

A Morning Stroll Through History: My Ultimate Chinatown Singapore Walking Tour Guide

Description

default watermark

This morning, I decided to play tourist in my own backyard. Thereâ??s something undeniably magnetic about Chinatownâ??the colours, the chaos, and yes, the heat. I hopped onto the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) and made my way down to one of Singaporeâ??s most iconic precincts and oldest ethnic quarters in Singapore. As soon as I stepped out of the station, the familiar humidity hit me, but so did the energy. The streets were already packed with locals and tourists alike, all eager to soak in the sights and sounds.


ENTRANCE
入口
1-FOR-1
Chinatown
A

Chinatown MRT is along the Downtown Line (blue) and Northeast Line (purple)

If youâ??re looking for a perfect blend of heritage, culture, and mouth-watering food, join me on this walk through Chinatown.

Remembering the Red Headscarves

My first stop was the Chinatown Heritage Centre. Right in front, prominently displayed, stands the statue of a Samsui woman. Seeing it instantly triggered a wave of nostalgia. I recalled the old Singapore drama serial, *Hong Tou Jin* (Red Headscarf), which I watched when I was just 4 years old.



These incredible female labourers were truly the pillars of early Singaporeâ??s growth. Known for their distinct red headscarves, they were symbols of grit, hard work, and dedication. Standing there, you canâ??t help but feel a deep sense of respect for the sacrifices they made to build the city we enjoy today.


牛车水原貌馆
CHINATOWN HERITAGE CENTRE
% OFF

Secrets of the Streets

Just a stoneâ??s throw away is Trengganu Street. Nowadays, itâ??s a bustling thoroughfare lined with souvenir shops, but it has a darker past. During World War II, this area was known as â??Japanese Streetâ?• or â??Brothel Streetâ?• because prostitution was rampant here. Itâ??s a stark contrast to the family-friendly vibe we see today, serving as a reminder of the complex layers of history beneath our feet.

default watermark


default watermark
THE ART OF
CHAGEE

Walking further, the distinct, pungent aroma of the â??King of Fruitsâ?• wafted through the air. Love it or hate it, Durian is a staple here. Rows of tables are set up where you can pick your choice and have it opened fresh right in front of you. Itâ??s a friend to some and a foe to others, but if youâ??re feeling adventurous, this is the place to try it!

default watermark


竹脚 TEKKA
奶油王 BUTTER KING
山顶XO
黑刺 BLACK THORN
黑金猫山王 BLACKGOLD MUSANGKING
皇中皇 KING OF KING
OFFER!!
BUY 5
FREE 1
MUSANG KING
猫山王
1KG 25
冠军 NO.1 榴莲
黑金
BLACK GOLD

The King of Fruit is not to be trifled with, but bring it on!

Smith Street: From Gangsters to Gourmets

Next, I found myself on Smith Street. Interestingly, this street is named after Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, a popular Governor of the Straits Settlements who spoke fluent Mandarin. He was well-respected by the locals, largely because he managed to resolve many troubles caused by secret societies in this precinct.

default watermark


default watermark
ARE
OPEN

Historically, this street was home to itinerant street hawkers. While they provided affordable food, they also faced poor sanitation problems. Thankfully, this street hawking culture has evolved into the clean, regulated hawker centres we cherish today. They are listed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity 2020. Thatâ??s a mouthful, isnâ??t it?

default watermark


default watermark

The Lai Chun Yuen theatre was a famous 800-seater Cantonese opera house built in 1887. This is where Cantonese opera singers held their debuts and rose to fame. Today, it has turned into a boutique hotel â?? Hotel Calmo Chinatown.

The Breakfast of Champions

Speaking of food, all this walking worked up an appetite. I couldnâ??t resist stopping for a traditional Singapore breakfastâ??a meal I eat almost daily.

default watermark



For the uninitiated, a classic set consists of Kaya toast (crispy bread smeared with Pandan-flavoured sweet coconut jam and a slice of butter), two runny soft-boiled eggs with dark soy sauce and white

pepper, and a cup of local *kopi* (coffee). We can eat this in the morning, afternoon, or at night. Itâ??s the ultimate comfort food.

> **Want to learn how to order like a pro? Check out our video guide here:** How to Order Kopi in Singapore

Art on the Walls

One of the highlights of my morning was spotting a mural by the well-known local artist, Mr Yip Yew Chong. Titled â??My Chinatown Home,â?• this piece is my personal favourite among his many works.

default watermark


安平入出
default watermark

My Chinatown Home, how Mr Yip remembers his childhood days, together with his siblings and gran

Yip Yew Chong was an accountant for 25 years before becoming a full-time artist in 2018. He has painted over 80 murals across Singapore, but only 9 are located here in Chinatown. His art captures the essence of a bygone era so perfectly, and his nostalgic memories as a. kid. If youâ??d like to hunt down the rest of his masterpieces, leave a comment below, and Iâ??ll happily point you in the right direction!

default watermark


出入平安
default watermark

Whatcha looking at?

A Tale of Two Temples

Religious harmony is a hallmark of Singapore, and nowhere is this more evident than on South Bridge Road. First, I entered the Sri Mariamman Temple, the oldest Hindu temple in Singapore, built way back in 1826.

default watermark


SG
60
நன்கொடை
DONATION
SPENDE
DON
寄付金箱
捐款箱

Dedicated to the Goddess of Rain, it is also a place where devotees pray for fertility and healing. The towering *Gopuram* (entrance tower) is colourful and intricate, filled with countless statues, carvings, and paintings of deities. As I looked up, I found myself wondering: just how many deities are there in Hinduism? The sheer detail is breathtaking.

default watermark


1. திருப்பரங்குன்றம் : ஸ்ரீ முருகப்பெருமான்-தெய்வானை அம்மை திருமணம்
2. திருச்செந்தூர் : ஸ்ரீ முருகப்பெருமானை, பிரம்மா, விஷ்ணு, நாரதர், வீரவாகுத்தேவர் ஆகியோர் வழிபடுதல்

Moving on, I visited the majestic Buddha Tooth Relic Temple. Built in 2002, this architectural marvel is dedicated to Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha. The main hall is awe-inspiring, featuring 100 dragon carvings and 100 Buddha statues that signify the virtues of Buddhism.

default watermark



default watermark

The crown jewel of the temple, however, is the Golden Stupa (often referred to as the Golden *Supta* by locals). Weighing a massive 320kg, it houses the sacred tooth relic. The serenity inside offers a peaceful respite from the heat outside.

default watermark


供養
在壇法師
供養
壇內諸佛菩薩

Along the same street, there is also a mosque named Masjid Jamae (Chulia) and a Fairfield Methodist Church, thus we call this Street of Harmony to signify the multi-religious society we have today.

Feasting at Chinatown Complex

By now, my stomach was growling loudly. I headed straight for Chinatown Complex, home to the largest hawker centre in Singapore. With more than 300 stalls, the variety is overwhelming in the best way possible.

default watermark


Spring Roll
MICHELIN
2025
2019-2025
MICHELIN
SELECTED
MICHELIN
No Pork
No Lard
薄餅
$2.20 /pc
新品
鮮蝦薄餅
PRAWN POPIAH
$3.20
$4.80
蝦仁金杯
ease Queue Up
自助服務

You could visit this place daily for a month and still not finish trying everything! This is also where you can find affordable Michelin-starred mealsâ??just keep an eye out for the red Michelin stickers on the stall fronts. From claypot rice to iconic chicken rice, itâ??s a foodieâ??s paradise. Mind you, when itâ??s crowded, you had better snatch a seat quickly when you see one!

Explore More Heritage

My morning in Chinatown was a sweaty but fulfilling reminder of how rich our local culture is. Whether youâ??re a history buff, a food lover, or just someone who loves a good walk, Chinatown has something for you.

default watermark


PUMPKIN CAKE
FAMILY VIOLENCE IS NOT OK
NEW YORK
default watermark
CLEAN CRUX DESIGNED & MADE HERE

You May Also Like

- Catching Sakura: My 12 Days Self-Drive Itinerary through Sendai, Fukushima, Nikko, and Tokyo in Spring â?? Day 7
- My 14 Days Travel Itinerary In Kyushu Japan 2023 â?? Day 5
- My 14 Days Travel Itinerary In Kyushu Japan 2023 â?? Day 9

Date Created
29/11/2025
Author
willietan

default watermark