

# LION OF THE EAST

*How to live among the gods in Singapore, one of the most sybaritic cities on Earth*

*Text by* KEITH GORDON

**“NOT ONLY IS SINGAPORE HOME TO PLENTY OF BILLIONAIRES, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE CITIES IN THE WORLD”**



*The Marina Bay Sands overlooks Gardens by the Bay park, and serves as a striking centerpiece of the Singapore skyline.*



In July, when billionaire entrepreneur Sir James Dyson purchased a \$32 million Good Class Bungalow, with prime views of the Botanic Gardens in one of Singapore's most exclusive neighborhoods, it might have been a case of déjà vu for local residents. After all, he had just completed the purchase of the most expensive penthouse apartment in the city-state only weeks prior, the \$54 million super-triplex at the elite Wallich Residence in the tallest skyscraper in Singapore. Even in a city of exorbitant wealth, limited space, and a premium for real estate, Dyson had made a statement. In a city of billionaires, the British inventor wasn't going to settle, he insisted on the best.

But for a country whose large number of billionaire residents belies its small size, with 22 calling the city-state home, it was the Good Class Bungalow purchase that caught the public's attention. Due to limited space, this category of home (there are only around 2,800 that exist), consisting of more than 15,000 square feet and typically including ownership of the land itself, is a symbol of wealth and one of the most sought-after purchases in the city.

Singapore's role as an international center of business and commerce might only now be getting the attention it deserves as one of the world's great financial centers, but the truth is the city-state has maintained its vital importance to the global economy for centuries. Despite a location that has ensured its geographical significance in Asia for more than 700 years, it wasn't until the British established a trading post there in 1819 that it started to become the economic center it is today; but since then it has become a bridge between Asia

and the rest of the world, developing into a hub of economic activity for the region, and eventually the world.

Not only is Singapore home to plenty of billionaires, it is one of the most expensive cities in the world for residents of any tax bracket. While this makes day-to-day living expensive, it also means that those visiting the city have access to a lifestyle of luxury and opulence found in few other places on Earth.

While not everyone can afford to purchase their own Good Class Bungalow, or penthouse, the city offers a selection of world-class hotels that can make anyone feel like a billionaire. Five-star options abound, such as the St. Regis Singapore, where no detail is overlooked, from the world-class private art collection to the Presidential Suite, which may be the most exclusive accommodation in the city with a Breche de Benou marble bathroom and a master suite that could make rooms in Versailles jealous. Crystal chandeliers, unrivaled personalized service and the St. Regis Butler Service are just a few features that produce a level of opulence that stands out, even amongst its peers in the St. Regis collection. Located near the posh Orchard Road shopping district, the property offers the best of the city just outside its doors, assuming you can be convinced to explore outside of this cathedral of luxury.

Mandarin Oriental, Singapore is another contender for the city's top hotel with its tradition of service, refined design and elite dining and spa options. Located in the Marina Bay district, the hotel is ideal for tourists and business travelers alike. Be sure to visit the Oriental Club Lounge, located on the 19th floor, where one can enjoy a peace-

ful retreat while overlooking the city's incredible skyline and partaking in the champagne breakfast that is an ideal way to start one's day.

The Fullerton Hotel Singapore is quite literally a National Monument, awarded such status in 2015. More than 90 years old, the building is one of the most striking architectural designs in the city, and has played a significant role in the its rich history. While it may be more restrained in its opulence than some of the newer additions to the city's skyline, it sacrifices nothing in terms of service or guest experience. Furthermore, it claims to possess the most exclusive hotel suite in all of Singapore with its Presidential Suite, and it's hard to argue that claim considering the suite's private elevator, baby grand piano, and glass-enclosed veranda just off the exquisite dining and living rooms.

Even if you stay at one of the other five-star hotels in the city, it should be mandatory for visitors to experience the Marina Bay Sands and its world-renowned infinity pool, located 57 floors above the city below. A hotspot for global celebrities and tastemakers, the hotel is exquisite, but the infinity pool is the crown jewel, and any visit to the city is rather incomplete without a few hours spent lounging by its edge with a glass of champagne in hand.

These towering heights are also where you'll find Cé La Vi Club Lounge, a nightclub and restaurant that will keep the experience going well into the night. The hotel also houses the two-Michelin-star Waku Ghin by Tetsuya Wakuda restaurant, serving a 10-course Japanese-European menu that rivals any found in this city of impossibly high standards. Foodies the world over are left anxiously anticipating what it will offer after its recent renovation and reimagined dining

PREVIOUS PAGE: ATHANASIOS GIOUMPASIS/GETTY IMAGES

THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF MARINA BAY SANDS SINGAPORE

*The infinity pool atop the Marina Bay Sands is one of the must-visit attractions in Singapore, and one of the most stunning vantages in all of Asia.*



As a global economic center, it's not surprising that the elite restaurants that call Singapore home are diverse in their cuisines as well. Burnt Ends offers Australian barbecue that brings the traditional backyard cuisine to exalted levels of refinement and quality, both in its menu and its atmosphere. The Michelin-starred Corner House offers food as art, with dishes so spectacular in design and execution that one is hesitant to eat the edible artwork placed in front of diners... until the first bite that is. Its "gastro-botanica" identity applies to both its food and its surroundings, as the building itself, dating back to 1910, and its adjacent horticulture act as inspiration for the menu. The restaurant is sure to wow even the most jaded of culinary aficionados.

But the most elusive reservation in this city of exclusivity is likely Odette. It's truly impossible to determine if the food or the surroundings are more impressive, but ranking 18th in the entire world according to The World's 50 Best Restaurants, Odette provides unmatched French culinary precision, despite being thousands of miles from Paris. The Kampot pepper-crusted pigeon has earned raves, but nothing that leaves the kitchen at Odette is short of mind-blowing. But you'd better plan ahead if you want to savor this heavenly culinary experience as,



according to Howard Oh, Concierge Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Singapore, "Odette is now the buzzing name for almost all of the tourists who are visiting Singapore; even calling a month in advance may not guarantee a reservation."

For those seeking even more exclusive culinary experiences, the newest trend in Singapore is private kitchens. These small, hard-to-book restaurants are found in apartments and homes throughout the city, and offer the same exquisite menu offerings as their larger counterparts but with an intimacy appreciated by the global elite. Establishments like FatFuku, Lucky House Cantonese Private Kitchen, and Lynnette's Kitchen are just a few of the private kitchens that are gaining worldwide reputations for both their exquisite food and unique experiences. For instance, Lynnette's Kitchen is hosted by Lynnette Seah, co-concertmaster of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and if you're fortunate enough to get a seat at her table, she might just entrance you with a



Top: Billionaire British inventor James Dyson has snapped up two of the most expensive, and exclusive properties in all of Singapore in the last year, following his decision to move his company's headquarters to the city-state. Middle: One of Dyson's purchases was a Good Class Bungalow, a category of private home only available to the wealthiest and most connected of Singapore's elite. Bottom: Gardens by the Bay features some of the most unique, and visually stunning, architectural design and sculptures found anywhere. Opposite page: The Parkroyal on Pickering, Singapore integrates elevated terrace gardens into the building's design, evoking a striking balance between modernity and natural space.



TOP TO BOTTOM: TRISTAN FEWINGS/BFC/GETTY IMAGES FOR BFC; RAHMAN ROSLAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF GARDENS BY THE BAY SINGAPORE; OPPOSITE PAGE COURTESY OF @FEVARENT



violin accompaniment to your meal.

While it's tempting to remain ensconced in the unparalleled luxury and comfort of Singapore's elite hotels and restaurants, one must journey out into the city itself to truly indulge in all that this metropolis has to offer. The most striking destination has to be the Gardens by the Bay, home to the Flower Dome, the largest glass greenhouse in the world, as well as to the Cloud Forest and its 30-meter waterfall, the tallest indoor waterfall in the world.

The entire park is an Instagrammers' dream, combining extravagant architecture, extensive botanical sections, and art installations and lighting that make the park fantastical, like a Disney World for billionaires. Comprised of three separate waterfront gardens, Bay South, Bay East and Bay Central, Gardens by the Bay is not just one of the must-see at-

tractions in Singapore, but one of the most distinctive, bold and beautiful excursions found anywhere in Asia.

For those looking for some adrenaline-filled activities to balance out all of the relaxation and pampering, be sure to explore the Formula One circuit that weaves through the city. Of course, one doesn't experience an F1 track on foot or bike. Instead, ask your concierge about obtaining a Ferrari, Lamborghini or McLaren supercar with which you can live your fantasy of being Lewis Hamilton or Sebastian Vettel, even if only for a few laps.

For those with a love of being on the water, your concierge may also be able to set up guests with a private yacht charter, allowing you to cruise the Singapore Strait with its jaw-dropping views of the island while sipping the finest wines or cocktails. It's a fantastic luxury experi-



A globally renowned DJ and actress, Singapore native Jade Rasif, showing off the style and luxury for which the island-city has become famous.



ence for those who don't have the means to bring their own yacht with them to this urban, island paradise.

Singapore is a land of billionaires. But it's also a city where those of us without that level of wealth can feel like a billionaire, whether it's for a week, a day or even a single meal. It truly lives up to, and even exceeds, its reputation as Asia's Monte Carlo—a playground for the wealthy and an aspirational escape for the rest of us.

## The Return of Raffles

*Singapore's most iconic hotel reopens after a major renovation*

*Text by JARED PAUL STERN*

It first opened in 1887 with just 10 rooms, was declared a National Monument a century later by the Singapore government, and has played host to everyone from Grace Kelly and Queen Elizabeth to Karl Lagerfeld. The iconic Raffles Hotel Singapore at 1 Beach Road is one of the most famous hotels in Southeast Asia, and with good reason. And it

*One of the pillars of the Singapore luxury scene, Raffles Hotel Singapore has become synonymous with the island-city it calls home, such is its history and significance to Singapore's modern*



COURTESY OF @MCVXY (FARHAN ARIF)

COURTESY OF RAFFLES HOTEL SINGAPORE





recently reopened after 18 months, having undergone a reportedly multimillion-dollar restoration led by designer Alexandra Champalimaud, looking better than ever.

"There are few hotels in the world whose names have become virtually synonymous with the cities in which they are located, and none more so than the Raffles Hotel in Singapore," notes Christian Westbeld, the property's General Manager, who cites its unique combination of "dis-

tinctive architecture, heritage and legendary service." From the famous Long Bar, where the Singapore Sling is often said to have been invented in 1915 [see sidebar p. 59], to the gracious palm-lined courtyard, the place simply exudes luxury, style and timeless sophistication with a uniquely tropical and colonial air.

The revitalized hotel is designed to offer an even more attractive mix of "culture, beauty and gentility." Among the improvements are lavish

*The pinnacle of refined accommodation and exquisite personalized service, the Mandarin Oriental, Singapore creates an atmosphere of uncompromised luxury while maintaining a clean and elegant design principle*

COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL SINGAPORE



new suites, exclusive dining concepts, including one by famed chef Alain Ducasse, and "vibrant lifestyle experiences," while guests are waited on hand and foot by the iconic Raffles Butlers. Their pair of Presidential Suites, Singapore's grandest, are particularly impressive at nearly 2,800 square feet, complete with parlor, dining room, living room, dressing area and a private balcony overlooking the Palm Court.

And a new chapter in cocktail history is set to be made with the renovation of the Writers Bar, which pays tribute to the many famous authors who have stayed at the hotel over the years, including Rudyard Kipling, Noël Coward and Somerset Maugham. We hope they're saving a barstool for us.

## Singapore Slings

*The famed city is home to some of world's best bars*

Text by JARED PAUL STERN

Each year at the Tales of the Cocktail Foundation's Spirited Awards, the high-end drinks industry conference and festival held in New Orleans, the trade's top professionals present awards honoring the world's top bars, bartenders, and cocktail experts, both here and abroad. And 2019 was something of a sweep for Singapore in the latter category. Two of the city's most famous bars took home top honors: Atlas bar won Best International Cocktail Bar while Manhattan bar at the Regent Singapore hotel claimed Best International Hotel Bar.

Singapore can now legitimately assert supremacy on the international cocktail scene, and with good reason. Although historians of mixology will tell you this is actually nothing new. The Singapore Sling is often said to have been invented in 1915 at the Long Bar at Raffles Hotel [see sidebar p. 58]. However drinks called slings were apparently being slung in Singapore as far back as 1897, according to *Imbibe* magazine.

Regardless, Singapore's bars have moved on to more modern concoctions—although a Sling at Raffles is still de rigeur; the decor has evolved as well. Rather than imitate the Long Bar's impeccable colonial style, Atlas bar and Manhattan evoke the Gatsby-esque glamour of other by-gone eras.

TOP TO BOTTOM: COURTESY OF ST. REGIS SINGAPORE; COURTESY OF THE WAREHOUSE HOTEL SINGAPORE



Atlas was designed as a celebration of "the great Art Deco lobbies of Europe and their rich culinary and beverage traditions," as the bar puts it. Manhattan meanwhile is a "grand hotel bar inspired by the 19th century's Golden Age of cocktails and fine drinking[,] delivering on its name with a glamorous yet modern space reminiscent of old New York." Ranked as Asia's Best Bar for two consecutive years on the list of Asia's 50 Best Bars, it is also home to the world's first in-hotel rickhouse, referring to a space used to store barrels of aging whiskey—about 100 of them, in this case.

In his gorgeous and thirst-provoking 2018 book *150 Bars You Need to Visit Before You Die*, sommelier and spirits connoisseur Jurgen Lijcops lists a total of 10 must-visit watering holes in Singapore. In addition to Atlas and Manhattan, he cites Gibson bar, Smoke & Mirrors and the aptly-named Tippling Club (a Tales of the Cocktail winner in 2017), among others, as being remarkable for both the beauty of their design and the quality of their libations.

Smoke & Mirrors, an indoor-outdoor aerie located on the roof of the



Top left: *The butler service available at the St. Regis Singapore can handle almost any request, but it's the behind-the-scenes attention to detail that can impress most of all.* Top right: *The newest iteration of the spa at the St. Regis Singapore offers world-class treatments in surroundings that are as peaceful as they are luxuriant.* Bottom: *The den is just one of the unique spaces to be found in The Warehouse Hotel, a relatively recent addition to the Singapore luxury hotel community, offering 37 rooms to those looking for the highest level of service in a boutique hotel setting.*





Top: Executive Chef Tim Lam, who oversees the Michelin-starred Jiang-Nan Chun restaurant within the Four Seasons Hotel Singapore. Bottom: Offerings from the Summer Delights seasonal menu at Jiang-Nan Chun, which attempts to embody the concept of “Xiang Le Zhu Yi,” or the principle of enjoyment and happiness



National Gallery Singapore, offers up incredible views of Marina Bay along with its riffs on classic cocktails. *Singapore Tatler* notes it “sets out to elevate guests’ cocktail experience by bringing the three senses of taste, sight and touch into every sip,” via “cocktails that use chef-inspired techniques to artfully challenge perceptions with an intricate play on names, presentation and flavors.”  
Make mine a double...

### Billionaire’s Playground

According to real estate powerhouse Knight Frank’s annual Wealth Report, Singapore was home to 3,598 ultrahigh-net-worth individuals in 2018, and several are billionaires. The *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* notes that in addition to British inventor Sir James Dyson, the city’s billionaire residents reportedly include Facebook cofounder Eduardo Saverin and Valencia football club owner Peter Lim. According

COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HOTEL SINGAPORE. OPPOSITE PAGE TOP TO BOTTOM: EK YAP / ATLAS BAR; COURTESY OF ODETTE; COURTESY OF PO / THE WAREHOUSE HOTEL SINGAPORE



Top: A celebration of Europe’s greatest Art Deco lobby bars, Atlas raises the luxurious ambience, décor and drink selections to a rarefied level, on par with any of the iconic European venues that inspired its design and atmosphere. Bottom right: What the Po restaurant in the Warehouse Hotel eschews in terms of design complexity, it more than makes up for with its exquisite versions of classical Singaporean cuisine. Bottom left: Located within the National Gallery Singapore, Odette is not only the hardest reservation to get in the entire city, but chef Julien Royer’s modern French culinary creations make this one of the most in-demand fine dining establishments in the world.





“SINGAPORE OFFERS A SELECTION OF WORLD-CLASS HOTELS THAT CAN MAKE ANYONE FEEL LIKE A BILLIONAIRE, AND FIVE-STAR OPTIONS ABOUND”



Top: At 282 meters above Singapore, 1-Altitude is one of the city's most stunning nightlife options, with a 360-degree view of the city that's incredible at sunset and only improves from there as the night progresses and the city lights up. Bottom: Possibly the city-state's best nightclub, Lulu's Lounge offers Singaporean luxury with an edge and an attitude, evoking a 1960s New York back-alley lounge.

to *Forbes*, as of August 2019 the collective wealth of the city's 50 richest residents had reached a record \$130 billion, up more than 12% since 2018 despite global trade tensions. In the top spot, with an estimated net worth of \$16.3 billion as of September 2019, is restaurant tycoon Zhang Yong, who never finished high school according to the magazine. Ranking second are brothers Robert and Philip Ng with an estimated \$12.2 billion, who control the Far East Organization, Singapore's largest private landlord and property developer. Facebook's Saverin, worth an estimated \$10.5 billion, has resided in Singapore since 2009. According to the *SCMP* he's currently living it up in a 10,300-sq-ft. penthouse in the Sculptura Ardmore high-rise, known for its "cantilevered swimming pools, tilted facade and glass fins that envelop the tower," designed by famed architect Carlos Zapata.—*Jared Paul Stern*



DJ and actress Jade Rasif is a fixture on the Singapore nightlife scene, whether she's performing at one of the city's clubs or just enjoying nightlife that can rival any great metropolis.

COURTESY OF 1-ALTITUDE; COURTESY OF LULU'S LOUNGE

TOP IMAGE COURTESY OF @JUNHAO\_THAM (JUNHAO THAM)