



bras basah.bugis
be inspired. be creative. be more.

Your Guide to Singapore's Arts & Heritage Precinct

Bras Basah.Bugis Online:



brasbasahbugis.sg
nhb.gov.sg



facebook.com/brasbasahbugis



brasbasahbugis



nhb_brasbasahbugis@nhb.gov.sg

Brought to you by:



National
Heritage
Board

Supported by:



Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth



Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 4 History & Culture
- 14 Art & Design
- 24 Off The Beaten Track
- 30 Grub
- 36 Map of BBB

IMAGES COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

P01 Bras Basah Road with St Joseph's Institution, Singapore. Source: Andrew Tan

The Rendezvous Restaurant famous for its nasi padang at Bras Basah Road.
Source: Ronni Pinsler

St Joseph's Institution, Singapore.
Source: Arshak C Galstaun Collection

P07 Singapore – Laundry men – Dhoby men.
Source: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

Indian launderers working in Stamford Canal at Dhoby Ghaut, Singapore. Source: Lee Kip Lin Collection

Cathay Building at Dhoby Ghaut.

P08 Print showing prisoners in the convict goal compound at Bras Basah, taken by G.R. Lambert & Co, C 1900. Source: Illustrated London News Collection

P11 Cathedral of the Good Shepherd at Queen Street. Completed in 1847, the church was elevated to the status of cathedral in 1888.
Source: Lim Kheng Chye Collection

IMAGES COURTESY OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

P03 Deng Guoyuan, Noah's Garden II, 2016.
Source: Image Courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

P10 Chap Chye. Source: True Blue Cuisine

P20 Facade of Bras Basah MRT Station.
Photography: Patrick Bingham-Hal

P18 Performance in The Substation. Source: The Substation

P21 Facade of School Of The Arts. Photography: Patrick Bingham-Hal

P21 Facade of LASALLE McNally Campus.
Source: LASALLE College of the Arts

P23 Facade of Deck. Photography: Darren Soh

P27 Gem stone. Source: The Gem Museum

P28 Shopping area of Bugis Street. Source: CapitaLand

P34 Beer taps of Mikkeller Bar Singapore.
Photography: Alwyn Loh

PHOTOGRAPHY
Ratna Sari Binte Sutara

EDITORIAL
Gum Dong

DESIGN
Dinesh Joel Mammen

All information is correct at the time of print. Every reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of information within, hence, the publisher, editor and writers may not be held liable for errors and/or omissions however caused. The views and opinions expressed by stakeholders are not necessarily those of the National Heritage Board.

Every effort has been made to identify copyright holders. We deeply regret if, despite our concerted efforts, any copyright owners have been overlooked or omitted. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including printing, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the National Heritage Board.

Bras Basah.Bugis Singapore's Arts and Heritage Precinct

From as far back as the 19th century, the Bras Basah.Bugis precinct has been marked by diversity and eclecticism. Bras Basah, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Singapore, was one of the most ethnically diverse of its time with Jews, Europeans, Eurasians, Malays, Indians, Armenians and Chinese living together. Bugis, while not as ethnically diverse, was a bustling place of trade, entertainment and small businesses.

These beginnings play a large role in the unique vibe that the precinct has today. The diversity from its early days is reflected in the concentration of places of worship. From churches to Chinese, Hindu and Sikh temples, as well as a mosque and synagogue, these beautiful buildings continue to bring people of all backgrounds to the precinct.

Singapore's urban landscape can sometimes make it hard for people to connect with the past but in Bras Basah.Bugis, the sheer number of museums, heritage buildings and historical monuments that stand stoically amid this modernity provide precious glimpses into the nation's humble beginnings.

It's not just the precinct's rich heritage that makes Bras Basah.Bugis unique. Over the years, the area has also become the creative heart of Singapore, with a concentration of art schools, art and design museums, art and theatre houses and independent businesses.

Don't just take our word for it, explore the precinct and be your own judge. In the next few pages, we've set out various trails that cater to different interests. They'll take you through the major attractions, hidden gems, the most interesting places to eat and shop ... and hopefully by the end of the day, you'll have created great memories and fallen in love with this bohemian precinct.



Top to bottom: Bras Basah Road with St Joseph's Institution, Singapore; The Rendezvous Restaurant famous for its nasi padang at Bras Basah Road; St Joseph's Institution, Singapore.

The Bras Basah.Bugis precinct is one of the oldest districts in Singapore and wherever you go, you're walking through a piece of history. Here are some examples.



One of the first paved roads

Bras Basah Road

Singapore is home to a stunning urban landscape and it's hard to imagine that creating Bras Basah Road – one of the nation's first paved roads – involved clearing forests and hunting tigers. To find out more about the people responsible for these dangerous tasks, turn to pg 8.



Singapore's oldest Catholic Church

Cathedral Of The Good Shepherd

Recently restored to its original Neoclassical colour scheme, this 173-year-old church provides quiet respite in the bustling civic district. To find out more, turn to pg 11.



One of the first integrated residential developments

Waterloo Centre

Urban planning is one of Singapore's greatest achievements and Waterloo Centre was one of the pioneers in a housing concept that's ubiquitous today – combining high-rise housing with commercial components such as hawker centres and shops. To find out what to buy at Waterloo Centre, turn to pg 29.



Oldest Jewish synagogue in Southeast Asia

Maghain Aboth Synagogue

Part of the precinct's charm is in its unassuming vibe. Case in point – a quiet cream-coloured building along Waterloo Street that just happens to be the oldest surviving synagogue in Southeast Asia. Read more about the interesting places of worship in Bras Basah.Bugis on pg 12.

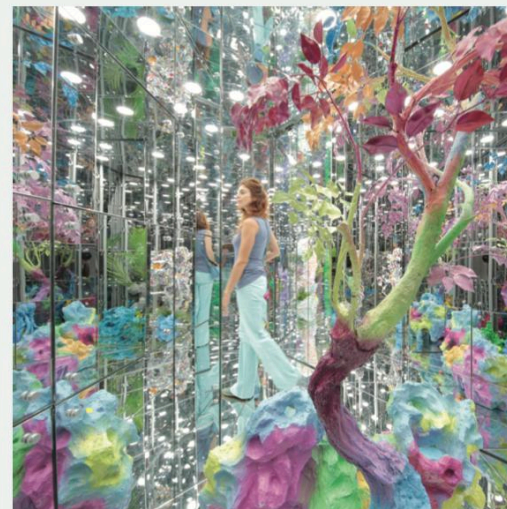


Left to right: Aerial performance at National Museum of Singapore, *Garden of Angels* by Theatre Tol, SNF 2015; #showerthoughts installation at National Design Centre by LiteWerkz, SNF 2016; facade projection, *Journey by NOVAK*, at Singapore Art Museum, SNF 2016.

Bras Basah.Bugis is where art, film, people and memories converge and these two festivals celebrate the unique energy of the precinct.

Singapore Night Festival

By far the biggest event of the year in the precinct, this festival held over two weekends sees up to half a million people take over the streets to watch immersive local and international performances, engage in interactive installations, feast and shop at the Festival Village, and watch the museum facades come alive with the ever-popular light art projections.



Deng Guoyuan, *Noah's Garden II*, 2016
Aluminium alloy steel frame, mirror glass, LED lighting,
real and artificial plants and rocks 1160 × 650 × 320 cm.
Collection of the Artist Singapore Biennale 2016 commission.

Singapore Biennale

Organised by the Singapore Art Museum, this contemporary international art exhibition invites over 60 local, regional and international visual artists to exhibit their works. It's not just an exciting platform for the arts community to share information and resources, it also encourages a deeper public engagement with the arts.



- Arts
- Chinese Temple
- Church
- Unique Location
- Museum
- Hindu Temple
- Synagogue
- Restaurant

- 1 Albert Mall Trishaw Park**
Queen Street between
Fu Lu Shou Complex and
Albert Centre Market & Food Centre
- 2 Sri Krishnan Temple &
Kwan Im Thong
Hood Cho Temple**
152 & 178 Waterloo Street
- 3 Maghain Aboth Synagogue**
24/26 Waterloo Street
- 4 The Old Bras Basah Jail**
81 Victoria Street
- 5 CHIJMES**
30 Victoria Street
- 6 Cathedral Of The Good Shepherd**
A Queen Street
- 7 Armenian Street Char Kway Teow**
Formerly at the corner of Armenian Street
and Loke Yew Street
- 8 Peranakan Museum**
39 Armenian Street
- 9 National Museum of Singapore**
93 Stamford Road
- 10 Dhobis at Dhoby Ghaut**



History & Culture

This precinct has a colourful past. Bras Basah is one of Singapore's oldest districts while Bugis, named after the Bugis people from Indonesia who came to this area for trade, was a notoriously seedy area of small businesses and entertainment. Today, the heritage of the precinct is still very much alive in its rich concentration of museums, heritage buildings, religious buildings and national monuments.



National Museum Of Singapore

93 Stamford Road

The elegant neo-Palladian facade stands stoically amid its modern surroundings. But it's more than just a pretty building – take a walk inside, and you'll realise there's so much more to the oldest museum in Singapore. Carefully curated galleries tell insightful stories of Singapore's cultures, traditions and history. Wander on your own, or join the Singapore History Gallery Guided Tour. There's always something new, be it a world-class exhibition or an exciting art installation, so be sure to check in to find out what's happening.

Dhobis At Dhoby Ghaut



Singapore – Laundry men – Dhoby men

Few people know this but Dhoby Ghaut is named after the Hindu term for laundrymen, dhobis. These dhobis travelled from India to Singapore in the early 19th century, and delivered a primitive form of modern-day dry cleaning services.

Dhobis would collect laundry from their customers who were mainly members of the Indian community, wash the clothes along the banks of what is now known as Stamford Canal, and dry them on an open park that would later be occupied by the Ladies Lawn Tennis Club in 1884.

Up till the 1980s, there were still about 30 dhobi shops across the island but most of the dhobis have since retired or passed away. Today, there is only one surviving dhobi shop in Singapore.



Cathay Building at Dhoby Ghaut.

FUN FACT!

CATHAY BUILDING AT DHOBY GHAUT

If you decide to take a break and watch a movie at The Cathay, stop to take a look at the building. When it opened in 1939, it was the first skyscraper in Singapore, and the tallest building in Southeast Asia!



Indian launderers working in Stamford Canal at Dhoby Ghaut



Print showing prisoners in the convict goal compound at Bras Basah

VOICES OF BBB



Mishelle Lim
Curator at Singapore Philatelic Museum
(23B Coleman Street)

As a curator, I am basically a storyteller. I take care of, study and interpret the museum's collection for the visitor and bring the stories behind each object to life through exhibitions and programmes. The BBB precinct is my favourite part of Singapore – it's historical, quiet and yet central. Perhaps because it is an arts and culture area populated by passionate people, there is a less commercial and more contemplative vibe here. It's the perfect place to spend some time with friends or alone.

As a museum buff, I can spend days getting lost in the various museums. Or pop down to the National Library to bury my head in books which, like stamps, are windows to the world. If I need fresh air, or want to relax my eyes with greenery, I can stroll to Fort Canning Park and walk among trees that have been there before us. The precinct is where the old never left. There are stories everywhere. For a curator, there's no better place to be.

The Old Bras Basah Jail

81 Victoria Street

The land on which the Singapore Management University campus now sits used to be Bras Basah Jail, constructed in 1833 to house penal prisoners from the South Asian colonies of the British Empire. What's less known even to locals is that these convicts played a huge role in the development of modern Singapore. They were put to work, and their tasks included hunting tigers and clearing roads to build some of Singapore's first paved roads such as Bras Basah Road, and iconic buildings such as the gothic-styled St Andrew's Cathedral.



St Andrew's Cathedral



Trishaw Uncle

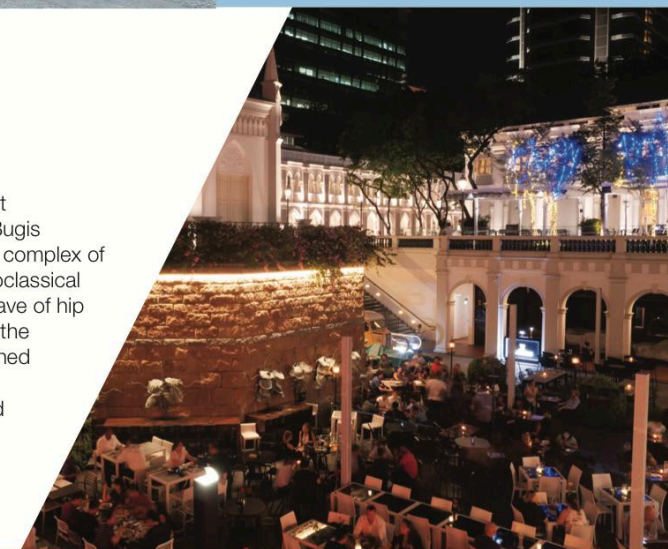
Queen Street between
Fu Lu Shou Complex and
Albert Centre Market & Food Centre

Take a break from walking and take in the sights on a trishaw – the most common mode of transportation in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, there is only one licensed trishaw company, Trishaw Uncle, and it follows a fixed sightseeing route. For \$39 per adult, you get a half-hour ride that takes you through Bugis and Little India.

CHIJMES

30 Victoria Street

CHIJMES is a prime example of the distinct old-meets-new charm of the Bras Basah. Bugis precinct. Within this 162-year-old stunning complex of buildings of architectural diversity from Neoclassical to Anglo-French Gothic, lies a lifestyle enclave of hip bars and restaurants. Take a walk through the compound and admire the handmade stained glass windows, grand spires and intricate staircases. Or even better, grab an ice-cold beer from one of the bars in the al fresco courtyard and enjoy the view.



Armenian Street Char Kway Teow

Formerly at the corner of Armenian Street
and Loke Yew Street



When it comes to Char Kway Teow, one of Singapore's most iconic local dishes, Armenian Street will always be fondly remembered as the best in town. From 1949 to 2007, until the business relocated, the owner whipped up this delicious dish of flat rice noodles, eggs, chinese sausage, bean sprouts and cockles fried with garlic, lard and sweet soy sauce, and satiated generations of cravings.

Peranakan Museum

39 Armenian Street

Peranakan culture is unique to Southeast Asia. Referring to the Chinese immigrants who moved to Indonesia in the 15th and 16th centuries, and eventually settled in Malaysia and Singapore, this culture is a melting pot of Chinese, Malay and Indian elements with its own elaborate traditions and beliefs.

There's no place better than the Peranakan Museum for insights into this rich heritage. Housed in a conserved three-storey Neoclassical building, this museum houses the world's most comprehensive collection of Peranakan artefacts. There, you'll learn about the origins of the culture, cuisine and religion, as well as their elaborate rituals that include a 12-day wedding ceremony, and marvel at the intricate traditional arts and crafts.



Chap Chye from
True Blue Cuisine

FUN FACTS!

- In a Peranakan household, the woman is the head of the family.
- Singapore's first prime minister, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, was of Peranakan heritage.
- Peranakan food draws influences from Thai, Malay and Chinese cuisines, and is known to be labour-intensive with a strong focus on slow cooking.

To get an authentic taste of Peranakan cuisine, head to True Blue Cuisine (49 Armenian Street).



Cathedral of the Good Shepherd at Queen Street. Completed in 1847, the church was elevated to the status of cathedral in 1888

Cathedral Of The Good Shepherd

A Queen Street

The oldest Roman Catholic church in Singapore, this church was built in a restrained Renaissance style. Its layout is in the form of a Latin cross but what it is famous for is its beautiful pipe organs, including the oldest playable organ in Singapore, a Bevington and Son instrument that was blessed in 1912.



Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple is always crowded, especially on the eve of Chinese New Year, when it is believed that the first person to insert joss sticks into the urn will receive good luck for the rest of the year.



It is a common sight for Chinese devotees to make joss stick offerings outside Sri Krishnan Temple.

Sri Krishnan Temple & Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

152 & 178 Waterloo Street

Testament to Singapore's multicultural and multi-religious society, two of the grandest Chinese and Hindu temples in Singapore co-exist harmoniously side by side on Waterloo Street. Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, a Chinese temple dedicated to the Goddess of Mercy, was built in 1882 while Sri Krishnan Temple, a South Indian Hindu temple, has existed since 1870. Devotees from both religions flock to these temples every day. Together with the florists, fortune tellers and street-side vendors outside the temples, this part of Waterloo Street has an electrifying buzz.



Hindu temples are colourful, intricate and beautiful. Be sure to head inside to take a look – you might be lucky enough to observe a Hindu ritual.

VOICES OF BBB



Makeswary Periasamy

Senior Librarian, Exhibitions, Curation and Rare Collection, National Library (100 Victoria Street)

The intermingling of the old and new gives the BBB precinct an eclectic vibe, offering residents, workers and visitors multifarious experiences. From traditional, ethnic enclaves to modern shopping districts, everything about the BBB precinct is refreshing and vibrant. Just as I get excited when I discover something interesting in the BBB precinct that I didn't know about, I get similarly elated when I acquire a significant rare title on Singapore to enrich the Rare Materials Collection. After all, my major role as a Rare Collections librarian is to ensure that the Collection is continuously developed and expanded with relevant historical content. This thrill of discovery inspires me to collect more of the valuable rare materials from Singapore's past and ensure they are well-preserved and accessible for present and future generations of Singaporeans.










SINCE YOU'RE HERE...



Walk down Waterloo Street and check out the oldest surviving synagogue in Southeast Asia, Maghain Abooth Synagogue (24/26 Waterloo Street). While visitors aren't allowed into the building, it's interesting to note that the Jewish community in Singapore can be traced back to 1830, and that the area including Middle Road, Wilkie Road, Selegie Road and Prinsep Street used to be the Jewish quarter back in the day.



 Arts
  School
  Museum
  Unique Location

-  **1 LASALLE College Of The Arts**
1 McNally Street
-  **2 Deck**
120A Prinsep Street
-  **3 School Of The Arts**
1 Zubir Said Drive
-  **4 Objectifs**
(Formerly known as Sculpture Square)
155 Middle Road
-  **5 National Design Centre**
111 Middle Road
-  **6 Street Art**
51 Waterloo Street
-  **7 Street Art**
222 Queen Street
-  **8 Singapore Art Museum**
72 Bras Basah Road
-  **9 Bras Basah MRT Station**
65 Bras Basah Road
-  **10 The Substation**
45 Armenian Street



Art & Design

Bras Basah, Bugis is the arts and heritage district of Singapore. The sheer number of art galleries, museums and schools are the most visible indicators but what sets this precinct apart from the rest of Singapore is how art, architecture and design are seamless and integral parts of the urban landscape.

From walls, pavements and benches to even an MRT station, the everyday and functional parts of life in Bras Basah, Bugis are transformed into energetic and engaging public spaces.

So don't just focus on getting to each destination on this trail – the journey's just as fun.

Street Art

Despite Singapore's tight control on vandalism and street art, the walls of commissioned creative explosions in the precinct prove that street art is a flourishing scene. Here's where to find the best of them.

222 Queen Street

In the alley between 222 Queen Street and Oxford Hotel at 218 Queen Street is a massive mural that's a mash-up of artwork by Singaporean and Thai street artists from Bangkok.



261 Waterloo Street, Waterloo Centre

This design was created by local illustration studio Chips & Toon as part of a pop-up event organised by Bras Basah.Bugis in 2016. Members of the public were invited to colour the design as they saw fit. The end result? A vibrant addition to the neighbourhood that celebrates the community spirit of the precinct.



51 Waterloo Street

On the ground floor of this arts and lifestyle centre are six murals by local artists that depict lost landmarks such as the old National Library. Created to be interactive, they're painted on door panels so that you get two views of each scene when you open and close the doors.



The Substation

The walls of this independent non-profit centre for the arts at 45 Armenian Street became a home for street art when a French artist asked for permission to use them as his canvas. Other requests soon followed and now the wall is jam-packed with art. Be sure to walk down the alley – there are more designs on the back of the building!



VOICES OF BBB



Howard Lo

Resident in BBB precinct and owner of Standing Sushi Bar (8 Queen Street) and Tanuki Raw at kapok (111 Middle Road)

Walking down Waterloo Street, you're hit with the smell of incense, burning in pots on the side of the road. Across the street, the celebration of Vesak Day brings a flood of worshippers to the Buddhist temple, looking to continue their old traditions and celebrate Buddha's birth; next door to a Hindu temple that is quiet until activity surges around Deepavali. While walking around this area you hear the smattering of languages, of which English is not the majority, and you see, feel, and hear the pulse of old Singapore and a cross-section of Asia. Go further and you start to see the entrepreneurs, the independent shop stall owners hawking their wares, lined up along the street or under the large tent. Last week, I took my 15-month-old son to Waterloo Centre. There's a void deck on the fifth floor; it's amazing to have such a large open space elevated in the middle of the city. Granted it's a little concrete-heavy, but for a toddler that space means freedom.

Galleries & Museums



Objectifs

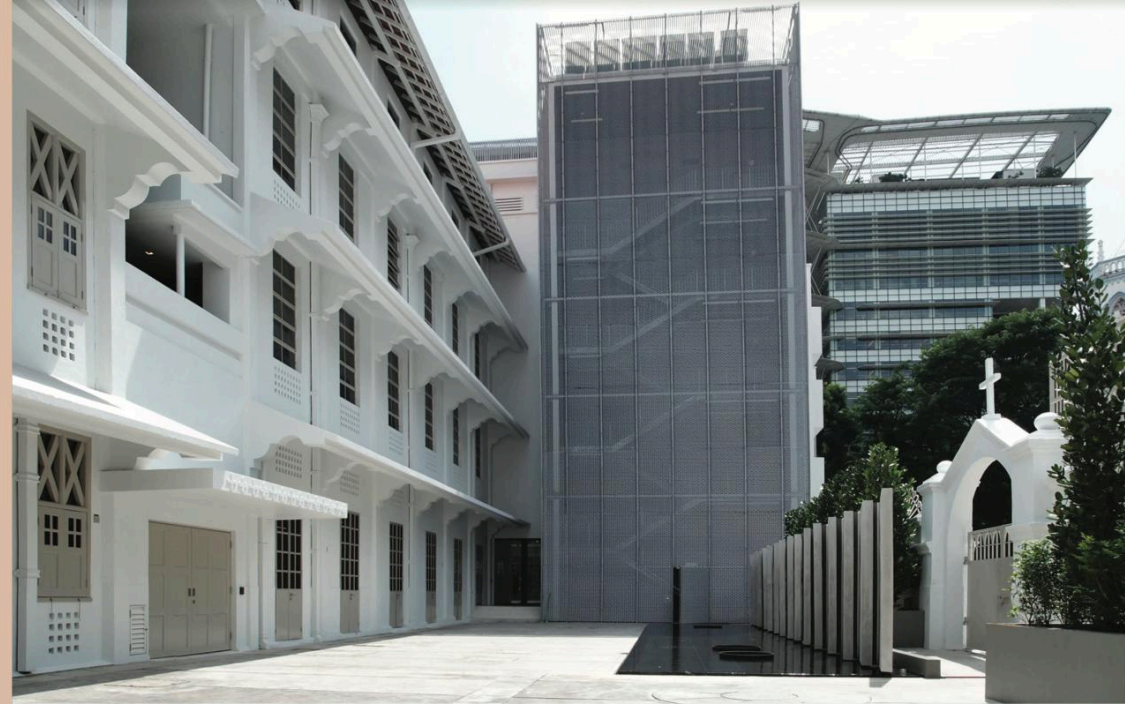
155 Middle Road

Within this picturesque canary-yellow chapel building is contemporary photography, video art and film centre, Objectifs. More than just a spot to check out a possible exhibition or film screening, Objectifs is all about building a supportive community for budding local filmmakers and photographers. Who knows, a visit might mean bumping into future Royston Tans and Tan Pin Pins!

SINCE YOU'RE HERE...

161 Middle Road

Head to Neh Neh Pop at Artichoke for a gourmet popsicle by local rockstar chef, Bjorn Shen. Baklava is a classic, made with dark chocolate-layered cherry blossom ice cream, rose water, chunks of baklava and an aromatic coating of dukkah.



National Design Centre

111 Middle Road

The National Design Centre is the nexus for all things related to design. There's always something going on here, be it local or international design activities, showcases, seminars, workshops or pop-ups.

Be sure to also take a walk through the levels of this building, as it is a prime example of how clever design both transforms and respects old buildings in the precinct. Set in three pre-war buildings, the centre's facade has remained as it was since then. The interior, however, is an interesting mix of old and new elements. For example, the angled aluminium entrance to Block D gives the structure a contemporary personality but if you look carefully, you will see the Catholic reliefs that pay tribute to the space's past as a chapel.



SINCE YOU'RE HERE...

111 Middle Road

Get some shopping done at cult lifestyle and design boutique, kapok. Or, grab a bite at Tanuki Raw at kapok – it's famous for its \$2 oysters during Happy Hour.

The Substation

45 Armenian Street

This is Singapore's first independent contemporary arts centre. While established artists frequently showcase their works at this venue, what makes The Substation precious is that this is where local musicians, poets and visual artists test new ideas. If you're into the indie scene and love spotting raw talent, you've come to the right place.



Architecture

Historic buildings stand next to modern malls, functional spaces double as art spaces, conserved heritage buildings get refurbished with contemporary touches ... Bras Basah. Bugis is a charming mish-mash of contrasts and juxtapositions. Here are some of the easily missed gems.



Bras Basah MRT Station

65 Bras Basah Road

Look up as you emerge from the deepest MRT station in Singapore. In this award-winning design, the roof is an elegant water-filled skylight that reflects historic buildings when viewed from the surrounding park. The natural light and views deep into the ground create an ambience that's not typical of underground transit and provides the commuter with a connection to the real world the moment they step onto the 41m-long escalator that takes them to the ticket concourse.



Stephanie J. Burt
Artist

VOICES OF BBB

I have many fond memories of Bras Basah. Since the time of my diploma years at art school, the bulk of my late teenage years were spent in the area. The close proximity of the Singapore Art Museum and National Museum, as well as the two major art schools, made it a hub for artists to talk, shop, hold meetings or just hang out. The craft and printing stores in Bras Basah Complex as well as the National Library have always been places where I would bump into acquaintances. Pausing for a quick chat or just a mere hello would always brighten my day, and these moments make me feel connected to the area, which is rare given Singapore's constantly changing landscape. Having an arts district like Bras Basah. Bugis is important for the local arts community to thrive.

LASALLE College Of The Arts

1 McNally Street

This award-winning piece of contemporary architecture is inspired by geology. Six organically shaped buildings with inroads and alleyways running between them are much like lava flowing through canyons and valleys. The buildings featuring facets of glass, stone and aluminium are linked by sky bridges, making this campus look almost like a living sculpture.



School Of The Arts

1 Zubir Said Drive

Here's a fun fact: The dramatic angles of this high school for performing and visual arts were inspired by the 1920 horror film, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. From a four-storey base that stands tall amid a concentrated and buzzy part of the civic district, are a concert hall, drama theatre and small informal performing spaces connected by a network of circulation routes that's designed to encourage pedestrians to explore and navigate the art school.





Singapore Art Museum

71 Bras Basah Road

Housed in a beautifully restored 19th-century mission school, the Singapore Art Museum is the place to go for contemporary art from Singapore and Southeast Asia. While contemporary art can sometimes be inaccessible to newbies, there is a considerate effort here to make it engaging and thought-provoking.

You can opt for a docent guided tour or head to the Learning Gallery that's dedicated to discussion and engagement with contemporary art. There, you can also view the permanent collection of the museum, Once Upon This Island – a collection that questions what it means to live in modern Singapore.

Deck

120A Prinsep Street

The area where this independent art space dedicated to photography now stands was once barren, unused land without a postal code, water and electricity and phone lines. So what you see today – 19 refurbished shipping containers that are seeming haphazardly stacked atop each other, and can be disassembled and reassembled like Lego – isn't just an administrative and architectural feat, it's an impressive result of crowd-funding and determination by the founders to create a vibrant local arts scene.





Hidden Gems



1 The Auld Alliance

#02-02A Rendezvous Hotel,
9 Bras Basah Road



2 Kacang Puteh Man

Outside Peace Centre, 1 Sophia Road



3 White Feather

#01-24 Sunshine Plaza,
91 Bencoolen Street



4 Singapura Seafood Restaurant

#01-31 Selegie House, 9 Selegie Road



5 The Gem Museum

#02-02 222 Queen Street



6 The Farm Store

#04-20 Waterloo Centre,
261 Waterloo Street



7 wheniwasfour

#02-18 Waterloo Centre,
261 Waterloo Street



8 Bugis Street

3 New Bugis Street



9 Loof

#03-07 Odeon Towers,
331 North Bridge Road



10 Bras Basah Complex

231 Bain Street



Off The Beaten Track

If you're a traveller who digs hidden gems, likes hunting down spots only the locals know and gaining instant cred, this trail is created just for you.



Bras Basah Complex

231 Bain Street

Made up of old-school Chinese bookstores and music equipment, printing, stationery and art supply shops, Bras Basah Complex is a haven for all things analogue, and was understandably a popular hangout spot for young people in the 1980s and 1990s.

The ground floor where the atrium remains is where the local Chinese music scene once flourished – young Chinese music composers would showcase their works to fellow music lovers. That scene faded, largely with the arrival of the Internet.

Today, Bras Basah Complex is a gentle reminder of a slower pace of life and a treasure trove of indie gems for the nostalgia junkie.



Cat Socrates (#02-25) is a whimsical world of the prettiest knick-knacks from homeware, postcards, fabrics and terrariums to locally-designed pins.



Basheer Graphic Books (#04-19) is arguably one of the best independent bookshops in Singapore – it holds an impressive collection of art and specialised graphic books and magazines.



VOICES OF BBB

This area has grown to become my second home in the last two years, when Centre 42 first opened our doors on Waterloo Street. We're surrounded by people working, living, breathing their craft; among museums, galleries, art centres and institutions, big and small, glamorous and gritty. But while the rest of BBB can be bustling and busy, our side of Waterloo Street is serene, quiet and a comforting respite. And maybe because we seem to be an oasis situated in an urban city centre, Centre 42 has become a home for independent artists and collectives to visit, write, read, research, create, exchange and showcase. It's so precious these days in Singapore to have space – physical, mental, emotional – to experiment and well, just be.

Ma Yanling
Marketing and Communications
Manager of Centre 42
(42 Waterloo Street)



The Gem Museum

#02-02 222 Queen Street

This private museum was created to introduce gemology to budding gem enthusiasts, and to help collectors become more savvy buyers. The comprehensive collection is from all over the world and is categorised into six main groups: Crystal systems, organic gemstones, phenomenal gemstones, rare gemstones and imitation gemstones.



Singapura Seafood Restaurant

#01-31 Selegie House, 9 Selegie Road

Singapura Seafood Restaurant is almost an institution of Fookchow cuisine in Singapore. This unique North-South Chinese fusion cuisine is marked by delicate and well-balanced flavours, and best exemplified in the restaurant's signature dish, cold crab. The recipe has remained unchanged since it was created in the 1970s – live Sri Lankan crabs are steamed with a secret mix of herbs to enhance the sweetness of the meat and the richness of the roe. Dip it into some plum sauce, chilli sauce or vinegar, and enjoy!



wheniwasfour

#02-18 Waterloo Centre, 261 Waterloo Street

Tucked away on the second floor of a HDB block, this local design studio hand-makes bags, cards, homeware and random knick-knacks with idiosyncratic Singaporean inflections. Inspired by childhood memories, these craft items won't just make unique souvenirs, they're also fun ways to find out about the most mundane and intimate aspects of Singaporean life, such as the snacks we grew up with and our favourite hawker stalls.

The Auld Alliance

#02-02A Rendezvous Hotel,
9 Bras Basah Road

The Auld Alliance claims to have Southeast Asia's largest collection of whiskies, and to be one of the best whisky bars in the world. One look at its 70-page menu and towering shelves of bar spirits, and you'll be inclined to believe it. It has whiskies from every distillery in Scotland, from the usual like Macallan to ones you've never heard of, and ones from distilleries that don't even exist anymore. Best of all, there's nothing intimidating about this place – the service is warm yet professional, and prices start from \$14 a dram.

Bugis Street

3 New Bugis Street

Forget the big malls; Bugis Street is where the local teenagers know the best steals are. Navigating the hundreds of small stalls selling everything from street food, clothes and shoes to souvenirs requires patience as the place is constantly bustling with people but if you enjoy haggling and a good bargain, this will be the workout you've been looking for.

Loof

#03-07 Odeon Towers,
331 North Bridge Road

Singapore is a crowded and land-scarce city so most buildings are built upwards. That's why when it comes to exploring Singapore, looking at what's on the ground level is only part of the picture. Head upwards and stumble upon great finds such as Loof, a playful rooftop bar that serves Asian-inspired cocktails and modern bar bites inspired by local street food.

White Feather

#01-24 Sunshine Plaza, 91 Bencoolen Street

For timeless handcrafted jewellery, head to White Feather. Mike Tang, the talented artist behind this label, started wire jewellery making as a hobby but decided to pursue the craft full-time. Now with over 10 years of experience, Mike combines traditional techniques and aesthetics to create pieces that are simple and versatile.

The Farm Store

#04-20 Waterloo Centre,
261 Waterloo Street

This community-centred arts organisation and design studio exemplifies the best of the Bras Basah Bugis precinct – creativity, originality, and a whole lot of fun. At their store is a collection of products by Singapore-based designers that are carefully curated by a young team of artists and designers. Think pineapple tart cushions, chicken rice postcards and table runners inspired by vintage Peranakan tiles.

Kacang Puteh Man

Outside Peace Centre, 1 Sophia Road

Kacang puteh is a snack of beans, peas and nuts that originated from Chevdo, India. At the stall, each snack is stored in individual containers – you pick what you want and the kacang puteh seller scoops it into a thin long cone made of newspaper. Up till the 1980s, kacang puteh stalls were still a common sight, but as packaged snacks became easily available at supermarkets, this trade dwindled and today, there are only two sellers left in Singapore.



Restaurants



1 Coriander Leaf
#02-01 CHIJMES,
30 Victoria Street



2 Coffee Express 2000
#01-79 Bras Basah Complex,
231 Bain Street



3 Mary's Kafe
1 Queen Street



4 Tanuki Raw at kapok
#01-05 National Design Centre,
111 Middle Road



**5 Leong Yeow Famous Waterloo Street
Hainanese Chicken Rice**
261 Waterloo Street



6 Chef's Kitchen
#01-08 Waterloo Centre,
261 Waterloo Street



Supper Spots



7 Paper Crane
#01-07 SCWO,
96 Waterloo Street



8 Tracy Juice Culture
#01-34 Fortune Centre,
190 Middle Road



9 Victor's Kitchen
#01-49 Sunshine Plaza,
91 Bencoolen Street



10 Curious Palette
64 Prinsep Street



11 Gu Thai Noodle Cafe
#01-04 PoMo Mall, 1 Selegie Road



12 Mikkeller Bar Singapore
120A Prinsep Street



13 Rochor Original Beancurd
2 Short Street



Grub

With anything from a hearty meal for \$3 at a local *kopitiam* to the most creative of culinary concepts in hip restaurants, the grub scene in Bras Basah.Bugis offers plenty to chew on regardless of your budget and whims.

On this trail, we offer two spectrums of culinary experiences – the traditional, affordable and authentic, and the modern, sophisticated and creative. Whichever you go for, you're bound to get a good taste of why Singapore is a nation of hardcore food lovers.



Chicken Rice

Hainanese Chicken Rice
from Leong Yeow Famous
Waterloo Street
Hainanese Chicken Rice

261 Waterloo Street

Like most local hawker dishes, this national dish appears deceptively simple. But any local will tell you not all Hainanese chicken rice dishes are created equal. This humble stall nails all three components to awesome chicken rice – juicy, tender chicken, fragrant rice and an addictive chilli sauce. The chicken is boiled in a broth that's perfumed with a secret mix of aromatics so it takes on delicate flavours that enhance the sweetness of the meat. The rice made with pandan leaves and chicken stock is aromatic but never greasy. Lastly, the chilli sauce is tangy and spicy yet not overpowering, allowing the chicken to remain the star of the show.

TRADITIONAL

Garlic Butter Chicken *donburi*
from Tanuki Raw at kapok

111 Middle Road

Not quite Japanese, not quite American, Tanuki Raw is a welcome collision of two extremely different cuisines. In this dish, boneless chicken leg that has been marinated for at least 24 hours is pan-seared to seal in the juices before it's glazed with a rich butter, garlic and *shoyu* sauce. Served on top of starchy Japanese rice seasoned with *furikake*, it's one *umami* flavour bomb.



MODERN

Cake

TRADITIONAL
Sugee Cake from Mary's Kafe

1 Queen Street

A meal at Mary's Kafe is like having a meal cooked by Mum – that's if your mum were proudly Eurasian and one kick-ass cook. At the top of the list of things to try is Sugee Cake, a Eurasian classic that's usually served at Eurasian weddings. The original came from Goa, India where they use semolina flour and cashews, but the Singapore-Eurasian version uses semolina flour, almonds, butter and brandy instead. Mary's sugee cake is buttery, luscious and aromatic, so head to the café early to get yours – it usually sells out by mid-afternoon.

MODERN

Berry Ricotta Hotcake from Curious Palette

64 Prinsep Street

You might argue that hotcakes aren't exactly cakes, but one bite into this ridiculously soft, moist and fluffy hotcake that's served with vanilla bean ice cream, fresh berries, pumpkin and sunflower seeds and maple syrup, and you really won't be fussed with definitions.



Vegetarian

TRADITIONAL
Tracy's Special Udon from Tracy Juice Culture

#01-34 Fortune Centre, 190 Middle Road

Fortune Centre's eateries are mainly vegetarian because they cater to the large community of Buddhists who visit the temple along Waterloo Street. The options can be dizzying, but one of the most surprising finds lies in a fruit juice shop. The star of this bowl of noodles is the intensely rich and chunky broth made from mushrooms, tomatoes and parsley. Served with broccoli, cherry tomatoes and mock prawns, it's tasty enough to satiate even carnivores.

MODERN

Pearl Barley Salad from Paper Crane

#01-07 SCWO, 96 Waterloo Street

While Paper Crane might not be a vegetarian restaurant, it's starting to gain a reputation for well-composed and hearty Western vegetarian offerings. This warm salad features al dente pearl barley that's cooked in vegetable stock, slow-roasted mushrooms, onions, tomatoes and fresh herbs that are tossed in a lemon vinaigrette.



Small Plates

TRADITIONAL

Dim Sum at Victor's Kitchen

#01-49 Sunshine Plaza, 91 Bencoolen Street

The humble and simple surroundings of Victor's Kitchen hide one of Singapore's favourite joints for authentic Hong Kong-style dim sum. The chef previously worked in the kitchens of a five-star hotel in Hong Kong before setting up home in Singapore. Prices are affordable too, so brave the queue and get ready to order up a feast! Just make sure you get the Golden Egg Yolk Lava Bun – this show-stopper is consistently voted one of the best ones on the island.

MODERN

Asian-fusion at Coriander Leaf

#02-01 CHIJMES, 30 Victoria Street

The menu is made up of modern interpretations of Asian food with five flavour verticals: Fresh, Familiar, Spicy, Umami and Sweet. The dishes are made to be sharing plates, so much like if you were to dine at a Singaporean's home, you're encouraged to sit together, pass food around and enjoy a variety. Signature dishes include soft shell crab with curry leaves and salted egg yolk sauce, and barbecued ray fin with sambal and calamansi.



Beer

TRADITIONAL

Coffee Express 2000

#01-79 Bras Basah Complex, 231 Bain Street

Having Tiger beers at a coffee shop is as local an experience as you can get. This is how people, especially older folks, get together to eat, drink and gossip, so it's prime for people watching. Your surroundings might not be anything fancy, but this doesn't mean there's no table service. Look out for what the locals call the "Tiger Auntie" – a woman dressed in blue, usually wearing a waist pouch who will take your order and bring your Tiger beers to the table. She'll ask you if you want ice with your beer – if you want to roll like the locals, the answer is yes.

MODERN

Mikkeller Bar Singapore

120A Prinsep Street

From bespoke cocktails to craft beers, Singapore has one of the most sophisticated booze scenes in the region. In the precinct, Mikkeller Bar Singapore is the spot to check out if you're a beer geek. An outpost of the legendary Copenhagen-based craft brewery that's known for their experimental beers, you can expect up to 20 taps – three are reserved for Singapore beers and the rest are on a rotating list.



VOICES OF BBB



Tham Ying Wai

Owner of Merely Ice Cream
(91 Bencoolen Street)

I started Merely Ice Cream with an aim to make it a happy place where people gather over ice cream. Over these four years, I have seen so many new faces coming through the door. Old and young, from near and far, families and students ... Magic happens in this shop. Some of those once-new faces have become my friends. I've seen customers go from being friends to lovers. This is where I met my better half when we hosted her first solo exhibition. If it weren't for this tiny shop on Bencoolen Street, we would have never met. So Merely Ice Cream is truly my happy place, and I hope the magic happens for many more people to come.

Supper Spots

Gu Thai Noodle Cafe (open from 11am - 5am)

#01-04 PoMo Mall, 1 Selegie Road

Boat noodles come in tiny bowls because they were traditionally sold between boats on the rivers in Thailand so there's less risk of spillage. But at \$1.90 a pop, you can feel free to order as many as you want.



Rochor Original Beancurd (open from 11am - 1am on weekdays, 12pm - 3am on weekends)

2 Short Street

It might not seem like much – beancurd in a sweet syrup served either hot or cold. But try it at Rochor Original Beancurd, and you might understand why this is a hot favourite among Singaporeans. Compromising well-balanced, soft and smooth handmade beancurd with the most delicate aromas and flavours of soy beans, this dessert even won over one of the world's most famous carnivores, Anthony Bourdain.



Chef's Kitchen (open from 5pm - 2am)

#01-08 Waterloo Centre, 261 Waterloo Street

If you're looking to feast without busting your budget, this is the place to go to. Order the off-menu Moonlight Horfun – fried flat rice noodles in dark sauce with plenty of wok hei that's topped with a raw egg yolk. For something spicy, go for the Sambal Sotong – the squid rings are tender and springy, and the homemade sambal is punchy and piquant.



