

CHINATOWN



1. Mohamed Ali Lane

You won't find any boxing gloves here but a nice contemporary Japanese restaurant, Ikukan, round the bend along Mohamed Ali Lane. See if the Western-Japanese fusion cuisine does bring you to different spaces as the restaurant name suggests. Lunch ends at 2.30pm so be early.

2. Club Street

Climb the gentle slope of Club Street and experience an eclectic mix of charming traditional Chinese building, bars, clubs, and cafés where you can sip a cup of soothing earl grey or bottom-up to some Stella Artois. This is also one street where you can find up market designer wares and news agencies like the BBC and the International Herald Tribune. Spot quirky stuff like the Big Foot building, bird caged light bulbs, and the International Herald Tribune newspaper box. Watch the steep stairs and the narrow five-foot way lined with trash bins.

3. Ann Siang Hill Park

If you haven't been up this part of the hill, you're missing out on something. The Ann Siang Hill Park is a tucked away escapade between the hustle and bustle of Club Street and Ann Siang Road. Follow the red pathway that winds upslope to a breezy pavilion roofed with flowering creepers where you can take a breather or catch a tired chef snoozing on one of the benches. You can either carry your pram down the spiral staircase and exit via Ann Siang Road or retrace your path and walk down Club Street.

4. Ann Siang Road / Ann Siang Hill

Descend the gentle slope of Ann Siang Hill and traverse through old world charm of ornate wall

tiles and window grilles. The narrow five-foot way is home to Chinese associations like the Haichew Clan and the Chinese Sports Association. See if you can spot the Chinatown Cabaret signboard.

5. Sago Street / Trengganu Street

Make a left as you exit Ann Siang Hill and cross over to Sago Street. Once known as the death street due to the number of death houses here, the area now houses plenty of food outlets to satisfy your craving. Pop into the famous Da Zhong Guo Bing Jia (literally Big China Bakery) for some traditional pastries which are still wrapped in conventional paper packaging. By night, the street transforms into the Chinatown night market (which stretches into Trengganu Street). You can watch master craftsmen work on traditional trades like clog making and rattan mat weaving; or shop for Buddha statues and ornaments, wedding knick knacks, and dried food stuff. Instead of walking, you can also hire a trishaw to tour around Chinatown. Prices start from \$36.

6. Smith Street

Where would Singaporeans be without food? Smith Street is the lip-smacking good Food Street. It comes to life when dusk falls and can be difficult to find a seat especially during weekends. Sample peanut glutinous balls from the Ah Balling stall if you enjoy a roadside eatery atmosphere, otherwise you can pop into one of the many eateries like Chen Fu Ji chicken rice or Yum Cha dim sum restaurant along the street.

7. Trengganu Street

Once known as Japanese Street, this main artery connects Sago Street, Smith Street, Temple Street, and Pagoda Street. It is a shopping strip

for ethnic goods and salivating food, and was home to the famous 19th century Chinese opera house, the Lai Chun Yuen, which was once a 834-seater theatre.

8. Pagoda Street

Deriving its name from the oldest Hindu worship place, the Sri Mariyamman Temple, down the road, Pagoda Street was once a coolie quarters. It is now a thriving tourist belt where you can find ethnic crafts and furniture, name seal engraving, and, surprise-surprise, spa treatments. Drop in at the Chinatown Heritage Centre where you will discover the Chinatown time capsule, videos, exhibits, and learn about its history. Entrance fees start at \$5.30 for children and \$8.80 for adults. You can also rest a bit and enjoy a pot of freshly brewed Chinese tea at the cafe.

9. New Bridge Road

Be greeted by the aroma of barbeque sweet meat (bah kwa) from Lim Chee Guan as you turn out into New Bridge Road. You can buy some nibbles for the rest of the journey or return to try out dim sum from Zhong Guo Can Ting or wanton noodles from Sarawak Kolo Mee.

10. Eu Tong Sen Street

a) Garden Bridge

Fancy some foot reflexology in the middle of New Bridge Road and Eu Tong Sen Street? The Garden Bridge, staged above these busy roads, offers a splendid view of the estate - there is no ramp for strollers though. It also has pavilions for relaxing and plenty of seats for a game of chess.

b) People's Park Hawker Centre

Wander down from the Garden Bridge to the

People's Park hawker centre. You can buy a fat-free traditional ice-cream for 50-cents, get your shoes mended at the many cobblers around the area, or have a sugarcane drink for \$1 at the spacious three-storey food centre where you can watch some senior citizens at a game of chess.

c) Block 32

Feeling up to it for a panoramic view of Chinatown? Take the lift to the top floor of block 32 (next to the People's Park hawker centre) and whip out your camera. (Best viewed during sunset.) Keep the children away from the parapet!

d) The Majestic

The Majestic, originally named Tin Yin Moh Toi (Tin Yin Dance Stage), is one of the most celebrated opera theatres built by tycoon Eu Tong Sen for his wife. Its original facade remains intact and grand even today, though its interior is a different story altogether. Long gone are the Cantonese movie screenings but what you can find in here are bakeries, cafes, and sadly, empty shop spaces.

e) Yue Hwa Building (former Great Southern Hotel)

Another building owned by Eu Tong Sen, the Yue Hwa Building was formerly the Great Southern Hotel. In its heydays, the six-storey building was the place for cabaret and the high society. It is now a departmental store where you can buy children's clothes at reasonable prices.

11. Mosque Street

Cross back down to Mosque Street where again, you can smell the fragrance of barbeque sweet meat from Bee Cheng Hiang. Here's also where you can purchase tonics and bird's nest from Dragon Brand down the road.