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A 3 Day 2 Night Itinerary from Singapore's Chinatown

by Ian Updated on 16 Jul 2018

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The traditional heart of Singapore's Chinese community, Chinatown today boasts a slew of landmarks which tell of this rich heritage, from sights including the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple to the popular local dishes available from hawkers on Food Street. Located in the Outram district, it's also a great base from which families can visit Singapore's other attractions, never more than 30 minutes travelling time away. Buses and mass rail transit (MRT) trains stop just ten minutes from Furama City Centre, while access to hop on hop off city tour buses makes it even more convenient a base.

Day 1 – Blow away the cobwebs on Sentosa Island

Sentosa Island is a firm family favourite, boasting as it does a two kilometre stretch of beach, the British-era Fort Siloso, and Resorts World Sentosa, which encompasses [Universal Studios Singapore](#), Adventure Cove Water Park and the Trick Eye Museum.



The only Universal Studios in Southeast Asia features 24 different rides and attractions in seven zones centred on a lagoon, including the Battlestar Galactica duelling rollercoasters (the tallest in the world), Shrek's castle of Far Far Away, and the Jurassic Park Canopy Flyer rollercoaster. [Adventure Cove](#) (part of Marine Life Park with the SEA Aquarium) meanwhile has adrenaline-inducing water fun fit for all the family, including the world's longest lazy-river ride and the chance to snorkel amid live corals and tropical fish.

The [Trick Eye Museum](#) is quite different, using the art of trompe l'oeil (French for 'trick of the eye') to convert two-dimensional works into three dimensions. 'Step inside' its large canvasses to ride a dragon's tail, hover above the ground and become part of famous paintings.

The island is easily reached by Sentosa Express monorail (from VivoCity Mall near HarbourFront MRT station), traveller-equipped boardwalk, or by cable car – a journey that provides spectacular aerial views of both Singapore and Sentosa – and departs from HarbourFront Tower II.

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Back on Singapore, make sure to visit the [Gardens by the Bay](#) (Bayfront MRT stop) come evening. The Gardens are a 101 hectare nature park containing two large conservatories: the magnificent Flower Dome and Cloud Forest. The highlight though is perhaps Supertree Grove, with tree sculptures forming vertical gardens that top out at a height of 50 metres, and a walkway that enables visitors to get up close and personal with the high-level planting.

Day 2 – Delve into Singapore's history

Begin your second day in Singapore's Chinatown by sailing down the Singapore River on an iconic bumboat, the vessels that have been plying these waters for more than a century. Pass under historic bridges as you make your gentle way upriver, taking in the first landing site of Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore, the old warehouse buildings of the quays, and the futuristic architecture of the city behind.

Disembarking after the 40 minute tour, you should make the effort of visiting the Merlion sculpture, the symbol of Singapore and its people. Inaugurated in 1972, it represents the early origins of Singapore (meaning 'lion city') as a fishing village, and has become the unofficial mascot of the city.



To delve further into the region's history, visit the [Asian Civilisation Museum](#) in the elegant Empress Place Building, which displays half a millennia of Asian art and culture. Just two minutes from the bus stops of Fullerton Square and five minutes from Raffles Place MRT, its galleries aim to show how Singapore has grown due to its regional interactions. Don't miss the exhibits from the Tang Shipwreck, pulled up from the sea floor and dating from around 900 AD.



Then take to the air in a capsule of Singapore's giant Ferris wheel, the [Singapore Flyer](#) on Marina Bay (use Promenade MRT). At 165 metres it is one of the world's tallest wheels, giving panoramic views of architectural gems including the [Esplanade](#). A 60,000 square metre performing arts space also known as Theatres on the Bay and 'the durian building' due to the design of its roof, it hosts a regular series of exhibitions and concerts including free concerts in the Concourse most days.



In the evening satisfy your hunger at the vibrant [Clarke Quay](#), just a 10 minutes' walk across the Singapore River from Furama City Centre. A well-conserved historic landmark you will have already seen from the river, it comprises five blocks of restored shops and warehouses which offer dining for every taste, including on several moored Chinese junks converted into eating houses.

Day 3 – Explore the local neighbourhood

First on any tour of Chinatown should be the extraordinary multi-storey [Buddha Tooth Relic Temple](#), based on the architectural style of the Chinese Tang dynasty and conveniently located beside the Chinatown Visitor Centre (walking distance from Chinatown and Tanjong Pagar MRT stations). Even more extraordinarily, the temple was only completed in the mid-2000s. Head to the fourth floor to view the relic itself, said to have been discovered in a collapsed stupa in Myanmar (Burma) in the 1890s.

By contrast, the [Sri Mariamman Temple](#) on South Bridge Road is the oldest Hindu temple in Singapore, dating to 1827, less than 10 years after the modern settlement was founded by Raffles.

To ensure you don't miss a thing of this bustling neighbourhood, opt to join the complimentary Chinatown heritage walk organised by Singapore Footprints which runs every Saturday from 9.15 am at the Chinatown Visitor Centre. Lasting around two hours, it promises to take you off the beaten track to uncover Singapore's roots and the secret to its modern-day multiculturalism.

While in the area, stop off for some lunch at Chinatown's renowned Food Street hawker centre (actually on Smith Street), part of the larger street market. Though it may be casual eating, the authentic local delicacies are as good as they come, freshly cooked and following centuries old recipes often handed down through the family. Look out for skewers of peanut chicken satay, moreish fried noodles, and roast duck.



Chinatown can boast some world-beating sights and an astonishing array of fine foods, but more than that, it is a great place to locate yourself to be within easy reach of all Singapore's significant sights and attractions, whether you prefer the art and architecture of Marina Bay, or the resort parks of Sentosa.

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