



Exploring the new Changi Heritage Trail by the National Heritage Board

Description

We got an invite to go for the new Changi Heritage Trail by the National Heritage Board (NHB). Inevitably, the ever lazy and allergic to walking Wilber decided that this was something that Kevin and Daryl had to attend. He based this decision on the fact that in the office, the two of us are the ones who obsess about hitting out daily 10,000 steps. Fine by me and fine by Kevin.

This was organised by the National Heritage Board and it featured a tour around Changi. The tour features 23 heritage sites and six trail markers. For starters, this is a trail marker.



One of the first photos of Changi Village taken by photographer Cecil Beaton in 1945. The building is now a museum.



Row of shops in Changi Village, including a shop selling fish, along with a small boat and a small boat.



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Between the early 19th century and the 1970s, the landscape of Changi Village was shaped by the area's natural resources and geographical features. Some kampungs along the coast, including Kampong Tanah Merah, Ayer Gamush and Mata Ikan, were sustained by coastal trades, while other inland villages relied on agriculture. The economy of Changi Village, on the other hand, was dependent on the nearby British military base known as Changi Cantonment.

With the completion of Changi Cantonment in 1937, Changi Village grew significantly as traders and hawkers established themselves and catered to the base's personnel, offering goods and services that earned the village a reputation as a retail haven. The village's two rows of shophouses housed various establishments, including departmental stores, bakeries, photo shops, coffeehouses and restaurants such as Changi Milk Bar and Tong Seng, which specialised in Western cuisine. The village also had a market and various hawkers stalls.

From the 1970s, the kampungs of Changi made way for the development of Changi Airport and land reclamation schemes. Shophouses and shophouses in Changi Village were also cleared, and Housing & Development Board built five blocks of flats that housed shops on the first floor as well as a market and hawkers centre.

Located near the mouth of Sungai Changi, Changi Village also serves as a gateway to nearby islands. Even before the colonial era, boats ferried passengers from the village to Pulau Ubin and to other islands. A ferry terminal was constructed in 2005 to serve as a formal landing point for Changi and continues to offer ferry rides to Pulau Ubin today.

ROOTS FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT www.nhb.gov.sg



MARKED SITES IN THE SUGGESTED SIGHTSEEING ROUTES



There are six of these littered around the Changi area.

The media were ready at 930 am.



This was our tour guide. Well, one of our tour guides. From NHB.



This was the first trail marker that we were introduced to. It is located very close to the Changi Food Centre. More specifically, it is at the carpark entrance of Little Island Brewing Co at Changi Village.



It was a searingly hot Tuesday. This was our first port of call. We had the benefit of having a team from NHB bring us around.

Do you see that red-coloured rectangular gadget hanging around our tour guide's neck? That is a whisperer. Every tour participant had one and when the tour guide spoke, we could hear what was spoken via the earpiece that we had on. This meant that the tour participants did not have to cluster too closely together to be able to hear the tour guide's presentation.



There are soft copies of the booklet and brochures which were given to us. I think if you would like to truly appreciate this heritage trail, it would serve you well to have this material.



This was our other tour guide for the day.



Oh and good thing there was a chartered bus. It was really hot!



This was the second stop of the day. The Sree Ramar Temple.



First things first, we had to remove our shoes and leave them at the door of the temple.

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There was a Guan Yin altar placed at the entrance of the temple.

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This is Mr K V Thalapathy. He is a temple volunteer and resident who grew up in Changi Village. He shared with us the surrounding and how this temple had over the years become a cornerstone of the area.

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Ok, Kevin got me in one of his shotsâ?I I was giving my utmost attention. You just cannot see my eyes.

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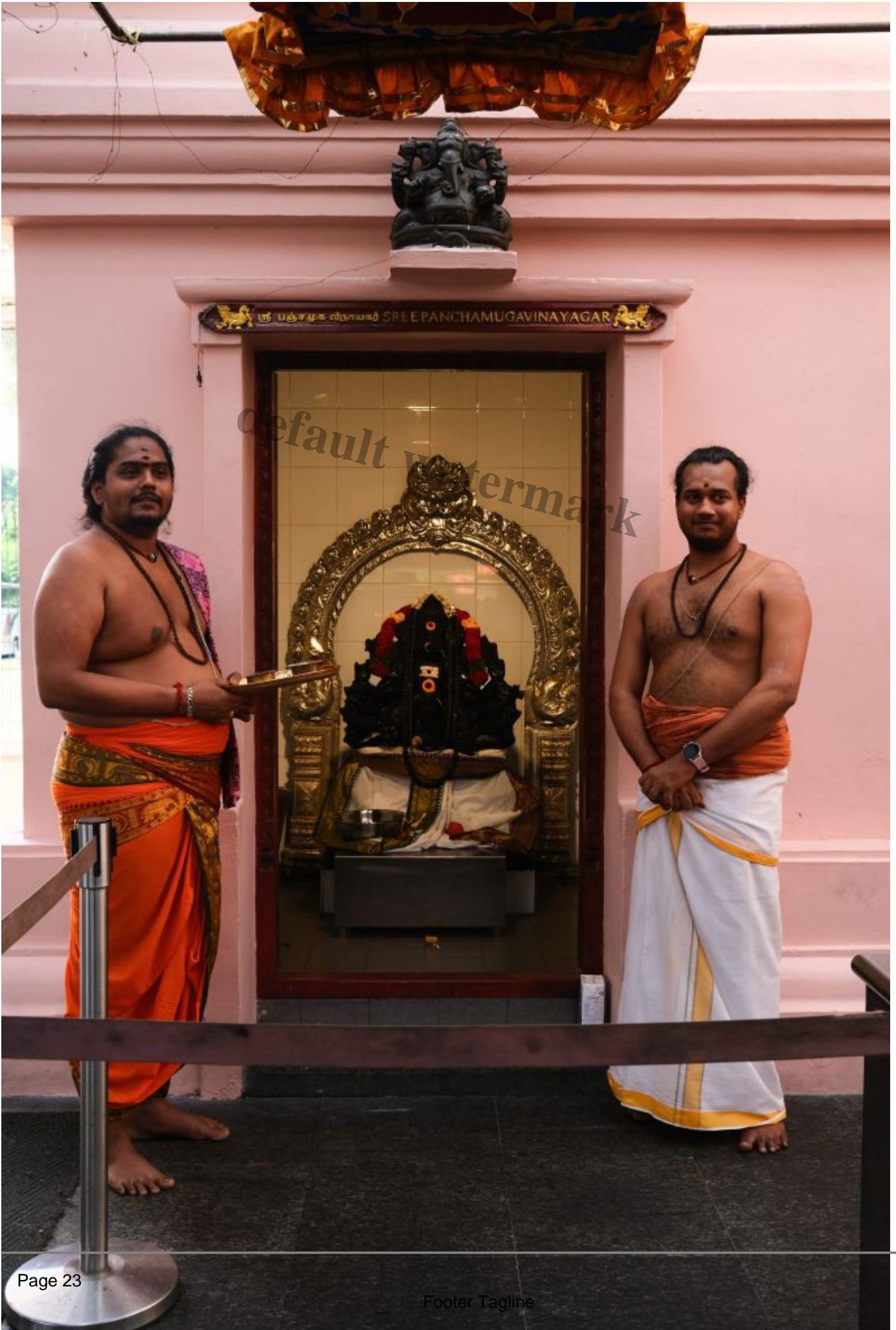
The people in the temple were extremely welcoming. There were worshippers and they even allowed us to take photos of what they were doing. This is perhaps something that I greatly appreciate. The religious harmony in Singapore. It allowed me to better understand a different faith from my own.

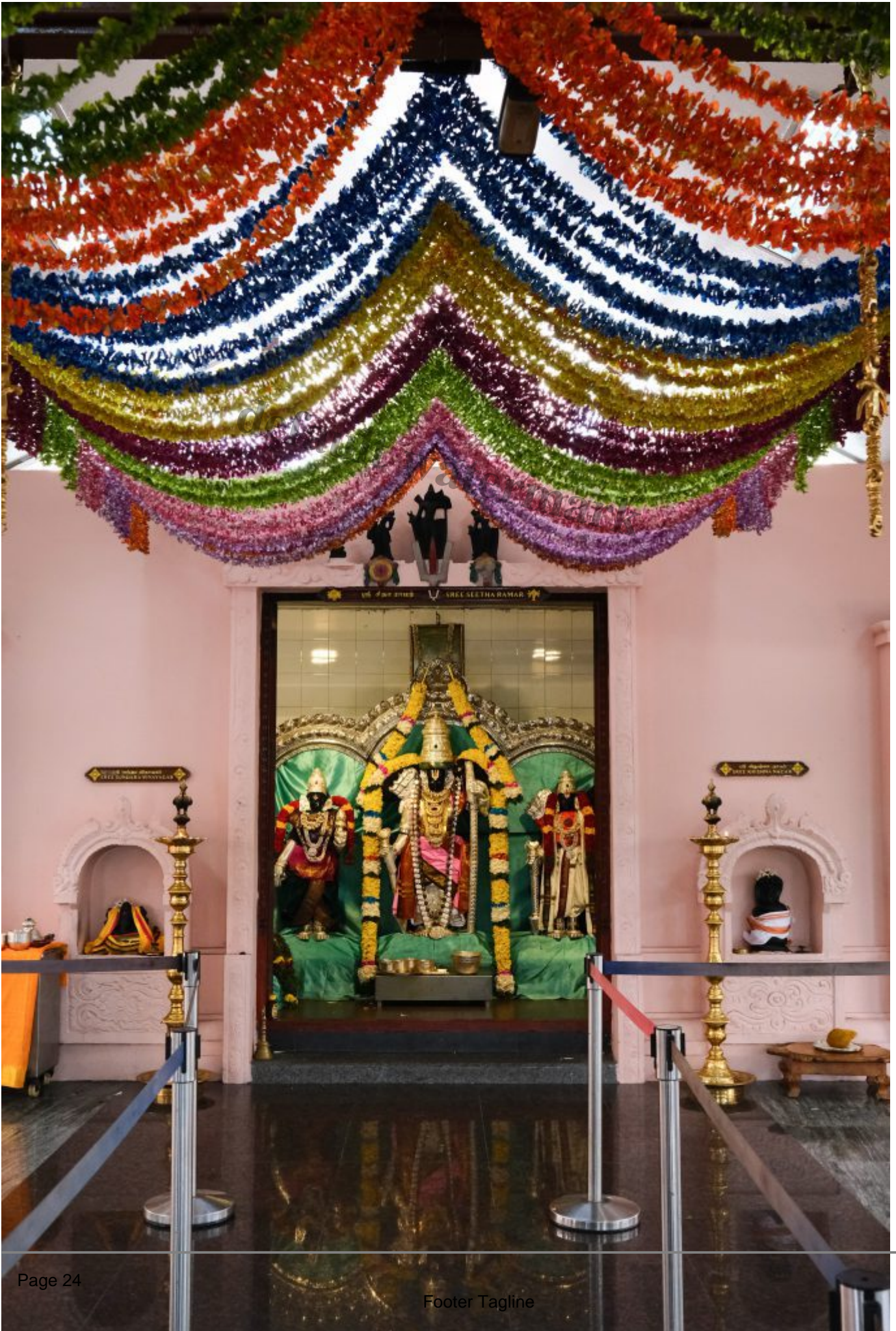
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The Hindu monks (sorry if I termed them wrongly) were very welcoming. They explained their practices to some of the participants.

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Oh yes, the trail marker is located by the side of the entrance of the temple.



This is the address of the temple. I believe that the people in the temple will be welcoming to visitors. This should also apply to just about every other temple in Singapore. So if you are on this heritage trail, feel free to enter the Sree Ramar Temple to take a look!



SREE RAMAR TEMPLE



Original temple building, 1946
Courtesy of Sree Ramar Temple



Priest performing a ritual at the Sree Ramar shrine, 2018
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Sree Ramar Temple traces its history to a shrine located at the foot of a tree regarded as sacred by Hindu residents of Changi Point. Established in the mid-20th century, the shrine was a focal point for devotees worshipping the deities Sree Ramar, Sree Seetha, Sree Lakshmanar and Sree Hanuman.

In 1946, a group of devotees led by Ram Naidu, a member of the British military forces stationed at the nearby former Royal Air Force Changi base, built Sree Ramar Temple to house the shrine and a *kumbabishegam* (consecration ceremony) was held to consecrate the temple. Since its establishment, it has served Hindus of the airbase and Changi Village.

In 1991, the temple was expanded and rebuilt with granite statues of its deities installed within their *garbhagrihas* (sanctuaries). Sree Ramar Temple later incorporated three other Hindu temples and shrines that were displaced by urban development in 1999. These were Sri Marimatha Karunaya Eswarar Temple (previously located at Cantonment Road), Sri Muthu Mariamman Temple (previously at Eng Neo Avenue) and Sri Palani Aandavar Shrine (previously in Kranji).

While following Vaishnavite traditions and rituals which honour the deity Vishnu, Sree Ramar Temple also houses several Saivite deities, which honour the deity Shiva. A shrine dedicated to the deity Shiva facilitates post-funeral prayers and rituals for Hindus, which include scattering the ashes of the deceased in the waters off Changi Point. The temple also includes shrines of non-Hindu deities Guan Yin and Buddha and draws devotees from other faiths.



Shrines of non-Hindu deities Guan Yin and Buddha at the temple, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

The trail map in English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil can be downloaded from our website at www.roots.gov.sg

此可透过我们的网站 www.roots.gov.sg 下载。新加坡英文、中文、马来文、泰米尔文网站地址：
Peta jejak warisan dalam bahasa Inggeris, Mandarin, Melayu dan Tamil boleh dimuat turun dari laman kami di www.roots.gov.sg
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ROOTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
<https://go.onn.sg/ht-sree-ramar-temple>



MARKED SITES IN THE SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES



Next up, Changi Sailing Club.

This was the walk into the seafront.

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We went past some chalets. I believe some of you may even recognise these chalets. Look at the sea in the background!



Welcome to Changi Point! This is perhaps one of the nicest views in Singapore.







Mdm Isiah Majid, a former resident of Kampung Ayer Gemuroh, introduced us to the area. The original Kampung was located at the current Changi Airport site. It was cleared to make way for the airport and the kampung shifted to this point. She reminisced about the times she spent in the area as a child. There were fruits which were aplenty for her while playing in the area. Children in Singapore nowadays do not have the experience of running around freely and getting fruits from trees in public. Such is the progress of Singapore but these are perhaps experiences that would make lives more memorable.

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This was the viewâ? It was so serene.







While everyone was in the shade, Kevin and I managed to get some nice shots of the sea with the yachts.



Next stop was the Former Kitchener Barracks.





You can find the trail marker along the main road.



These barracks are still vacant. Recently the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) held a public consultation with regards to the use of these barracks.

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The final stop was Changi Airport Terminal 1. This was Mr Joshua. His father was a former contractor who built the Changi Airport Control Tower.





Super effortâ? He brought along old photographs of the Changi Airport Control Tower.

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Ok, so we are done for the day!



Would I recommend the Changi Heritage Trail? Yes. I am a person who believes in conservation and I love old colonial or heritage buildings. I love history and learning about how places once were. There is a QR code on every trail marker. It will provide you with information about the Changi Heritage Trail. If you and your family or friends have a day to spare over the weekend, why not experience a heritage trail? Singapore has quite a few of these splayed all over the island. This beats having to jostle with the crowd at some shopping mall. Hot tip if you decide to embark on this heritage trail. A large bottle of water, loads of sunscreen and a hat will serve you well.

The six places with the trail markers are:

1. Changi Village
2. Sree Ramar Temple
3. Van Kit Village Chinese Temple
4. Former Changi Cantonment and RAF Changi (located near the former Kitchener Barracks)
5. Bungalows and Leisure in Changi (located outside the clubhouse of CSC@Changi) (Civil Service Club)
6. Changi Airport

Yours sincerely,

Daryl

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