

3 best-kept secrets about Singapore



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If you have ever dreamed about the wonders of Asia, Singapore may have crossed your mind. Yes, Singapore has it all. It has brands to shop till you drop, exquisite Asian and international cuisine, and lush vegetation that complements a sophisticated, modern, luxurious urban city. But this Southeast Asian Island has three iconic gems just waiting to be discovered.

Marina Bay Sands

When we think about Marina Bay Sands, we may wonder if it is just another luxury resort, but no, it is more than that. It has astounding architecture.

The three towers united at the top resemble boats.

But that was not the idea behind building Marina Bay Sands. According to its architect, Moshe Safdie, the idea was to ensure the building would not

block the sea views from the city. Hence, the three towers give enough space to enjoy the views.

Another interesting fact Safdie shared is that a vast resort concept wouldn't fit the limited land available for the project. Thus, the high-rise building. It comprises 57th stories.

You will be amazed by the sky terrace on the top floor, which offers unlimited views from an infinity pool that is by far the largest in the world. But another feature is worth noting. Is the sky park asymmetrical, and why is it so? According to Safdie, this is because it promotes better feng shui. This makes Marina Bay Sands a building that captures our imagination and takes luxury to new heights. One remark: If you are not a hotel guest, you cannot swim at the infinity pool at the top of the hotel, but you can head to the public observation deck and glimpse the skyline.

One thing is certain. Even though this resort isn't a beach resort, it still attracts many tourists. Or just anyone who is not afraid of heights!

The Merlion

Merlion Park spans 2,500 acres, where you can see the gigantic original Merlion statue, an iconic Singapore landmark. There, you will find three Merlion statues. The original statue stands 8.6 meters tall and weighs 70 tonnes.

A perfect curved line of water landing in the river emerges from its mouth to make the Merlion statue even more impressive. This statue is not new. More precisely, it was unveiled on September 15, 1972.

Credit also goes to Lim Nang Seng, the statue's sculptor, and Kwan Sai Kheong, the designer, both Singaporeans.

You may not know that the original Merlion statue was not always at Merlion Park. On 23 April 2002, it was moved from the mouth of the Singapore River, 120 meters away, to Merlion Park.

Interestingly, a long time had passed before this 2002 relocation. In 1997, the Esplanade Bridge was completed.

Many realised that this new construction was blocking the view of the Merlion statue. It was clear that something had to be done. So, in 2002, the Merlion statue was officially moved to where it is today: in Merlion Park.

Today, the statue overlooks Marina Bay; at night, it lights up. It is a magical moment you will never forget.

Another intriguing fact: the Merlion statue faces east. This may seem like a random fact, but it is not. Everything has a meaning, and this is no exception.

You may be surprised to learn that, in Chinese culture, Feng Shui is a way of life. The Merlion statue faces east because it is auspicious and brings good luck.

But this statue is not alone. Two smaller replicas of the Merlion stand just behind it. They are 2 meters tall and weigh 3 tonnes each. Curiously, these two statues are considered the cubs of the original Merlion statue.

But after you have seen a Merlion statue, you cannot avoid questioning why there is so much interest in that statue. After all, it is an extremely strange creature. It has the head of a lion and the body of a fish.

But there is more than meets the eye. It isn't just a statue made to impress visitors. It represents Singapore itself.

And how is that? Let's see. First, the head of a Lion. What does it mean?

The answer is simple. In Malay, Singa Pura stands for the city of the lion.

Now you understand why the country is called Singapore.

But what about the body of a fish? This has a deep meaning that goes back in time—to a point when Singapore was just a tiny fishing village. All of this makes us think about Singapore's origins, and it reminds us that to know the present, we must look to the past.

Now, you may be thinking that this is it—that there are no other Merlion statues across Singapore—but no. They are everywhere—well, not exactly everywhere.

Another is at the Tourism Court on Grange Road, another at Mount Faber, and a pair of replicas are at a car park entrance on Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1.

Another one stood on Sentosa, Singapore's island, but it was sadly demolished. It was last seen on 20 October 2019. It stood an impressive 37 meters tall!

But if you cannot take your photo next to the gigantic Merlion sculpture in Sentosa, you can still take one next to the original Merlion statue.

And this is probably the best photo you will take home. Next, you will discover one of Singapore's oldest and most enigmatic hotels.

Raffles Hotel

Raffles Hotel is Singapore's oldest colonial-style hotel, and it has stood the test of time. Today, it may seem like a luxury hotel everyone wants to stay in.

The truth is, the Raffles Hotel is more than just a luxury hotel. It is a landmark of a past that began in 1887. The Sarkies Brothers, who were Armenians, built it.

Curiously, they could have given it any name they could conceive, but they didn't. They chose to honour Singapore's founder, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles.

But this is not when it all truly began. Its history dates back to the 1830s. By then, it was simply a privately owned beach house.

But in 1878, it became a hotel. It was named Emerson's Hotel.

Near the beach, with high-end services and rooms, this hotel was designed to be highly sought after by the wealthy.

With that in mind, Raffles Hotel was officially opened on December 1, 1887, with ten rooms! Meanwhile, in 1894, the hotel could accommodate 75 guests.

Fast-forward: The Raffles Hotel became a national monument in 1987, exactly one century after its grand opening!

The Raffles Hotel's 1989 renovation cost \$160M, and the result is simply stunning. Today, its style resembles that of the 1915 hotel.

The hotel rooms were upgraded to suites, and the famous Long Bar opened. This is where the official national drink, Singapore Sling, was invented.

Today, the Raffles Hotel is a luxury hotel that hosts celebrities and anyone who can afford to stay in such a historic hotel. You can still dine or drink at the hotel if you cannot afford the luxury. It will be expensive, but it will be worth every cent.

How can you reach such a unique hotel? Well, you can take a short walk from the modern MRT station at City Hall and the Raffles City Shopping Centre, and you will be there. The Raffles Hotel reminds everyone that Singapore is an intriguing island worth discovering.

Now that you know more about what makes Singapore so special, you just have one thing left to do - to board that aeroplane and get there. One thing is for sure. You will never ever forget this small little island located somewhere between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.