



Hawker Center duck stall

# SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE

If what you've heard about Singapore is that it's little more than high-rise buildings occupied by the world's highest concentration of billionaires, you've only scratched the surface. While this city-state did transform itself in just two generations by pursuing economic growth at all costs, its rigid reputation is quickly dashed for those willing to explore its distinct neighborhoods. Yes, buying chewing gum remains illegal here (the same goes for spitting and littering), but the same authority that doesn't shy away from social engineering has also cultivated an efficient society where different groups enjoy the fruits of a forward-thinking government—and it's attracting more and more expats every year. As part of a young nation that's still defining its cultural identity, Singapore recognizes that liberalizing its ideals, staying creative, and working collaboratively can save the capital city from disillusioned youth drunk with fame and wealth.

**JENNIFER LIEN, DAYLON SOH,  
CHIARA MARIA DE CASTRO**



**Artistry** is a gallery and café, nestled in a cozy, century-old shophouse, which hosts weekly events after dark that range from public performances by local bands to poetry recitals. Local thinkers drop by to enjoy coffee and draw inspiration from the monthly rotating art or photo exhibitions.



Launched in 2000, **Speakers' Corner** in Hong Lim Park is a free-speech area designated for the public to hold nonreligious assemblies and make speeches without a permit. In a country ranked 140 out of 167 countries in Reporters Without Borders' *Press Freedom Index*, the park is a welcome sign that the government is at least aware of the problem.



**Hawker centers** are Singapore's version of clean street food. Local treats prepared with fresh ingredients can be found within open-air stalls, which are individually rented from the government, providing a way for young hawkers—or hawkerpreneurs—to run thriving small businesses.



The government's penchant for mass organization and orchestration reaches its apotheosis in August when the **National Day Parade** takes over the city with floats, choreographed dances, and fireworks to celebrate the independence Singapore gained in 1965. Leading up to the event, corner shops and apartment blocks are dotted with red and white national flags.



Private car ownership in Singapore is extremely expensive. A yearly quota on the licenses required to own and operate a car mean residents have to bid for the right to own a vehicle for the next 10 years. (The current rate is about \$90,000 for a mid-sized sedan). However, the bus and mass rapid transit systems are more than adequate for 63 percent of trips made by Singaporeans.



Singapore has been dubbed the "greenest city in Asia" thanks to the government's ambitious targets to ensure each citizen has access to natural space. The 183-acre **Botanic Gardens** are an impressive example of that, boasting a virgin rainforest and National Orchid Garden.



Singapore is a hyperdiverse city, with more than 1 million people who are foreign-born—most coming from China and Southeast Asia. The Geylang neighborhood (also the red-light district), along with Little India and Chinatown are vibrant and less pristine pockets of the city, where the usual Singaporean melting pot gives way to more distinct cultures and traditions.



Despite 14 government-mandated days off per year, economic success means that work/life balance has taken a backseat for many. Some government civil service agencies have responded by introducing one work from home day per week, and many employees are increasingly choosing to trade higher remuneration in favor of work/life-friendly policies.

**SINGAPORE'S PRINCIPAL CONCERT** hall the Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, is known locally as the Durian,

because of its likeness to the beloved, if smelly, native fruit.

