

Don't miss the Red Dot and its über first world city

Known as the Red Dot on account of its tiny global footprint on a world map, Singapore stands as an example of what can be achieved when the political will and leadership vision to do so is there. I found Singapore utterly inspirational, an indication of the potential our own South African future holds.

 By [Brian Berkman](#) 13 Apr 2016



More than 23% of Singapore today consists of a 130km² mass of land reclaimed from the sea and it is in this Marina Bay area that I recommend you stay. If you've ever shied away from visiting Asia because of an anxiety about sanitary conditions, you will find Singapore a sparkling city that redefines clean.

Cruise the river

The Singapore River today is another example of industrious Singaporeans. The Singaporeans succeeded in cleaning up their river through a major clean-up and desalination plants - once heavily polluted with human waste, the city's water supply now comes from the river.

Take a historic bumboat River Cruise tour of the river. Bumboats were once the only way to offload cargo from the ships to the quay. All but banned from the river during the clean-up, they are now restored as excellent river shuttles.

Award-winning hotel

Although celebrating thirty years in 2017, [Mandarin Oriental](#), Singapore - the only property of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group in Singapore - is one of the city's most luxurious hotels, ranked sixth on TripAdvisor's Top 25 Luxury Hotels and a Travellers' Choice 2016 winner. Mandarin Oriental, Singapore, has also been awarded Five-Star status for both accommodation and spa in the prestigious Forbes Travel Guide for five consecutive years from 2012 to 2016.



You can access a number of inter-connected and smart shopping malls directly from the hotel and the Orchard Road shopping high street is nearby. Taxis are an excellent and affordable way to get around Singapore and the fare into Chinatown, for example, is around R120. Fare to the airport is around R250.

Become a fan

In an area known for service excellence, the gracious elegance with which every interaction is imbued makes Mandarin Oriental stand out. Book a bay-view room for the best views over the water from floor-to-ceiling windows. The sight of the Singapore Flyer big wheel and the skyscrapers along the Raffles and Fullerton roads are fabulous to see, especially at night.

The atrium lobby is in the shape of a Mandarin Oriental fan and best photographed from the fourth-floor entrance to Melt Café, winner of Singapore's Top Restaurants "Best Buffet" award by Wine & Dine. We have the most stunning breakfasts there.



With 527 rooms and suites, four executive floors and a premium Oriental Club Lounge you wouldn't expect the kind of intimate boutique hotel personal service and yet that is what you receive. Even the housekeeping staff addresses you by name if you happen to pass them in the corridors. All guest rooms offer spectacular views of the ocean, bay or city, and include super high-speed internet password-controlled access at no extra charge.

Afternoon Tea is a British tradition which the Singaporeans have embraced and the hotel's Axis Lounge is the best place to indulge in this - a five-course extravaganza on tiered tea plates along with a selection of teas and coffees as long as my arm.

Poolside music while overlooking the city

There are plenty of pool-side loungers, and on-the-ball staff and lifeguards will bring fresh towels. Free-flowing chilled water and fruit juice shots are always at hand. The private pool cabanas include double recliners and even iPod docking stations and sound systems.

You will want at least three full days and long nights to spend in Singapore. Singapore's Chinatown is probably the most pristine in the world and offers black pepper crab and other local favourites at competitive prices. The Gardens By The Bay, an easy walk over the Helix Bridge from the hotel, is an architectural and natural wonder not to be missed.

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