes (and anyone who wants to get a taste of their first triathlon) will surely enjoy the **Tri Dash Bangkok**. The "Dash" event, set to take place on 10 May, features a "sprint" distance consisting of a 400-metre swim, a 20-kilometre cycle and a 5-kilometre run; other events include the "Handicap Pursuit Dash" and the "Elimination Dash". They all take place at Bangpoo Golf and Sports Club in Samut Prakan, Thailand. For more race and registration details, visit goadventureasia.com/tridash/.





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Consultant Surgeon

General, Vascular & Endovascular Surgery

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery, NUS

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
- Member of the American College of Phlebology



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RUNNING COMMENTARY:

Burn, Baby, Burn!

Wouldn't it be great never to run out of fuel? Not to hit the wall during a marathon? For the truly fuel-efficient runner, that's a reality. This month, VERNE MAREE undergoes a fuel efficiency test on the treadmill to find out more.

Fuel efficiency means burning more fat – of which we all have more than enough; instead of only carbohydrates – of which we're able to store such limited amounts. Taking about 15 minutes, the fuel efficiency test is the second of two treadmill tests that you can undergo, as the basis for setting endurance fitness goals. (I described the first, lactate threshold, in last month's Running Commentary.)

The idea is to improve performance by building **aerobic fitness**, which is a combination of the ability to do three things: to effectively deliver oxygen to the muscles, to clear lactate, and to use fat for fuel. Having identified your personalised heart rate zones by means of the tests, you then follow a running programme tailored to you and your goals. And, they say, you can expect to start seeing results in the form of faster race times in as little as three months.

But can it really help a middle-aged runner like me who enters only 10K races? Yes, according to Chris, the fitness consultant at the Journey Fitness lab: a strong aerobic base is just as necessary for a 10K runner as it is for a marathoner. That's because aerobic running makes up such a high proportion of the effort over all distances: it's 99 percent for the marathon, as you might expect, but still a whopping 96 percent for the 10K!

What about those elite marathoners flying along at 3:15 minutes per kilometre, for 42.2 kilometres in a row? (That's faster than most of us can sprint 100 metres!) They're actually highly aerobic, I'm told. Whereas the average Jo stops burning fat when she hits 10km per hour, an elite marathoner is burning a good proportion of fat even at 20km/h. Even for the skinniest Kenyan athlete – and that's saying something! – fat is the main source of energy.

Test Talk

Almost all the energy we burn is a combination of fat and carbs. This fuel efficiency test takes a look at one's current fitness level from a fuelling standpoint; while you exercise, it will be tracking the proportion of fat in relation to carbs that you're running on. (If you're already glazing over, perhaps skip the next paragraph.)

A mask worn over the face takes continual samples of what the runner is breathing out. (Yes, that's me in the photo; and no, it's not a good look.) These samples run through tubes into an analyser that measures the respiratory exchange ratio (RER): in other words, the ratio of oxygen to carbon dioxide that you're breathing out. The harder you exercise, the less oxygen gets processed; so you're producing less of the carbon dioxide that results in your burning more carbs and getting out of breath.

My Test

- I strap on the yellow facemask, make sure it's fairly airtight and wonder if my breath really smells like this.
- Starting me off at a 4km/h stroll, the software attached to the treadmill slowly adjusts its speed up to 13km/h over a maximum period of 20 minutes.
- At the start, the monitor shows that I'm burning a good proportion of fat to carbs; fat-burning peaks at about 8.5 min/km before it starts coming down and carb consumption begins to rise.
- Once fat-burning drops to zero, the test is over; for me, this happens around the 15-minute mark.





Learn to Burn Fat

Here's why you might want to. Fat is an aerobic fuel that requires oxygen for it to be broken down; when you're moving slowly, the body is able to utilise the oxygen to burn fat. But as the heart rate and intensity climb, a contribution from carbs starts to kick in. The body becomes less effective at using the available oxygen to process fat; so the contribution from fat drops and you start drawing on your limited reserves of muscle glycogen instead.

"If you teach your body to tap into fat," says Chris, "you could in theory go for days on it at a consistently easy pace." So, how would you go about converting an inefficient, largely glycogen-burning motor into one that prefers fat?

There are three ways to become a better fat burner:

Firstly, you should **run on an empty stomach**, especially for your easy runs; secondly, you should follow a **healthy**

low-carb diet; thirdly, you should **run at the right intensity** (or heart rate). If you run at the right intensity, especially on an empty stomach, your body will be in the best state possible to learn to run on fat.

Chris says the test shows that my own fat-burning ability is well developed. But if you're unaccustomed to morning runs on an empty stomach, you'd need to make gradual changes. "A poor fat-burner," chuckles Chris, "could very well end up in a bush."

Running doesn't have to be as technical and complicated as this. It can be as simple as lacing your trainers and heading out of the door – and continuing to do so for the rest of your running life. For me, though, after four weeks of following a heart rate and distance-based running programme, I'm looking forward to seeing the results that others have achieved. See you on the road!

journeyfitnesscompany.com

Coming Up

APRIL

5

NTUC Income RUN 350

5am, 800m kids' dash, 10/21K, F1 Pit Building

11

The Music Run

4pm, 5K, Sentosa

23

JP Morgan Corporate Challenge

5.30pm, 5.6K, Esplanade Bridge

MAY

2

Energiser Singapore Night Trail

12 midnight, Mandai

17

HomeTeamNS REAL Run

7am, Sentosa

17

Cold Storage Kids Run

7am, 800m/6K, Gardens by the Bay

23

Meiji Run

2pm, 5K, Sentosa

24

National Vertical Marathon

63 storeys

24

Pocari Sweat Run

6.30am, 10K, Gardens by the Bay

JUNE

7

No Frills Run

7.30am, 5/10K, Kallang Riverside Park

13

The Great Relay Singapore

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*Julian Van Kan
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Nutrition Rules!

The Sunshine Vitamin

Here's a GP with a holistic approach, one who highlights the value of exposure to sunshine, underlines the importance of vitamin D for so many aspects of our health, and dots both of the i's in "nutrition". The soft-spoken DR HUI VOON LOO talked to Verne Maree about her special interest in nutritional medicine as part of a well-rounded family practice.

I caught up with Dr Loo at the CHI clinic in leafy Rochester Park. What came first, I wondered, her interest in nutritional medicine or her joining the well-known holistic practice? But she's quick to confirm that she was attracted to CHI because its founder, Dr Kim Hayes, has such a deep interest in this field.

Tell us a bit about your background.

I did my medical training at University College Dublin, and then worked for a while in Singapore before moving to Toronto, Canada, where I lived for some time. Last year, family reasons brought me, my husband and our three-year-old son back to Singapore, and I joined CHI. One thing I've learnt from my overseas experience is that there's no one right or wrong way of practising medicine; it's practised differently in different societies and in different healthcare systems.

What's it like to work with CHI's team of holistically oriented GPs?

There are so many advantages to working with a group of colleagues, each of whom has different types of experience; there's a lot of discussion between us and we are continually exchanging information.

Our approach to patients here is a bit different, too. We deliver medicine in the way I like it to be delivered: taking the whole person into account, rather than merely prescribing medicine for a particular symptom. We get to the bottom of what is causing his or her un-wellness.

Preach to the converted! – explain why sunlight is so good for us.

There's so much that is good about sunlight, so many connections between light and health, and science is discovering more of these every day. By now, everyone should know that we need to expose our bare skin to sunlight – making sure never to burn, of course! – in order for it to make the vitamin D that is then absorbed naturally into the body. Direct midday sunlight remains by far the best source of this ultra-important nutrient.

Not only that, but exposure to bright midday sunlight also plays a part in regulating the sleep cycle, and a good night's sleep is vital for good health. What's more, vitamin D is involved in the regulation of many different genes that govern the functioning of every tissue in the body – including bone metabolism, immune system function and neuromuscular activity.

Low levels of vitamin D have been connected not only with osteoporosis, autoimmunity diseases such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis, but also with metabolic syndrome, the cluster of conditions that predispose us to diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

So we're lucky to live near the Equator, right?

We are. Year-round sunshine is one of our best assets here in the tropics, and it's free! Unfortunately, though, most of us don't take advantage of that fact, and we don't get nearly enough sunshine.

Our lifestyle is partly to blame: we're in the car or on the train, we sit all day in an office, and by the time we leave the office it's 6pm or later and the sun is going down. Even I only manage to get outside during the day on the weekends – but I do try my best to do that!

What about a vitamin D supplement?

If you're not able to get enough sunshine for whatever reason, a vitamin D supplement is the second-best source; but check the label to make sure it's in the more bio-available, active D3 form (not D2). You get some vitamin D from food, too, but it would be very difficult to get enough.

What's your approach to supplements in general?

Supplementation is a very individual thing. Just because one of your friends does well on a particular supplement – be it folate, glucosamine, CoQ10 or whatever – doesn't mean that you necessarily will, or that the same amount will necessarily be right for you. It's important to get the right supplements and to get the dosage right, too, for each person's individual needs.

Taking a daily multivitamin is unlikely to do any harm and might do you some good. But because it has limited amounts of any one particular nutrient, you may not experience any difference in your wellbeing; it may not provide enough of what you may be lacking. Also, each nutrient works within a complex system, where all the nutrients need to be in balance. It's hard – and seldom useful – to try to give a good general recommendation.

Just how do you assess nutritional deficiencies? Blood tests?

Sometimes yes; vitamin D levels can be checked in this way. But for many nutrients, there are no blood tests available to assess deficiency; instead, we use clinical assessment tools and clinical history to formulate an overall picture of the patient; from that, we get an idea what the problem could be.

Nowadays, we may also be able to detect genetic changes and variations in our patients that give us clues as to where a problem may lie.

What's your advice for a healthy diet?

The key is to eat whole foods, including good fats such as coconut oil, olive oil and avocados, and to avoid highly processed food and refined sugars. If you must cook at a high heat, use coconut oil: it's stable enough not to be transformed into a transfat.

Again, however, a diet that works well for one person may not be right for another. For example, though fresh fruit is generally healthy, someone who is prone to diabetes or metabolic syndrome might be better off sticking to one or two pieces a day.

Do you cook at home?

Yes, we juice in the mornings, and I cook almost every evening – mainly Asian soups, stews and stir fries with plenty of vegetables. I choose organic when I can, but it can be pricey, so we just do our best. Apart from helping to ensure a nutritious diet, I believe that eating at home also brings the family together. 



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Liquid Diet

By Amy Brook-Partridge;
photography by Emily Cornelius

With 28 juice cleanse companies currently in Singapore, and so many home-juicing systems to choose from, I didn't know where to start. So I asked American owner and chef at juice cleanse company Rejuicenate, CHRISTOPHER REMALEY, about the benefits, and embarked on my first juice cleanse to find out for myself.

How did you get into juice cleansing, and why?

While living in New York, I'd been a private chef for families, including celebrities such as Bruce Springsteen and Robert De Niro and his family. I

was travelling so much for the job and was always on call. The long working hours just wore me out. I wasn't taking care of myself, I wasn't exercising and I was constantly eating on the go. So I reached out to a nutritionist friend.

She wanted to change my diet; but first she suggested a juice cleanse to help change my relationship with food, and I had the most powerful experience with it. After the cleanse I started drinking herbal tea instead of coffee, and eating fruit instead of chips, and my brain just kind of switched.

It's not a weight-loss solution, although I have lost weight and I feel fantastic. I personally drink the juice all day long until dinner, and then I have a full meal. It's been really awesome for me: my energy is great and I sleep better.



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#03-37C (Annexe Block)
6A Napier Road, Singapore 258500
T: +65 6472 3703 F: +65 6472 3704

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There's been negative press regarding cleansing, focusing on whether the purported detoxification benefits actually work. What do you say to that?

Okay, I'm not a doctor; I'm a chef. And we work really hard to make sure these juices have enough nutrition within them that your insulin doesn't spike. It's not a miracle cure; our cleanses are more aimed at giving your body a rest and pressing the reset button. I liken it to a car: if you don't change your oil in your car it starts to run poorly. Drinking only these juices for three or five days is not an easy thing to do, so there's an added sense of accomplishment after you've finished.

Why should someone choose to use your products rather than juice at home?

What we offer is convenience and taste. Yes, you could do this at home, but a three-day cleanse requires 18 bottles, and that's roughly ten kilos of fruit and vegetables. That's a lot of chopping, and a lot of processing. Also, our juices are blended and quality-tested by myself or my talented sous chef before they go out, to make sure they are perfectly balanced. I make the juices with the same care and passion as I do my food.

What makes you different from other juicing companies?

For one, we are the only juice company that is helmed by chefs. As a trained chef, I only source the best possible ingredients and have sought out partners and suppliers who can provide us with the highest quality produce and fruit. We also have a strong relationship with many local farmers; we have a farmer who grows a particular type of kale for us, for instance.

REJUICENATE REVIEWED

Our cleanse: The beginner's Rejuicentation Cleanse, 5 days, \$500 per person. Juices include Mean Green, Pineapple Punch and Coconut H2O.

Amy: I was pretty apprehensive about the thought of a five-day cleanse with no solid food. I'm known for getting extremely grumpy if I'm hungry, and I find it hard to go for three days straight without a glass of wine. But I was hopeful that this cleanse would reset these inner issues.

The first and last days, when I wasn't in the office, were the hardest, particularly when I was with the kids. I enjoyed almost all of the juices, particularly the evening Liquid Dessert, which I poured into a glass and drank with a spoon to make it feel more like a meal.

The sense of achievement afterwards was amazing; I felt stronger, and more able to make sensible decisions about my food habits. I'm drinking more herbal tea than coffee, and I lost a little bit of weight too.

James: Overall, the cleanse was a great experience. It was tough at times, but I felt incredible the day after it ended, both mentally and physically: it was the best I'd felt for a long time.

My favourite juices were the Liquid Dessert and the Red Label Smoothie. The hardest part was the caffeine withdrawal, as I usually drink a lot of tea; but I would definitely do this cleanse again.



What's Next?

Rejuicentate has recently started making dehydrated snack products, including coconut jerky and banana almond bread, which are available online at rejuicentate.net. The company is branching into catering and is now making healthy meals for selected Pure Fitness outlets. It is also planning a programme that pairs food with cold-pressed juices, and is working on nutrition-labelling that will provide information on the calories, protein and carbohydrates in its products. 





Dr Quah Hak Mien

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Get Your Body Back

Getting your body back to its old self after pregnancy is tough. From excess fat to stretch marks and cellulite, there can be lots of unwanted side effects – which is why DR CHRISTOPHER NG of GynaeMD Women's & Rejuvenation Clinic offers a slew of aesthetic services to help his patients get both their bodies and their confidence back. Here, he explains how the innovative, non-invasive Maximus TriLipo system can help.



The Maximus TriLipo system uses a combination of TriLipo Radio Frequency (RF) and TriLipo Dynamic Muscle Activation (DMA). What can it achieve?

As a whole, the Maximus TriLipo system can be used to treat the face, arms, abdomen, buttocks and thighs for conditions including cellulite, stretch marks and loose skin, which many women experience following pregnancy. Benefits include:

- Fat reduction
- Body sculpting
- Cellulite reduction
- Stretch mark elimination
- Skin tightening
- Face and body contouring
- Treatment of acne scars

How do the two treatment modalities work? Are they used separately or simultaneously?

Focused TriLipo RF energy generates heat to the subcutaneous fat tissue layer, accelerating natural fat metabolism and forcing the release of liquid fat from fat cells; the liquid fat is then removed by the body's natural lymphatic system.

Meanwhile, on the dermis layer, focused TriLipo RF energy heats up collagen fibres causing them to contract; as the collagen strands are pulled closer together, the skin immediately becomes tighter and smoother. The heating effect also accelerates collagen regeneration, yielding long-term skin-tightening results and an improvement in the appearance of wrinkles on the face, neck, chin and cheeks.

TriLipo DMA technology is designed to achieve fat reduction and muscle toning, using pulses to cause contractions at the muscle layer; these contractions elevate the underlying muscles and push fat cells up towards the surface. The mechanical pressure of the applicator from above also presses on the fat cells, resulting in an hourglass effect that induces liquid fat drainage and decreases fat cell layer volume.

The Maximus TriLipo RF and DMA treatments are designed to work simultaneously to achieve one's desired goals more effectively on the abdomen, arms, buttocks, thighs and legs. For the face and neck, the DMA mode is not needed, as those areas generally call for skin tightening and contouring rather than fat reduction.

Are these procedures painful, and must clients be awake during treatment?

No, the procedures aren't painful. In fact, they feel like a warm and gentle massage. However, patients must be awake so that they can alert the therapist if any area becomes uncomfortably hot, so as to prevent the risk of burning.

How long does each session take?

It really depends on the area being treated. Treatments can last from around eight minutes for the face to around 40 minutes for both thighs. Patients may undergo up to six or more sessions, and there's a minimum interval of one week between each treatment.

GynaeMD's model integrates aesthetics with gynaecology and obstetric care. Why do you feel it's important to tie in aesthetic treatments with your other health services?

By integrating all three services under one roof, patients need only pay for one consultation, saving both time and money. It's quite common to have skin problems like acne breakouts, for instance, develop as a result of hormonal changes, as well as rashes and stretch marks during pregnancy. Women are also concerned about getting back into shape and losing weight after birth, so we have aesthetic treatments for these issues.

GynaeMD Women's & Rejuvenation Clinic
1 Orchard Boulevard, #04-03A Camden Medical Centre
6733 8810 | gynaeMD.com.sg

DR BEN NG

WWW.DRBEN.COM.SG



Dr Ben Ng Jen Min is an **Endocrinologist and Specialist in Internal Medicine** with an interest in Diabetes Mellitus, Thyroid and Parathyroid disease and Osteoporosis. He trained in the United Kingdom and has worked for 16 years in the National Health Service in the UK and since 2011 in Singapore. He is an accredited specialist in both countries.

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DR BEN NG JEN MIN
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38 Irrawaddy Road, Singapore 329563

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Email: enquiries@arden.com.sg



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Dr Kelly Loi

BA (1st Class Honours, Oxford), MA (Oxford),
BM BCh (Oxford), DFFP (London),
MRCOG (London), FAMS (Singapore)

- Obstetrician & Gynaecologist
- Accredited Fertility & IVF Specialist by Ministry of Health
- Minimally Invasive Surgeon

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Dr Christopher Ng

Obstetrician, Gynaecologist
MBBS (Imperial College, UK), FRANZCOG (Aust-NZ)
MMed (O&G) (S'pore), FAMS (O&G) (S'pore)

#04-03A Camden Medical Centre
1 Orchard Boulevard
Singapore 248649

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Dr May Ling Eide

BSc (Hons) (Glasgow), BDS (Hons) (Glasgow),
M ClinDent (Orthodontics) (London), M Orth
RCPS (Glasgow), M Orth RCS (Eng)

Dr May Ling Eide is a Dental Surgeon with Postgraduate Training in Orthodontics. She moved back to Singapore from the United Kingdom in 2012.

Dr Eide is an Invisalign-accredited dentist and provides a range of treatment options to align teeth including braces and Invisalign. She sees patients across all age groups and is particularly motivated to make the Orthodontic journey a pleasant one for all. Besides English, Dr Eide is also fluent in Mandarin and Norwegian.

Orthodontics deal with teeth alignment to correct improper bites and the modification of facial growth. While orthodontic treatment has traditionally been recommended for functional reasons (i.e. to improve a patient's bite), it is increasingly used for aesthetic reasons to improve one's appearance.

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Dr. Andrea Rajnakova, PhD

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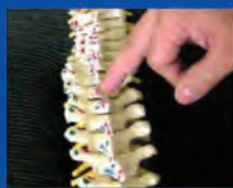
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**ARIES**

March 20 – April 19

This is your special month, in your year. You not only overcome past frustrations, but new, wonderful and often surprising options also appear. Your only problem? Fitting it all in. Ignore those who say to cut back. Explore every idea or offer, knowing you'll learn from everything, even what you don't pursue. If there's any challenge, it's keeping others updated and ensuring that, with so much going on, loved ones don't feel forgotten. By April's close, you'll need a break. Taking it with others makes up for neglecting them.

**TAURUS**

April 20 – May 20

April's all about changes, some beyond your control. Worrying as that seems, often these involve breakthroughs where, previously, you've been overly cautious. Remember this and when sudden and perhaps worrying shifts take place, you'll realise they're in your best interests. In the meanwhile, carefully consider what and, indeed, who is holding you back. Letting these go may seem extreme but at least consider it. Then focus on exploration. Things won't come together until May's second half, but once they do, you'll be relieved that you have few restrictions.

**GEMINI**

May 21 – June 20

As a restless, inquisitive Gemini, you sometimes crave excitement. During this portion of the year, however, you'll be kept busy dealing with changes in the lives of others, rapidly shifting circumstances and dramatic developments in your own life. Some are no surprise. But other events are so sudden you've no idea what's best. The secret is to explore everything – but, with things moving so swiftly, the more flexible your attitude and your plans, the better. If initially this annoys others, they'll soon thank you.

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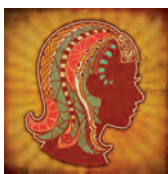
June 21 – July 22

Making decisions when short of facts is difficult for anybody. For you, being confident about what you're getting involved in is vital. However, with the foundation on which plans are based shifting, your intuition is more reliable. What's more, ongoing changes mean what you do plan must be flexible. Forget about analysis and rely on your powerful intuition. It's been a brilliant ally in the past and will be now. This applies to career or finance as much as to matters of the heart.

**LEO**

July 23 – August 22

This really is your month, although as you're dealing with its numerous unexpected twists and turns, you may disagree. Only when viewing what's gone, changes and both new arrangements and the amazing people that appeared with them, will you fully grasp how amazing things are. This means curbing your stubborn side and, instead, at least being prepared to take chances. You may find yourself doing things you said you never would. More important, you'll be delighted with both the outcome and what you discover.

**VIRGO**

August 23 – September 22

This is no time to plan ahead, even for you as a Virgo and somebody for whom organising things is like breathing. Acknowledge this and you'll worry less. With so many planets, including your ruler Mercury, in restless yet courageous fire signs, life's about taking action first then assessing the results later. This applies as much to your domestic setup as your activities out in the world. The more chances you take, the more you'll learn and benefit, even from what you once thought risky.

**LIBRA**

September 23 – October 22

During early April you'll realise that certain important decisions could upset or inconvenience those closest, at home or in your working life. This comes to a head around the Libra Full Moon on the 4th, when you must put your interests first. Don't argue. Ironically, sudden developments could mean others will benefit, too. The resulting alliances may be new, confusing and require lots of clever thinking. But they'll also be exactly what's needed. Still, with things changing, you'll need to rethink arrangements frequently.

**SCORPIO**

October 23 – November 21

Ordinarily, you'd never stand back and allow the decisions of others or seemingly random events to reshape elements of your life. Yet despite this apparent chaos, your instincts say to proceed. Trust these and by the powerful Scorpio Full Moon, on 4 May, your intuition will have been proved correct. Better yet, events will have resolved several persistent and increasingly worrying issues, some practical, others involving close relationships. After ages of trying but being unsuccessful in finding solutions, you achieve results that delight you.

**SAGITTARIUS**

November 22 – December 21

Since last year there's been talk of plans that would be rewarding personally, creatively and, if you work, professionally. Things are coming together, but slowly, and you're increasingly impatient. Yet you must wait, mostly because the actual situations in question are still in transition. By late June, they'll be settled. In the meanwhile, invest time in decluttering your life, so you're free to move swiftly, and in getting to know more about who and what will be central to your existence in the future.

HOROSCOPES

By Shelley
Von Strunckel

**CAPRICORN**

December 22 – January 19

Late last year your ruler Saturn moved into the most reflective and strategic portion of your chart, beginning a cycle during which your objectives will be more subtle and ways of achieving them less direct. Initially, it may have seemed you were compromising. Now, instead, you realise you're benefitting from being exposed to unfamiliar but intriguing ideas and people. During April, things come together spectacularly – if, again, in surprising ways. Explore everything. Soon you'll enjoy this exciting but sometimes perplexing way of living.

**AQUARIUS**

January 20 – February 17

Earlier in the year, you reassessed elements of your life you regarded as unchanging. Since then you've begun doing things differently. At the time, others questioned your plans. Now events spur them to explore and consider similar changes. Where your lives are linked, this is helpful, as you can consider your options jointly. But even when decisions are independent, discussions will be stimulating if challenging. Initially, the purpose of the changes is unclear – enough that you may be anxious – but, fortunately, your instincts soon reassure you.

**PISCES**

February 18 – March 19

During the past several months you've been conducting an extensive review of your life, alliances, achievements and what remains undone. Now, as April begins, you've already put some plans into action but are weighing up others. Take it slowly, since the foundation on which many are based is itself shifting. Where facts are lacking, your intuition is your best ally. Just remember, don't discuss this strategy with others. Not everybody understands, or trusts, these feelings. Besides, soon events will prove how right you were.

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When Singapore starts to feel like home

By Raelee Chapman

I must admit I've always been one of those expats who hankered for home, even after three years. I longed for the dry, hot air of an Australian summer, the smell of eucalypts after rain, haze-free skies and flocks of screeching sulphur-crested cockatoos. Mostly, though, I missed family and friends, and had yet to make my network here – a “home away from home”.

Slowly, subtly, things changed. In my condominium, the social group is made up of expats from India and Pakistan, a couple of Chinese-Malaysian families and a few local Chinese-Singaporean families. In fact, there are only two other Australian families that I know of, and we don't often cross paths due to their work commitments.

At some point – and I'm not sure what I did to warrant the invitation; perhaps it was my new baby (babies are a sure way to make friends) – I was asked to the house of an Indian neighbour who I did not really know, except in passing, and presented with gifts for my daughter. I was so touched and overwhelmed.

Since that moment, there has been a continuous stream of pot-luck lunches with 15 or more ladies each bringing a sumptuous Indian or Asian dish, many considered delicacies. I have felt embarrassed by my simple offerings of a baked pasta dish – “typical Western cuisine”; however, some of the embarrassment has been overcome by the fact that the other expat children are

crazy about pasta as they never have it at home and it's seen as exotic and delicious.

The kindness I have been shown extended beyond invitations when my daughter was hospitalised earlier this year: a Chinese-Singaporean neighbour came over with a bouquet of balloons; the same neighbour brought around a Chinese pork and vegetable dish to help feed my guests one December when my maid did not return as expected from home leave; another Chinese-Singaporean came over during the same period with the insightful gift of a small slow-cooker for preparing single serves of baby food while I attended to the kids and the house.

I have been privileged enough to be invited to a Muslim new year luncheon, a Haldi Kumkum ceremony, Halloween trick or treating, and countless birthday parties for the large rabble of children of all different ages and ethnicities that play together. I feel so lucky to be part of such a large and inclusive community.

But the real highlight of the social calendar each year is the Diwali celebration, where maybe 20 or 30 families participate, dressing up in beautiful and colourful clothes and enjoying delicious catered food. The real draw-card is the talent show; last year, the children practised for months beforehand. My eldest daughter participated in a Bollywood-style dance choreographed by university students

and overseen by a professional Indian dance instructor. There were piano performances, and one boy charmed us all with a poem recitation and by belting out one of the year's Top 40 hits. The night ended with the adults playing a few rounds of bingo and the children playing with sparklers in the garden.

This occasion was full of surprises for me, not only in its randomness but also in how much fun it was – and very typically un-Australian, with not a drop of alcohol all night; yet you couldn't have seen a merrier group. I'm eagerly looking forward to this year's Diwali celebration.



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