

## ACCOMODATION

We have not made any hotel block reservations due to large price differences between hotels, and also because we are unsure of our guests accomodation preferences. We have however compiled a list of hotels and hostel room rates (including taxes), accurate at the time we sourced for them. The 2 hostels we recommend are right in the heart of Singapore's Chinatown. Both are comfortable and include breakfast, but they both have shared bathrooms. We hope that this list will be helpful to you in finding your accomodation.

### Hotels

#### Peninsula Excelsior Hotel

S\$220 / night

[www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

This is a little on the expensive side. However, it is extremely close to the church and is right in the City center, walking distance to almost everything you want to see downtown.

#### Hotel ibis Singapore at Bencoolen

S\$158 / night

[www.ibishotel.com](http://www.ibishotel.com)

This hotel might be slightly cheaper than the rate above and be an attractive choice for Cathay staff. With consideration to the wedding venues, it's distance from the Northeast Line MRT makes for a 15-minute walk anytime you wish to return to the hotel. It is however near to Bugis shopping area, and is considered to be situated in the downtown area and very near to Orchard Road and sightseeing venues.

#### Hotel ibis Singapore at Novena

US\$119 / night

[www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

This brand new hotel isn't even open yet, but can be had for an attractive room rate now, before it opens mid-April. It is about the same walk from an MRT as Bencoolen, about 600m. Two MRT stops away from Orchard Road.

#### Best Western Jayleen 1918

US\$136 / night

[www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com)

A tired hotel which some may describe as historic (built as a residence in 1918), now it's simply old and has very small rooms. Its saving grace is location and price: in the heart of Boat Quay very near the Clark Quay MRT and a lower price than nearby hotels.

#### Hotel 81 Chinatown

S\$139 / night

[www.hotel81.com.sg](http://www.hotel81.com.sg)

Pretty similar to Best Western but a local chain, this hotel on top of the Chinatown MRT station could be just about perfect, except for the loud music on the lower floors that reportedly can go on all night.

### Hostels

#### Rucksack Inn Hostel

S\$30 / night / person or S\$79 / double room

[www.rucksackinn.com](http://www.rucksackinn.com)

A clean, fun hostel in a great location near Chinatown, the hip area Clark Quay, and the scenic Boat Quay, The Rucksack Inn (and Rucksack Inn Two) won't break the bank. This hostel is highly recommended by most travelers who stay there for its cool atmosphere, free wifi, and 24-hour reception.

#### A Beary Good Hostel

S\$26 / night / person

[www.abearygoodhostel.com](http://www.abearygoodhostel.com)

A newer hostel that's only one year old, both "A Beary Good Hostel" and the "Beary Nice" hostel promise all-day free hot chocolate, wifi, and local phone calls. It's very close to the Chinatown MRT station, which makes it convenient for shopping and food in Chinatown, as well as easy links to the rest of Singapore.

## THINGS TO DO

We hope to go out and show you around Ting's hometown, but on those days which we're busy getting ready, you can use this guide to get the most out of your journey. When you get to Singapore airport, stop by the Singapore Tourism booth that is located in every airport terminal and pick up a map, then take a pick out from the list below and have fun!

---

### The Singapore Zoo and Night Safari

Great open-air exhibits and lots of indigenous South-East Asian animals: Malay sun bears, proboscis monkeys, orangutans, etc.

### Little India

One of Singapore's more vibrant and bustling areas - eat a dosa masala with your hands, buy some cheap Bollywood VCDs, and get your fortune told by a parrot! The Mustafa Shopping centre is also in this area - it sells absolutely everything and is open 24 hours.

### Orchard Road

If you love to shop, this is the place to go. The road is lined with giant shopping mall after giant shopping mall filled with designer clothes. It's quite the sight to behold, but not a good spot for bargain hunters.

### Bugis Street Market

Lively street market area with cheap t-shirts, the cheapest souvenirs in the city, fruit vendors and food stalls.

### Lau Pa Sat

Singapore is well known for its food centres and this is one of the best. It's in a good location right downtown, too.

### Esplanade Park

Right downtown near the waterfront checking out the park and walking around downtown is one of the best free things that Singapore has to offer. There's a Merlion statue here (the half-lion half-fish "icon" of Singapore), the Esplanade theatres, shopping malls, coffee shops, etc. You can catch a boat tour from here, too. The Asian Civilizations museum is near here.

### Marina Bay Sands

Singapore's newest destination offers world-class entertainment, dining and shopping, offering a vibrant collage of entertainment and lifestyle choices. This impressive wonder will truly inspire the cosmopolitan landscape of Singapore.

### The Helix Bridge

Walk across the architectural marvel and admire the city skyline.

### Clarke Quay

Trendy area of restaurants and bars near the waterfront. Prices are a bit inflated, but the atmosphere is great - try to show up around 5ish for happy hour drink prices (2 for 1).

### Chinatown

A very photogenic part of town and good spot to sample street food like "char kway teow" noodles and steamed buns. You can get rickshaw tours around this area.

### Sentosa

Man-made island full of family-friendly attractions and mediocre beaches. The Underwater world aquarium is pretty good.

### Universal Studios Singapore

Experience blockbuster adventures like never before. Located in Resorts World Sentosa, Universal Studios Singapore is Southeast Asia's first ever Hollywood movie theme park.

We suggest taking a look at the three-day itinerary for Singapore on the Wikitravel site for good ideas too.

## TRANSPORTATION

Getting around Singapore is effortless. The public transportation system is among the best in the world and taxis are reasonably priced. Very few visitors rent cars. [www.gothere.sg](http://www.gothere.sg) does a pretty good job of figuring out the fastest route by MRT and bus and even estimating taxi fares between any two points.

If you are staying in Singapore for some time, the EZ-Link farecard might be a worthwhile purchase. You can store value on it and use it on the MRT trains as well as all city buses at a 15% discount. The card costs S\$12, including S\$7 stored value, and the card can be "topped up" in increments of at least S\$10 at the farecard vending machines or 7-Eleven stores. You can use the same card for 5 years. The card technology was changed in 2009, but if you have any old cards lying around, they can be exchanged for free with value intact at TransitLink offices in all MRT stations.

Alternatively, the Singapore Tourist Pass available at selected major MRT stations (including Changi Airport and Orchard) also includes EZ-Link card functionality and a variety of discounts for attractions. Prices start at S\$8 a day for unlimited travel on MRT and buses, but you need to travel a lot to make this alone pay off as buses and trains are quite cheap.

Single tickets can be purchased for both MRT and buses, but it's a hassle, and in the case of buses it delays everyone else because the driver has to count fare stages to tell you how much you need to pay. We suggest you buy the EZ-Link card upon your arrival and return it for a refund (minus S\$5) when you depart.

---

### By Rail

The MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) trains are the main trunk of Singapore's transit system. They are a cheap and very reliable mode of transportation, and the network covers most points of interest for the visitor. Single-trip tickets cost from S\$0.80 to S\$2.00 plus a S\$1.00 refundable deposit, just insert your used ticket into machine to get your dollar back. EZ-link cards (described above) are the easiest and most popular way to use the MRT. All lines are integrated, so you do not need to buy a new ticket to transfer.

There are four main lines running at present: the North South Line, the East West Line, the Circle Line, and the North East Line. All of the wedding events are along the North East Line.

### By Bus

Buses connect various corners of Singapore, but are slower and harder to use than the MRT, and not too many visitors venture aboard. You can pay cash (coins, no change provided) in buses, but the fare stage system is quite complex (it's easiest to ask the driver for the price to your destination), you are charged marginally more and there is no provision for getting change. Payment with ez-link card is thus the easiest method: tap your card against the reader at the front entrance of the bus when boarding, and a maximum fare is deducted from the card. When you alight, tap your card again at the exit, and the difference is refunded. Make sure you tap out, or you'll be charged the maximum fare! Inspectors occasionally prowl buses to check that everybody has paid or tapped, so those who are on tourist day passes should tap before sitting down.

After midnight on Fri, Sat and before public holidays only, the NightRider services are a fairly convenient way of getting around, with seven lines running every 20 minutes. All services drive past the major nightlife districts of Boat Quay, Clarke Quay, Mohamed Sultan and Orchard before splintering off. Flat fare S\$3.50, EZ-Link accepted.

### By Taxi

Taxicabs use meters and are reasonably priced and honest, although the fare structure is remarkably convoluted. Outside weekday peak hours, trips within the city center should not cost you more than S\$10 and even a trip right across the island from Changi to Jurong will not break the S\$35 mark. If you are in a group of 3 or 4, it's sometimes cheaper and faster to take a taxi than the MRT.

Taxi pricing is largely identical across all companies at S\$2.80- S\$3 flagfall, which lasts you 1 km before increments of 20 cents per 385 m. (The sole exception is SMRT's giant black Chryslers, which charge S\$5.00 and S\$0.30/385m.) Watch out for surprises though as there are a few surcharges: peak hour (35%), late night (50%), central business district (S\$3), trips from airport (S\$3 or S\$5 during peak hours), phone booking (S\$2.50), public holiday (S\$1) and Electronic Road Pricing (S\$1-S\$4), which may add a substantial amount to your taxi fare. All such charges are shown on the bottom right-hand corner of the meter, recorded in the printed receipt and explained in tedious detail in a sticker on the window; if you suspect the cabbie is trying to pull a fast one, call the company and ask for an explanation. Note that there is no surcharge for trips to the airport, only from the airport. Credit cards are accepted by most but not all cabs, so ask when getting in, and a whopping 17% surcharge applies for this too. During rush hour in the city center, or late at night on the weekends, it's wise to call for a taxi from the unified booking system at 6342 5222 (6-DIAL-CAB).

In the Central Business District, taxis may only pick up passengers at taxi stands (found outside any shopping mall) or buildings with their own driveways (including virtually all hotels). Outside the city center, you're free to hail taxis on the street or call one to your doorstep. At touristy nightspots featuring long queues, such as Clarke Quay, you may on occasion be approached by touts offering a quick flat fare to your destination. This is illegal and very expensive, but reasonably safe for you (The driver, on the other hand, will probably lose his job if caught).

Some Singapore taxi drivers have very poor geographical knowledge of suburban areas and may expect you to know where they should go, so it may be helpful to bring a map of your destination area or directions on finding where you wish to go.

## WHAT TO EAT!

The cheapest and most popular places to eat in Singapore are hawker centres, essentially former pushcart vendors directed into giant complexes by government fiat. Prices are low (S\$2-5 for most dishes), hygiene standards are high (every stall is required to prominently display a health certificate grading it from A to D) and the food can be excellent. A general rule that Singaporeans follow is “if you see a queue, join it!” Ambience tends to be a little lacking though and there is no air-conditioning either, but a visit to a hawker centre is a must when in Singapore. However, be leery of overzealous pushy salesmen, especially at the Satay Club in Lau Pa Sat and Newton Food Centre at Newton Circus: the tastiest stalls don’t need high-pressure tactics to find customers. Touting for business is illegal, and occasionally a reminder of this can result in people backing off.

To order, first *chope* (reserve) a table by parking a friend by the table, note the table’s number, then place your order at your stall of choice. They’ll deliver to your table, and you pay when you get the food. Note that some stalls (particularly very popular ones) have signs stating “self-service”, meaning that you’re expected to get your food yourself — but if it’s quiet or you’re sitting nearby they’ll usually deliver anyway. At almost every stall you can also opt to take away (called “packet” or *ta pao* in Cantonese), in which case they’ll pack up your order in a plastic box/bag and even throw in disposable utensils. Once finished, just get up and go, as tables are cleared by hired cleaners.

Every district in Singapore has its own hawker centres and prices decrease as you move out into the boonies. For tourists, centrally located Newton Circus (Newton MRT), Gluttons Bay and Lau Pa Sat (near the Singapore River), are the most popular options — but this does not make them the cheapest or the tastiest, and the demanding gourmand would do well to head to Chinatown or the heartlands instead. Many of the best food stalls are located in residential districts away from the tourist trail and do not advertise in the media.

Ting recommends using [eatshootpost.sg](http://eatshootpost.sg) as a tool to find the best places to eat in Singapore. There are several great food reviews on this blog, so whet your appetite by compiling a list of food to eat and go on a food hunt!

### Peranakan / Nonya cuisine

**Chilli crab** is a whole crab ladled with oodles of sticky, tangy chilli sauce. It’s spicy at first, but the more you eat, the better it gets. Notoriously difficult to eat, so don’t wear a white shirt: just dig in with your hands and ignore the mess. The seafood restaurants of the East Coast are famous for this. For a less messy but equally tasty alternative, ask for black pepper crab.

**Kaya** is a jam-like spread made from egg and coconut, an odd-sounding but tasty combination. Served on toast for breakfast, canonically accompanied by runny eggs and strong, sweet coffee (*kopi*). Exists in two distinctive styles; the greenish Nonya version, colored with pandan leaf, and the brownish Hainanese version. Every time Joel goes to Singapore, he eats at Ya Kun for his Kaya Toast, and there are many Ya Kun shops scattered throughout Singapore.

**Laksa**, in particular the Katong or *lemak* style, is probably the best known Singaporean dish: a fragrant soup of noodles in a coconut-based curry broth, topped with cockles or shrimp. Singapore laksa is very different from Penang laksa which is made with a tamarind-infused broth instead of coconut, and has a spicy sourish taste.

**Mee siam** is rice flour noodles served with sour gravy made from tamarind, dried shrimp and fermented beans. Usually served with bean curd cubes and hard boiled eggs. Though the Chinese, Malays and Indians all have their own versions, it is the Peranakan version that is most popular with Singaporeans.

**Popiah** or spring rolls come fresh or fried. They consist of a filling of boiled turnip, fried tofu, pork, shrimp with a slew of condiments, wrapped in a thin crepe and eaten like a fajita.

**Rojak** means a mixture of everything in Malay, and there are two very different types. Chinese rojak is a salad of pineapple, white turnip, cucumber, *tau pok* (fried bean curd) with thin tiny slices of *bunga kantan* (torch ginger flower buds), tossed in shrimp paste sauce and sugar, then sprinkled with crushed peanuts. Indian rojak consists of mainly fried fritters made from flour and various pulses with cucumber and tofu, with sweet & spicy sauces.

**Satay bee hoon** is rice vermicelli (*bee hoon*) served with the same peanut and chilli sauce used for satay, hence the name. Usually see hum (cockles), dried squid and pork slices are added in.

### Malay cuisine

The Malays were Singapore’s original inhabitants and despite now being outnumbered by the Chinese, their distinctive cuisine is popular to this day. Characterized by heavy use of spices, most Malay dishes are curries, stews or dips of one kind or another and *nasi padang* restaurants, offering a wide variety of these to ladle onto your rice, are very popular.

**Mee rebus** is a dish of egg noodles with spicy, slightly sweet gravy, a slice of hard boiled egg and lime.

**Nasi lemak** is the definitive Malay breakfast, consisting at its simplest of rice cooked in light coconut milk, some ikan bilis (anchovies), peanuts, a slice of cucumber and a dab of chilli on the side. A larger fried fish or chicken wing are common accompaniments. More often than not, also combined with a variety of curries and/or sambal (see below).

**Otah-Otak** is a type of fish cake made of minced fish (usually mackerel), coconut milk, chilli and various other spices, and grilled in a banana or coconut leaf, usually served to accompany other dishes like nasi lemak.

**Rendang**, occasionally dubbed “dry curry”, is meat stewed for hours on end in a spicy (but rarely fiery) coconut-based curry paste until almost all water is absorbed. Beef rendang is the most common, although chicken and mutton are spotted sometimes.

**Sambal** is the generic term for chilli sauces of many kinds. Sambal belacan is a common condiment made by mixing chilli with the shrimp paste belacan, while the popular dish sambal sotong consists of squid (sotong) cooked in red chilli sauce.

**Satay** are barbecued skewers of meat, typically chicken, mutton or beef. What separates satay from your ordinary kebab is the spices used to season the meat and the slightly spicy peanut-based dipping sauce. The Satay Club at Lau Pa Sat near Raffles Place is one popular location for this delicacy.

Malay desserts, especially the sweet pastries and jellies (kuih or kueh) made largely from coconut and palm sugar (gula melaka), bear a distinct resemblance to those of Thailand. But in the sweltering tropical heat, try one of many concoctions made with ice instead:

**Bubur cha-cha** consists of cubed yam, sweet potato and sago added into coconut milk soup. This can be served warm or cold.

**Chendol** is made with green pea noodles, kidney beans, palm sugar and coconut milk.

**Durian** is not exactly a dish, but a local fruit with distinctive odor you can smell a mile away and a sharp thorny husk. Both smell and taste defy description, but eating garlic ice cream next to an open sewer comes to mind. If you are game enough you should try it, but be warned beforehand — you will either love it or hate it. The rich creamy yellow flesh is often sold in places like Geylang and Bugis and elsewhere conveniently in pre-packaged packs, for anywhere from S\$1 for a small fruit all the way up to S\$24/kg depending on the season and type of durian. This ‘king of fruits’ is also made into ice cream, cakes, sweets, puddings and other decadent desserts. Note: You’re not allowed to carry durians on the MRT and buses and they’re banned from many hotels.

**Ice kacang** literally means “ice bean” in Malay, a good clue to the two major ingredients: shaved ice and sweet red beans. However, more often than not you’ll also get gula melaka (palm sugar), grass jelly, sweet corn, attap palm seeds and anything else on hand thrown in, and the whole thing is then drizzled with canned evaporated milk or coconut cream and colored syrups. The end result tastes very interesting — and refreshing.

**Kuih** (or kueh) refer to a plethora of steamed or baked “cakes”, mostly made with coconut milk, grated coconut flesh, glutinous rice or tapioca. They are often very colorful and cut into fanciful shapes, but despite their wildly varying appearance tend to taste rather similar.

**Pisang goreng** is a batter-dipped and deep-fried banana.

## Chinese cuisine

Chinese food as eaten in Singapore commonly originates from southern China, particularly Fujian and Guangdong. While “authentic” fare is certainly available, especially in fancier restaurants, the daily fare served in hawker centres has absorbed a number of tropical touches, most notably the fairly heavy use of chilli and the Malay fermented shrimp paste belacan as condiments. Noodles can also be served not just in soup (tang), but also “dry” (kan), meaning that your noodles will be served tossed with chilli and spices in one bowl, and the soup will come in a separate bowl.

**Bak chor mee** is essentially noodles with minced pork, tossed in a chilli-based sauce with lard, ikan bilis (fried anchovies), vegetables and mushrooms. Black vinegar may also be added.

**Bak kut teh**, literally “pork bone tea”, is a simple-sounding soup of pork ribs simmered for hours in broth until they’re ready to fall off the bone. Singaporeans prefer the light and peppery Teochew style, but a few shops offer the original dark and aromatic Fujian kind. Bak kut teh is typically eaten with white rice, mui choy (pickled vegetables) and a pot of strong Chinese tea, hence the name — the broth itself doesn’t contain any tea. To impress the locals, order some you tiao fritters from a nearby stall and cut them up into bite-sized chunks to dip into your soup.

**Char kway teow** is the quintessential Singapore-style fried noodle dish, consisting of several types of noodles in thick brown sauce with strips of fishcake, Chinese sausage, a token veggie or two and either cockles and shrimp. It’s cheap (S\$2-3/serve), filling and has nothing to do with the dish known as “Singapore fried noodles” elsewhere! (And which actually doesn’t exist in Singapore.)

**Chee cheong fun** is a favorite breakfast consisting of lasagna-type rice noodles rolled up and various types of fried meats including fishballs and fried tofu. The dish is usually topped with a generous amount of sauce.

**Chwee kway** is a dish consisting of rice cakes topped with chai po (salted fermented turnips), usually served with some chilli sauce.

**Hainanese chicken rice** is steamed (“white”) or roasted (“red”) chicken flavoured with soy sauce and sesame oil served on a bed of fragrant rice that has been cooked in chicken broth and flavoured with ginger and garlic. Often accompanied by chilli sauce made from crushed fresh chillis, ginger, garlic and thick dark soy sauce as well as some cucumber and a small bowl of chicken broth.

**Hokkien mee** is a style of soupy fried noodles in light, fragrant stock with prawns and other seafood. Oddly, it bears little resemblance to the Kuala Lumpur dish of the same name, which uses thick noodles in dark soy, or even the Penang version, which is served in very spicy soup.

**Prawn noodles** (hei mee in Hokkien) is a prawn-based dark brown soup served with noodles and a giant tiger prawn or two on top. Some stalls will serve it with boiled pork ribs as well.

**Yong tau foo** literally means “fermented tofu”, but it’s more than that! The diner selects their favorites from a vast assortment of tofu, fish paste, assorted seafood and vegetables, and they are then sliced into bite-size pieces, cooked briefly in boiling water and then served either in broth as soup or “dry” with the broth in a separate bowl. The dish can be eaten by itself or with any choice of noodles. Accompaniments are spicy chilli sauce and sweet sauce for dipping.

## Indian cuisine

The smallest of the area’s minorities, the Indians have had proportionally the smallest impact on the local culinary scene, but there is no shortage of Indian food even at many hawker centres. Delicious and authentic Indian food can be had at Little India, including south Indian typical meals such as dosa (thosai) crepes, idli lentil-rice cakes and sambar soup, as well as north Indian meals including various curries, naan bread, tandoori chicken and more. In addition, however, a number of Indian dishes have been “Singaporeanized” and adopted by the entire population, including:

**Fish head curry** is, true to the name, a gigantic curried fish head cooked whole until it’s ready to fall apart. The head itself is not eaten, as there’s plenty of meat to be found inside and all around. Singapore’s Little India is the place to sample this. Note that there are two distinct styles, the fiery Indian and the milder Chinese kind.

**Nasi briyani** is rice cooked in turmeric, giving it an orange colour. Unlike the Hyderabadi original, it’s usually rather bland, although specialist shops do turn out more flavorful versions. It is usually served with curry chicken and some Indian crackers.

**Roti prata** is the local version of paratha, flat bread tossed in the air like pizza, rapidly cooked in oil, and eaten dipped in curry. Modern-day variations can incorporate unorthodox ingredients like cheese, chocolate and even ice cream, but some canonical versions include roti kosong (plain), roti telur (with egg) and murtabak (layered with chicken, mutton or fish). Strict vegetarians beware: unlike Indian roti, roti prata batter is usually made with eggs.

**Putu mayam** is a sweet dessert composed of vermicelli-like noodles topped with shredded coconut and orange sugar.