

Exploring the Galleries of the National Museum of Singapore (A Social Story)





I am visiting the National Museum of Singapore today.

There are many **different exhibition galleries** in the museum.

I may visit some of the galleries on this trip.



Some galleries in the museum are **big** and some of the galleries are **small**.

Inside the galleries, there are some areas that are **dark** or **bright**.

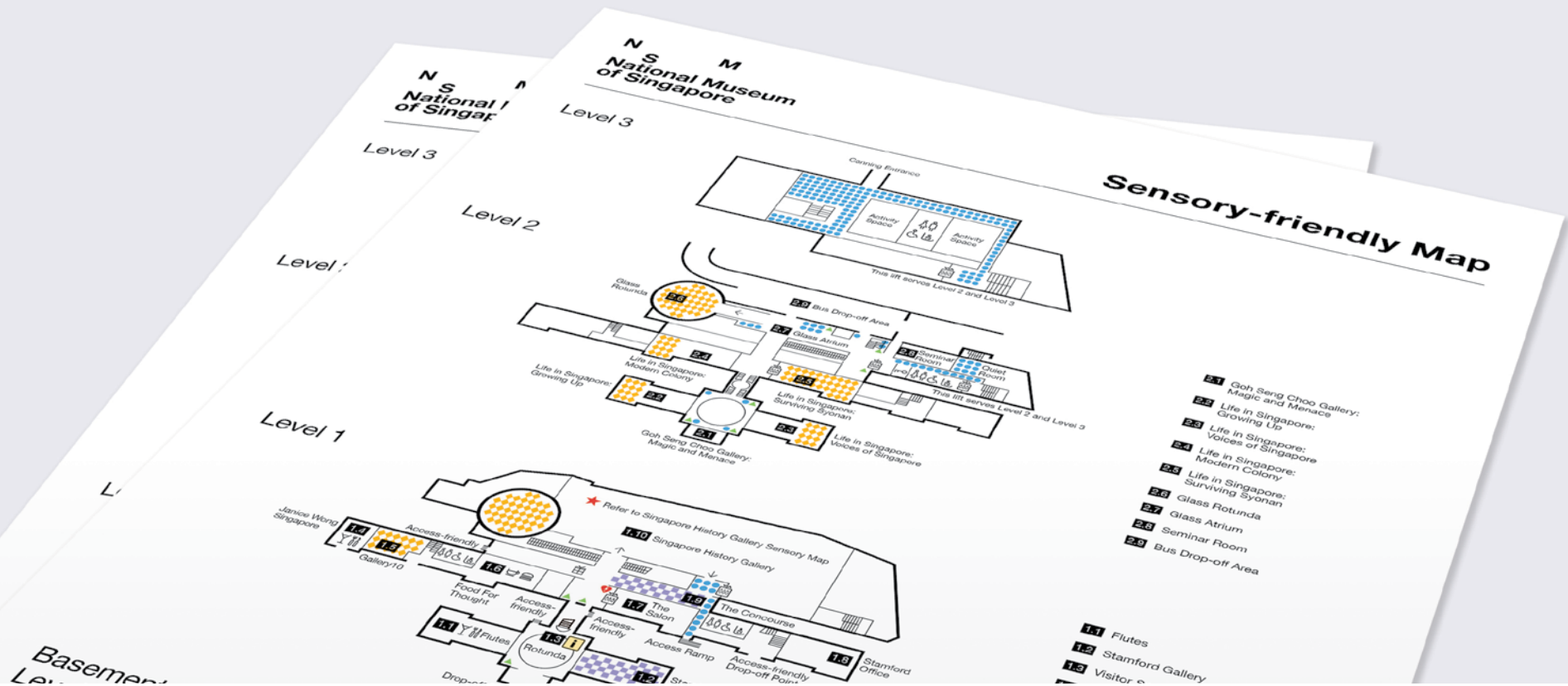
Some galleries may have different **sounds**.

If I feel uncomfortable in the room, I will tell my adult **(or caregiver)**.



Before coming to the museum, I can design my **visual schedule** with my adult.

This visual schedule helps me and my adult to decide which galleries to visit.



I may look at the **Sensory-friendly Map** to decide which galleries I should visit.

The map tells us which areas inside the galleries could be too bright or dark. It also tells us if there are loud noises. The map keeps us safe.



When I arrive at the museum and have obtained my admission sticker, I may proceed to the Singapore History Gallery, which is on the first floor.

This gallery tells us about the history of Singapore from more than 700 years ago!

Singapore History Gallery



Opening Hours
10am to 7pm
(Last admission 6.30pm)

A museum staff will greet us at the entrance.
He or she has a black tie and/ or coat on.



I will see a **big screen** when I enter the Singapore History Gallery.

It shows the settlements around ancient Singapore in the 1500s.
Singapore used to be known as “Temasek” or “Singapura”
in the past.



In the gallery, I will hear the **sounds of rain and thunder**, and I may be afraid.

I will remind myself that these sounds will not hurt me.
I can put on my **ear defenders** if I need to.



The first object I will see is the **Singapore Stone**.

It was once part of a 3-metre-tall stone boulder standing at the mouth of the Singapore River.



I will then hear the **sounds of splashing waves and chirping birds**.
I will also see a **big ship** in this section.



I will also hear **people chatting as they work on metal and pottery.**
This video gives me an idea of what Singapore looked like
700 years ago.



CROWN COLONY

1819–1941

In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles and Major William Farquhar arrived in Singapore. They struck a deal with the local Malay rulers to set up a British trading port, which Raffles declared would be "open to ships and vessels of every nation free of duty". This brought in traders and ships from as far away as Arabia and Africa. By the 1850s, Singapore was the centre of trade in Southeast Asia.

Singapore became a Crown colony in 1867, together with the other Straits Settlements of Malacca and Penang. As the British empire flourished, so did Singapore. The population swelled with migrants from the Malay Archipelago, China and South Asia. Some came to trade, as before, but many more came to work in the port city and in the plantations and mines of Malaya.

Indeed, Malayan rubber and tin powered Singapore's growth into an export and international financial centre – on a smaller scale, but not too different in character from what it is now. By the time Singapore celebrated its Centenary Day in 1919, it was a modern city, featuring the second largest dry dock in the world and modern conveniences such as electricity, motorcars and international telegraph and telephone connections.

This is **Sir Stamford Raffles**.

He is regarded as the founder of modern Singapore.



As I enter this section, I will **hear the sounds of horses' hooves**.

I will also **hear the sounds of men talking and bowls clanging**.
I imagine these sounds to be made by coolies having their meals
along the streets.



I will also see a **rickshaw**.

It was the main mode of transportation for people before motor cars, electric trams, buses and trishaws were brought into Singapore.



Many people in the past used to live in shop-houses with five-foot ways. As I walk through the five-foot ways, I will see hanging baskets of different sizes.

These baskets are made from rattan. They will not fall on me.



As I walk down this corridor, I will pass by two rooms and hear sounds of people marching, sirens and vehicles moving.

I may be afraid but I can put on my **ear defenders** if I need to.

SYONAN-TO 1942-1945

Well before World War Two began, the British had developed the "Singapore strategy" to defend the British empire in Asia. In Singapore, they built a naval base at Sembawang, strengthened the air force and installed large 15-inch coastal guns. Singapore became known as the "Gibraltar of the East" or "Fortress Singapore".

At the same time, the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 stirred up the Chinese community in Singapore. They formed "patriotic" organisations, which raised funds for China's war effort and organised boycotts of Japanese goods and businesses.

On 8 December 1941, Singapore experienced war for the first time when the Japanese bombed the city. On the same day, Japanese troops landed on the northeast coast of Malaya and began their invasion. After a swift 70-day campaign, the Japanese – to almost everyone's surprise – defeated the British and occupied the Malay Peninsula and Singapore.

The British surrendered on 15 February 1942. Singapore was placed under military occupation and renamed Syonan-To ("Light of the South" in Japanese). While the war continued elsewhere, the Singapore population struggled with food and fuel shortages, disease and, at its worst, violence and harassment from the Japanese. The occupation ended only when Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945.



The **Japanese occupied Singapore** from 1942 to 1945.

Singapore was renamed “Syonan-To”, which means “Light of the South”. It was a horrible time for people living in Singapore.



As I enter this section, I will see a **huge military tank** here!

There is a “no touching” sign. 

I will obey the rule and keep my hands to myself.



I will see a blouse and a skirt that belonged to Elizabeth Choy.
She wore this set of clothing for 200 days in the detention centre.

How would I feel wearing the same clothes for 200 days?



In the section ahead (on Rallies and Riots in the 1950s), there will be a lot of bright lights and big screens.

If I feel uncomfortable, I can hold my adult's hand and walk through this space quickly.



On 16 September 1963, Singapore became a part of Malaysia. But the merger did not last. Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent nation on 9 August 1965.

I can watch a video showing Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the founding prime minister of Singapore, speak about the separation of Singapore from Malaysia.



The next segment of the gallery might be noisy.
I can put my ear defenders on if the sounds are too loud for me.

There will also be bright fluorescent lights ahead.



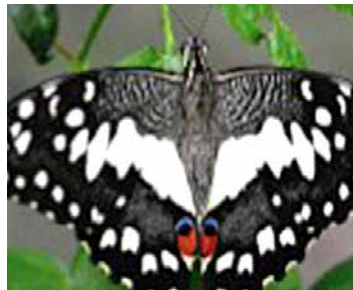
I will see images of men and women busily working in a factory and some products that were manufactured in Singapore, such as mosquito coils, chinks and candles.



I will then enter a “flat” and see a **living room** with a big interactive table. I can browse through the digital books found on the table and find out more about the homes in Singapore.



When I step out of the flat, I will hear the **sound of birds chirping** and **see a big rain tree**, as if I am in a park.



When I look up, I will see images of animals and plants such as the Collared Kingfisher, Pink-Necked Green Pigeon, Blue Pansy Butterfly, Lime Butterfly, Plantain Squirrel, Green Crested Lizard, Bamboo Orchid and Pigeon Orchid.



After exiting the Singapore History Gallery, I may visit the exhibition galleries on Level 2 during this visit to the museum.



I can take the **escalator or lift up** to Level 2, where the Life in Singapore: The Past 100 Years galleries are.



I can enter through these white doors to get into the **Modern Colony gallery**, which is on the second floor.

This gallery is about Singapore as a British Crown colony from 1925 to 1935.



On entering the gallery, I will see chairs, tables and a newspaper stand.

I will also smell English tea and hear soft ballroom music.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

...every nation meets. Fifty shipping lines
...an immeasurable quantity of native craft of

Journey (1939)

...olitan port city with a burgeoning population of over
...advancements in maritime technology and port services.
...n 1869 and the introduction of the telegraph system in
...n colony into a new era of global connectedness.
...vancements in steamship technology, modernising its
...sed volume of shipping and trade.

...somy brought thousands of immigrants and travellers
...tions and supporting services such as banks, shipping
...oon sprang up everywhere, as businessmen and shipping
...n swift and reliable contact with ports worldwide.
...avel also shortened dramatically. Many established
...g their interests into rubber and palm oil plantations,
...g of the Johor Causeway in 1923 linking Singapore
...d rail also gave trade a further boost. During the
...any merchants became multi-millionaires overnight.



I will see a heavy suitcase, which is known as a “wardrobe trunk”.

I will also see an old western suit and coat.

These were worn by men when they travelled in the past.



I will see a range of traditional outfits known as *cheongsam* and *baju Shanghai* that were worn by women in the 1910s and 1920s.

the 1900s. Previously, the roles of women were mainly in the home. By the 1930s, however, women were stepping out into public life. The "new woman" in Singapore coincided with similar changes in the rest of the world. In Britain, World War One brought women into the workforce as men had gone abroad to fight the war. In 1920, American women gained the right to vote. Closer to home, the collapse of the Qing dynasty in China now led the modernisation movement for overseas Chinese in Singapore.

Life in Singapore in the 1920s and 1930s through the lens of education. These included attending school, performing charity work, and participating in leisure activities. With the expansion of education to all, by the 1920s, more found employment as clerks, teachers and even lawyers and doctors, careers previously reserved for men. Women also played a greater role in charity and welfare work. Tensions arose as they negotiated their new roles in society. Tensions were evident as matters related to female modesty, such as the wearing of swimwear, were contested in the "Women's Corner" of the paper. Women were still expected to stop attending schools after marriage and going out without a chaperone was frowned upon.



This was the first uniform of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in Singapore. The uniform is made up of a pair of blue pants and a white top (known as *samfoo*).

I will also see an old school desk and a chair that belonged to the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in the past.



I could also explore the **Growing Up gallery**, which is on the second floor.

This gallery is about life in Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the uncertainties, children growing up in those times were still able to enjoy happy childhood years.



When I enter the gallery, I will see a coconut tree.
When I look up, I will also see some bright, colourful books and a rocket.
There is no danger of any object falling on me.





I will see a hoop-throwing game.

Children would throw the hoops over the bird images to gain points. The various birds represented different points, which are indicated next to their image.



I will see a selection of wind-up toys which were popular with children before battery-operated toys existed.

They had a spring that could be wound up to create movement.



I will see a bicycle that belonged to Mr Lee Hsien Loong,
the Prime Minister of Singapore.

His paternal grandmother gave this bicycle to him for his 11th birthday.

This brand of bicycle was very popular in the 1970s.



I will see a sleeveless *cheongsam* that was usually worn by teachers in the past.

I will also see a school bag that students used in the 1940s to 1970s.



Next, I may explore the **Voices of Singapore gallery**.

This gallery is about how Singaporeans forged a unique identity for themselves as “Singaporeans” through cultural activities such as music, performances, television and theatre.



In this gallery, I will see a room that may be a little dark.

But I will remind myself that I should not be afraid as it is safe.
The room is filled with dazzling stars and cars.



I can sit in the cars and enjoy a film about Singapore, like how people in Singapore used to enjoy movies at the open-air drive-in cinema in Jurong.



I can also explore *Story of the Forest* at the Glass Rotunda on Level 2. In this immersive installation, I will see animations of plants and animals from the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings.

It will be dark but I can hold my adult's hand as I walk through the installation.



At the end of our museum learning journey, my adult and I will leave the gallery area through the exit.



**We hope to see you soon
at the National Museum of Singapore!**

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