



Spirit of the Garden City

Singapore inspires with a seamless fusion of urban design and nature. BY LINA ZELDOVICH

Business and Pleasure:

Singapore skyline (top), and (opposite page) waterfall at Gardens by the Bay Cloud Forest

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A jewel of Asia, Singapore boasts a uniquely rich fusion of four cultures: Chinese, Indian, Eurasian and Malay. Originally called Singa Pura by a prince who spotted a lion-like creature when he came ashore, the name means “Lion City,” symbolizing courage, excellence and strength. With bold architecture, high sustainability ratings, top-notch service and gourmet cuisine, Singapore delivers on all counts.

With its enigmatic trio of towers topped with the world’s largest rooftop pool, Marina Bay Sands, featured in the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*, is synonymous with architectural excellence. Yet it is the love affair with nature that sets Singapore apart from other urban centers. Few metropolises manage to drape an utterly futuristic skyline into lush greenery, but here, nature and architecture intertwine like vines in a jungle. It’s not uncommon to see plants climbing concrete towers or hanging off balconies, boosting the visual appeal and cooling effects. In fact, the city’s Pan Pacific Orchard hotel, looking like a

skyscraper gift-wrapped in a rainforest, just earned the title of the world’s best new tall building by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

In between meetings, your clients or associates can revel in a tropical paradise at Singapore Botanic Gardens, the only one with a UNESCO World Heritage title, or marvel at the world’s tallest indoor waterfall at the Cloud Forest of Gardens by the Bay. Singapore’s well-oiled mass transit system takes you to most attractions, as do taxis and Grab, the Uber rideshare equivalent. A ride from international Changi Airport to downtown takes, on average, 20 minutes.

“Corporate planners seek Singapore time and time again not just for the dynamic cityscape that is iconic to their attendees, but because our City in Nature rewards curiosity,” said Eileen Lee, senior vice president, Americas, Singapore Tourism Board. “Whether that is experiencing our innovative spirit firsthand from the nationwide



commitment to sustainable infrastructure to the efficiency of our public transportation that enables business travelers to navigate the destination with ease, visitors will find a truly global city awaits, from our multicultural identity to world-class accommodations and restaurants, setting the perfect backdrop for your next event.”

For an energizing morning, start with Breakfast in the Wild at Singapore Zoo, watching orangutans, sea lions, African penguins and other creatures make appearances while you savor omelets, cheeses, cold cuts and fruit, along with Malay, Chinese and Indian options. The 90-minute experience comes with plenty of photo opportunities and educational insights from the zoo’s wildlife ambassadors — a rewarding experience that will set the mood and inspiration for work sessions. Alternatively, for a quick grab, swing by the SO France Café to savor pastries, tarts and quiches that taste like Paris and down powerful, shake-me-awake coffee.

For uniquely local lunch flavors, head to Chinatown Complex Market’s hawker center — a public space where food vendors sell traditional dishes from individual stalls. The hawker experience plays an integral part in Singaporean culture where people come to dine and bond over their favorite bites, offering a refreshing alternative to office lunches. While there, wander off to marvel at nearby temples or select souvenirs at local shops.

If bustling markets aren’t conducive to business discussions, opt for quieter, more upscale options at Marina Bay Sands: Japanese Wakuda

Restaurant or Yardbird Southern Table & Bar, celebrating rich culinary traditions of the American South — the only Yardbird location outside of the United States. Post lunch, take your associates to ArtScience Museum, part of the Marina Bay Sands complex. Designed by renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the lotus-like structure has been dubbed the welcoming hand of Singapore for its 10 “fingers” that come together, forming a round base that allows the collection of rainwater which the museum uses. The awe-inspiring building features exhibits that aim to expand visitors’ horizons — an inspirational break from strategy meetings.

Sentosa, an island resort with beaches, bars and cafés, offers a seaside escape for a refreshing breakout from sessions. You can reach the island by road or monorail in less than 30 minutes, but the most exciting way is via cable cars (some of which have glass bottoms) to relish the sweeping views of the Lion City from above. One of Sentosa’s culinary gems, SKIRT at W Singapore — famed for open-fire cooking, meticulous dry-aging techniques and bold flavors — can host private dining. If your clients seek evening recommendations, sunset at Sentosa literally brings magic, as seven outdoor light art installations illuminate the night, creating a nocturnal wonderland that dazzles the senses.

Recent studies find nature boosts creativity, imagination and attention span, crucial for brainstorming and strategizing. In Singapore, where nature is a stone’s throw away, the improved productivity makes a positive side benefit.