

Four nights in Singapore

by Camille Pepe Sperrazza

Day 1: We arrive in Singapore after a nonstop flight from JFK to Japan - 12 hours - and then another 7-hour flight here, about 22 hours of travel time. A car picks us up at 1 am, and we check into the St. Regis Singapore. It looks like a palace, with its marble floors and spacious, stunning decor. I am excited to be on the other side of the world.

Breakfast includes everything imaginable - omelets, sushi, fried rice, dumplings, cheeses, exotic fruit, duck, pancakes, French toast, baked beans, potatoes, noodle soup, and much more. The signature dish is the lobster and shrimp omelet, sprinkled with caviar. I try gelatin-like white cubes, presented inside a martini glass, which the chef says is coconut and has medicinal benefits. It is tasty, as are the croissants - some filled with chocolate - the pastry so incredibly flakey and crisp, only in Paris have I found them this good.

The St. Regis is located by Orchard Road, known for its shops, restaurants, and hotels. We visit the Hilton, the Four Seasons, and the Hard Rock Cafe. There seems to be a Starbucks on every corner. There are numerous malls, a lot of them built underground, and we get sticker shock when we see designer names selling for exorbitant prices. Singapore is a thriving, cosmopolitan city. We are told everyone works, begging is not allowed, and there is no homeless. It is a first-world country, the third wealthiest, with an air force stationed in Perth, Australia, says a guide. There is very little crime, and violence is extremely rare. The people speak English fluently, and are very welcoming. Service is impeccable. We walk through the city, among skyscrapers and unique architecture, juxtaposed by lush greenery and palm trees, so there is a tropical ambience. Singapore plants this greenery to be environmentally conscious. Streets are sparkling clean, as are cars, all the latest models.

I meet with the manager of the Shangri-La Hotel, inspecting the vast premises of the lovely resort. In the evening, we are picked up at the St. Regis for our tour of Chinatown that includes dinner. One of the highlights is riding a trishaw - a carriage for two, connected to a bicycle that is peddled by a driver. We race through the streets, amid traffic, a bit exciting and terrifying at once. The driver drops us off by the harbor where we board a bumboat for a ride along the river, absorbing Singapore at night. We view the Merlion, the city's symbol, water gushing from its mouth. Singapore means "lion city," and this is the most notable of the city's three Merlion statues.



Singapore at night

Day 2: We ride The Flyer - the second largest Ferris wheel in the world. The whole skyline can be viewed from here. Then we meet with the manager of the iconic Raffles Hotel where rooms start at about \$1400 per night. Suites run about \$10,000 per night. The hotel resembles a plantation with its palm-like ceiling fans and sprawling white property. We have High Tea at the renowned Tiffin Room, a formal affair that dates back to the 1800s. Then it's on to the hotel's Long Bar, where the famous Singapore Sling was invented. I was warned the drink might be sweet, but I enjoy it. After imbibing the original, I try a Summer Sling, but it doesn't beat the original recipe. It is a tradition at the Long Bar to be given a sack of shelled nuts, and the empties pile on the floor.

Singapore celebrates its 49th anniversary as an independent nation next week, and today is practice for the main event. Soldiers are marching, and streets are closed so we have to take the subway. It is immaculate, quite different from New York.

One of Singapore's newest hotels is the Sands Bay Marina, a massive skyscraper of three towers connected across the roof with a structure that looks like a boat. We go to the top to check out the view, and are privy to colorful fireworks that are being launched, in preparation of next week's celebration. As the fireworks explode, a man next drops to his knees to propose to his girlfriend. She says yes and her friends appear from the wings to participate in the excitement.

Day 3: I pre-arranged every aspect of our stay, deliberately leaving this morning free, not knowing if we be totally jet-lagged by now, in dire need of sleep. But this is not the case, so I am off to St. Regis' gorgeous spa - wet and dry saunas, whirlpools, and heated lounge chairs. The wet sauna clears my sinuses and my ears unpop. I didn't even know they were popped. Late afternoon, we take a cable car to Sentosa, an island filled with so many recreational activities, it would take days to see them all. There is a Resorts World casino, Universal Studios, Hard Rock hotel, restaurants, and the biggest Merlion statue in Singapore. We go to the world's largest aquarium, walking through clear tunnels surrounded by swimming fish above, below, and at all sides, so it seems like we are part of this massive tank. One fish looks like it has the happiest face. Another is a seahorse with wings like the floral plants of the sea. At night there's a most spectacular laser light show at an outdoor theater on the beach, a stunning arrangement of color and art told through story that surpasses all our expectations.

Day 4: On our last day in Singapore, we tour Asia's largest bird park - Jurong - which includes penguins, a surprise considering how hot it is here. Then we head to the harbor for our 2-week cruise through Indonesia and Australia, our wonderful stay in Singapore coming to a close...but more adventure ahead. ([See cruises - Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia](#)).

For more information or to book a trip, [contact](#) "Commodore" Camille today.

This article was accurate when it was written, but everything in life changes. Enjoy the journey!